

**Justus Twesigye, Maria das Dores Guerreiro,
Cláudia Pereira, and Joana Azevedo (editors)**

Families, Children and Youth at the Crossroads of Changing Welfare Systems



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Cláudia Pereira, and Joana Azevedo (editors)

FAMILIES, CHILDREN AND YOUTH AT THE CROSSROADS OF CHANGING WELFARE SYSTEMS



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Editora Mundos Sociais, CIES-Iscte, Iscte – Instituto Universitário de Lisboa,
Av. das Forças Armadas, 1649-026 Lisboa
Tel.: (+351) 217 903 238
Fax: (+351) 217 940 074
E-mail: editora.cies@iscte-iul.pt
Site: <http://mundossociais.com>

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Editors

Justus Twesigye is the Dean of the School of Social Sciences and a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Social Work and Social Administration at Makerere University. He holds a PhD from Stellenbosch University, a Master's degree in Social Work from University of Botswana, and Bachelor's degree in Social Work from Makerere University. His areas of research and teaching include mental health social work, social entrepreneurship, fieldwork education, and social work research methodology. Justus Twesigye has served as a guest researcher at CIES-Centre for Research and Studies in Sociology, Iscte. Also, he was the Coordinator at Makerere University for the Erasmus Mundus, MFamily program from 2015 to 2022, E-mail: justus.twesigye@mak.ac.ug

Maria das Dores Guerreiro is a Professor Emerita at the Department of Sociology, Iscte — University Institute of Lisbon. Associate Researcher at CIES-Centre for Research and Studies in Sociology, Iscte, where she has been coordinating the research group Families, Generations and Health, and the editor of the journal *Sociologia, Problemas e Práticas* for many years. Co-founder and former coordinator of the Erasmus Mundus MFamily master led by Iscte (1st to 5th editions). She also served as vice-rector for internationalization at Iscte (2018-2025), E-mail: maria.guerreiro@iscte-iul.pt

Cláudia Pereira is a Research Professor at Iscte — University Institute of Lisbon and a member of the Centre for Research and Studies in Sociology (CIES-Iscte). Her work bridges research, teaching, and public policy, with a strong focus on migration and integration. She holds the position of scientific coordinator of the Emigration Observatory and co-coordinator of the Erasmus Mundus Joint Master's program in Humanitarian Response, Health and Displacement. At the governmental level, she previously served as Portugal's Secretary of State for Integration and Migration, E-mail: claudia.pereira@iscte-iul.pt

Joana Azevedo is an Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology at the School of Sociology and Public Policy, Iscte — University Institute of Lisbon, and a Research Fellow at the Center for Research and Studies in Sociology (CIES-Iscte). She serves as Director of the Iscte Master's in

Humanitarian Action and as Co-Coordinator of the Erasmus Mundus Joint Master's Program in Humanitarian Response, Health, and Displacement,
E-mail: joana.azevedo@iscte-iul.pt

Introduction

Families, children and youth and social welfare workers Strengths, contexts, and responses

Justus Twesigye, Maria das Dores Guerreiro, Cláudia Pereira, and Joana Azevedo

Following our book titled *Families, Children and Youth in Global contexts* that was published by MUNDOS SOCIAIS in 2021, we recognised the need to make a further contribution to scholarship in these critical areas of social work practice and research by editing a new book. The first book presented fourteen chapters by authors who were nationals of 12 different countries, depicting a global context. These countries are Bolivia, Canada, China, Cyprus, Ghana, Italy, Jamaica, Mexico, Nepal, Nigeria, Norway and Uganda. The book also focused mainly on examining wellbeing of vulnerable and poor families, children and youth. The current book similarly mirrors a global context to the extent that authors of the thirteen chapters are from a comparable wide-ranging global context; they are citizens of 11 countries. These countries are Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, Dominican Republic, Germany, Greece, Nepal, Philippines, Russia, Serbia and Spain. However, our unique contribution in the new book is the particular focus on articulating how families, children, youth and their social welfare professionals marshal their strengths and resilience as they respond to various forms of adversity. Furthermore, preparing this book enabled us to fulfil a moral obligation of providing mentorship to our former students from the Master in Social Work with Families and Children program (MFamily) in transforming their research projects into a scientific book publication. This journey also has enabled us to advance collaboration and has facilitated us to transform from being course facilitators on the one hand and students on the other to joint researchers and co-authors. This was the family spirit that informed the inception and running of the MFamily Master program. The publication of the current book promotes this family-centred ethos by examining the strengths, capacities, and resilience of families and their partners as outlined in the parts that follow.

Throughout generations, families are recognised for nurturing and protecting their members (Guerreiro & Twesigye, 2021). Their capacity to support the wellbeing of members greatly depends on structural conditions such as availability of resources, government policy and environmental health. Globally, the family's capacity has been greatly affected by massive immigration and relocation of

people, epidemics such as COVID-19, and civil wars. Apparently, these factors pose multiple risks, including loss of dear ones, family breakups, financial hardships, loss of identity and citizenship, and exploitation and abuse. In particular, immigration is associated with acculturation stress for family members, characterised by feelings of isolation, learning a new language and establishing new family patterns. Such crises often co-occur with others as poverty, deprivation stigma and discrimination. Addressing those “multicrisis” (Minuchin, 2007), which undermine multiple domains—including individuals’ values, identities, conceptualizations of family, and practices of child-rearing—necessitates the adoption of an empowering and strengths-based approach (Saleebey, 1996).

The family has far-reaching influences, including the ways in which people perceive secondary welfare systems (McTavish., et al, 2019). In many cases, secondary welfare systems emerge to fill the void left by the family system. Accordingly, secondary welfare systems may be viewed as either positive or negative depending on the family’s capacity to care effectively for members. Their primary role is usually to restore and enable family to take care of its members. Therefore, the role of the family has become even more critical when secondary welfare systems such as the community, government and non-governmental organisations have become ineffective because of fragmentation, lack of the requisite resources and while others have been duplicated by various actors (Minuchin, 2007).

In spite of this predicament, it is reassuring to note that people have always found ways of recreating and regenerating families as the basis for their survival and success (Guerreiro & Twesigye, 2021). Reawakening the family spirit and organising new family arrangements not only underpin the need to sustain their protective roles but also underlie the inherent strengths and resilience of the family and her members to enable them to cope with adversity. On the one hand, the strengths-based perspective in the context of social work provides a bold position to consider individuals, families, groups and communities from a position of their strengths rather than deficits. It underscores the value of searching and capitalising on clients’ talents, possibilities, visions, values, hopes even though they may have been weakened or damaged by such circumstances as oppression and trauma (Saleebey, 1996). By reframing families as capable actors rather than victims, the strengths perspective highlights how they actively co-produce solutions either within their own networks and contexts, or with welfare services, turning challenges into opportunities for growth and contribution. According to Saleebey, upholding the strengths perspective is a courageous and diligent consideration by social workers that necessitates having a belief in the clients’ capacity to correct themselves and overcome misfortunes, adversity and giving them hope for positive outcomes. On the other hand, resilience has been viewed by many authors as either an outcome or a process. As an outcome, resilience represents a phenomenon that occurs when an individual experiences a relatively good outcome despite suffering considerable risks ordinarily lead to poor outcomes. While as a process, it is construed as “a dynamic adaptation within the context of adversity” (Luther & Cicchetti, 2000), or “normal development under difficult conditions” (Fonagy et al., 1994). The resilient approach examines and analyses how families draw on

internal capacities to confront and overcome adversities. The resilience perspective suggests that clients — such as individuals and families — possess protective factors, including a good sense of humour, a positive outlook on life, talents valued by both self and society, an organised home environment, authoritative parenting, and parents' post-secondary education, which can serve as springboards to resilience (Doty, 2010).

On the basis of family strengths and resilience, members can be enabled to undertake community initiatives such as peace-building that in turn nurture the family wellbeing. The multiplicity of the family wellness now extends and is multiplied and shared with members of the community and society. In circumstances where the primary families are unable to offer the usual nurturing and protective roles, the children and youths have applied the family template to cocreate familial relations to manage adverse situations, including ill-health, poverty and conflict. This co-creation not only empathises the enduring role of the family but also calls for a restoration of the functional family system.

In this publication, we reaffirm the centrality of the family systems orientation and agree with Minuchin et al.'s (2007) view that as the world becomes increasingly more complex, there is a need for better tools to support families, children and youth to cope more effectively with the attendant challenges and adversities. The current book suggests a new approach to responding effectively to adversity experienced by families, children and youth.

This volume is organised in three parts. The first part covers five chapters on the strengths, and resilience among the families, children and youth in the context of adversity. In the first chapter, Angela Markogiannaki examines children's understanding and experiences in exercising their right to participate in decisions affecting them as a form of citizenship, and an act of empowerment in Portugal. Drawing on the Theatre Forum methodology, the author also emphasizes the importance of co-learning between children and adults, the promotion of dialogue, and the development of skills that foster critical thinking, as key findings of her research. In the second chapter, Kris Hartmann, explores opportunities and challenges for Acholi youth regarding participation in peacebuilding activities, in post conflict northern Uganda. Through a qualitative methodological approach, the author conducted interviews with different actors, and the results of the study reveal a set of constraints on young people's participation in peacebuilding, despite the gradual positive change that has been taking place. Hartmann suggests the importance for the Ugandan government to create more opportunities for these young people and highlights the need of their economic empowerment, not only as more effective protagonists in the peacebuilding process but also for the country's development. Billal Hosen examines how street-connected girls harness social support in their social relations to cope with reproductive health problems they faced in Dhaka city, Bangladesh in chapter three. Through interviews conducted with these young women as well as with service providers, the research made it possible to identify the range of health problems to which they are exposed and the limitations of the support currently provided by NGOs, which falls well short of the young people's actual needs. From the author's perspective, it would be important for

health and social service professionals to adopt greater flexibility and to consider developing a policy targeted at these street children and young people, capable of addressing the multiple problems and risks they face. In chapter four, Anna Richardson explores the understandings of resilience processes for impoverished children and young people in urban Uganda. Making use of a mixed methods approach her research shows that the resilience processes of the population studied were closely associated with individual and contextual-level factors. Religious beliefs, personal behaviours, and the support received from the environments in which these children and young people are embedded represent specific circumstances that foster resilience and enhance their capacity to overcome the adversities they experience in their lives. This is followed by Brian Bag-ao who in chapter five, looks at family's enduring capacity to remain integrated upon reunification of Filipina immigrant single mothers with their children in Norway. Through the interviews conducted with a convenience sample, the author was able to ascertain the existence of a bi-cultural lifestyle characterized by adaptive and sharing-oriented parenting strategies, in which families are concerned with their children's adjustment to the context of Norwegian society. These parental situations appear to be facilitated by the families' financial circumstances, particularly the child allowances provided by the Norwegian social welfare.

The second part covers four chapters on parenting and gender experiences in the context of immigration. In chapter six, Anastasia Korolius examines the integration of Russian immigrant mothers and how such integration influences their parenting practices in Portugal. The author identifies a diversity of parenting styles, some more authoritative and others more permissive, depending on the children's ages and, to some extent, adapted to the socio-cultural contexts in which these immigrant mothers live within Portuguese society. Raquel Arias in chapter seven covers the experiences of mothering among Romanian immigrant mothers in the context of the Norwegian child welfare services. With her ethnographic research and narrative approach, the author captures the tensions that permeate immigrant mothers' perceptions, situated between their own understandings of motherhood and child protection and their awareness of the normative framework governing these issues in the host society. In the chapter eight Jayanti Karki, examines how unaccompanied minors and youths built social networks and factors that affected forming of the social networks in Sweden. She also examines the role of social networks in the integration of the unaccompanied minors and youths in Sweden. Through her research with young people living in residences for unaccompanied minors, the author observes these young people's capacity for agency and, in the absence of family ties, the importance of their social networks, established primarily with people from countries with similar cultural backgrounds. Chapter nine is presented by Sanjeev Dahal who examines changing perceptions and practices of gender among immigrant Nepalese men in Portugal. Participant observation conducted with Nepalese couples residing in Portugal made it possible to observe that staying in the host country has enabled these immigrants to become aware of the existence of contrasting perspectives on gender social relations in Portuguese and Nepalese society. The study further reveals a diversity of

practices and perceptions about gender associated with different levels of qualifications among Nepalese migrants.

The third and last part covers four chapters on responses of social welfare professionals in the context of adversity. In chapter ten, Lydia Mehrara presents a policy analysis regarding the provision of maternal health services to immigrant women in Norway. She assesses how national and local health policy in Norway address maternal health needs of immigrant women, and discusses challenges associated with the approach to health service provision. This is followed by Isabel Moncada, who in chapter eleven examines the challenges, coping strategies and supports among newly qualified social workers who had recently been employed in child welfare agencies in Sweden. Research conducted by the author highlights issues such as limited practical preparation after graduation to deal with complex cases, excessive bureaucracy, lack of time to manage workloads, and poor communication within organizations as potential causes, among others, of the high turnover among these professionals. In chapter twelve, Kristina Duvnjak delves into the professional caregivers' perceptions, interventions and life plans for vulnerable children in a shelter home in Lisbon, Portugal. Her case study makes it possible to understand the plurality of problems—poverty, alcoholism, violence and mental health issues—experienced by the families of origin of these children, deeply affecting many of them and shaping their developmental trajectories. In chapter thirteen, and also the last, Lindsay Coutts examines how social workers perceive and respond to economic abuse as a form of intimate partner violence against women in Västra Götaland County, Sweden. Her study shows that social workers have a clear understanding of economic abuse as a form of violence against women in intimate relationships. It highlights how, in many situations, women victims normalize the violence they experience due to ethno-cultural factors, and it recognizes the important role played by social workers in supporting these women.

In summary, the thirteen chapters and research on which they are based make a vital contribution to the family policy and social work literature on the strengths, resilience, contexts and responses of families, children and youth as well as their social welfare workers. The implications for social work and policy practice are identified and discussed.

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Part I | Strengths among children, youth and families in adverse situations

Chapter 1

Children's perceptions of participation

A case of forum theatre in Lisbon, Portugal

*Angela Markogiannaki*¹

Abstract: Over the recent years, there has been increased acceptance that eliciting and amplifying voices of children are of great importance to social work practice. There is extensive literature on benefits of child participation, which include strengthening personal and social development and promoting democratic governance. However, child participation has not reached its true and desired potential. Adults should be aware of their responsibilities and what children think regarding participation in tackling issues of concern. This study was conducted based on an experimental Forum Theater method; it aimed at eliciting views regarding children's understanding and experiences in exercising their right to participate in decisions affecting them. Overall, 12 children aged 6-12 participated in three Forum Theatre workshops that resulted in a Forum Theater play that was presented to three different audiences. Content data analysis was conducted. Children's views and the underlying emancipatory processes they go through were gleaned from the data. Findings add to previous literature demonstrating that children are capable of understanding and exercising participation as a right, a form of citizenship, and an act of empowerment. They also suggest the need to create safe places where children can be encouraged to reflect and be empowered to take action for change. Co-learning between children and adults, which promotes dialogue, awareness and skills that lead to critical consciousness, should be emphasized.

Introduction

There is growing acknowledgement that children and young people should be more involved in decision-making on matters that affect them (Kirby et al, 2003). Benefits attributed to involvement of children in decision-making include strengthening personal and social development, which are aspects of a democratic society (Checkoway, 2011). However, there is extensive literature on what is seen as limitations that hinder participation of children in decision-making on matters that affect them (Freeman, 2007; Therborn, 1996; Vandenbroeck & Bouverne-De Bie, 2006 in Reynaert et al, 2009). Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) considers age and capabilities of children as important in assessing their views. Even though these concepts are of great importance and should be taken into consideration, they should only

1 Erasmus Mundus MFamily Master Programme, 2nd edition, E-mail: angie.markog@gmail.com

affect the way that the child participates rather than the participation because if children are not involved, they could have major consequences on their self-belief and their ability to cope with stress and solve problems in their personal lives (Zimmerman, 1990). Furthermore, cultivating the sense of citizenship in the children from a young age reflects on them as responsible citizens and as adults. Moreover, not investing in education and emotional wellbeing of children could lead to negative consequences for all societal members (Esping-Andersen, 2009).

To ensure meaningful participation of children in decisions affecting their lives and being heard, Zimmerman (2000) stated that there was a need for children and adults to co-learn from each other. Co-learning would facilitate engaging in a critical dialogue, being aware and gaining skills that promote critical consciousness. In order to facilitate this co-learning experience, it is essential to have feedback from children themselves on how they experience exercising this right, if they are in fact conscious of it and what kind of limitations they are facing. Therefore, this study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the perceptions of children belonging to families of low socio-economic status that originate from African ex-colonies of Portugal regarding participation in decision-making on matters of concern?
2. How can such children's participation regarding decision-making on matters of concern be improved?

Literature review

Participation is a multi-layered concept, with the same term often used to describe very different processes (Kirby et al, 2003). Child participation means that children are able to make and express their opinions and at the same time contribute to solving problems they face. Child participation is related to the child's role in society and citizenship; it is not only a matter of expressing a child's opinion but also being able to influence positively the environment (Padilla & Rivera- Holguin, 2015 in Cussianovich, 2009). Hart (1992) defines participation as a process of sharing decisions which affect one's life and the life of the community in which one lives. It is the means by which democracy is built and it is a standard against which democracies should be measured (Malone & Hartung, 2010). At this point, it is important to clarify that participation does not mean self-determination. Self-determination is taking responsibility for decisions made, while participation is a matter of being involved in the decision-making process (Lansdown, 1995). The most dominant definitions of child participation in the existing literature refer to it in terms of rights, empowerment and citizenship.

Child participation as a right

Rights do suggest basic needs and the necessity to meet these especially for children in poverty, living in war zones or countries affected by environmental

problems (Alderson, 2008). Yet, a child's right to participation is as important as the basic needs no matter the context. The discourse on children's participation appeared in the preparation of the CRC where many nations had reservations about the participation articles in this convention and have since had difficulties realizing them (Smith & Lødrup 2004; Verhellen & Weyts, 2003; Sandberg, 2003 cited in Skivenes, & Strandbu, 2006). More specifically, Article 12 no. 1 of the CRC states: "*States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.*"

Therefore, children should have the necessary information about their options and consequences related to these options so that they can make informed and free decisions (Checkoway, 2011). Having said this, the first and foremost step is to acknowledge child participation as a fundamental human right, as important as any other, that children are entitled to and should be able to exercise it effectively.

Child participation as an active process of empowering children in decisions affecting their lives

Participation is seen as an act; the action of participating in decisions, speaking and generally taking active part in the community. But participation is also linked to the internal process of feeling capable to act and thinking in a critical manner about the ways to practice the right. By participating, children understand that it is possible for them to make a difference (Lansdown, 2011). When children are denied participation, it is unlikely that they can see themselves as moral persons able to shape their environments (Covell et al, 2008).

There are three interconnected dimensions of empowerment, namely (1) the development of a more positive sense of self; (2) the construction of knowledge and capacity for more critical comprehension of social and political realities of one's environment; and (3) the cultivation of resources and strategies, or more functional competences, for attainment of personal and collective goals, or liberation'. Therefore, individuals, groups or communities should be critically conscious and have knowledge of the oppression they experience which leads to power and the ability to take control of their situations (Lee, 1996 in Teater, 2014).

Participation as citizenship

There is an ongoing debate regarding whether children can be seen as active citizens or passive citizens. Because they are amongst the most vulnerable members of society, they are often denied basic civil rights (Cloke & Davies, 1995). However, from adolescence, children are suddenly expected to behave in a socially involved manner, to be independent and responsible (Jans, 2004). According to Delanty (2000) cited in Jans (2004), one or more of the following four elements defines citizenship: (i) citizenship as a whole of rights, (ii) citizenship as a whole of responsibilities (iii) citizenship as identity, and (iv) citizenship as participation.

Humans are social creatures whose practices are social activities. Children actually participate in society; they have the status of citizens, if we look at citizenship as participation and involvement (Jans, 2004). Childhood and living conditions of children are fundamentally influenced by the same economic, political and social powers that constitute the context of adults. The latter determine living conditions of children as well and the social construction of childhood (Jans, 2004). The participation and involvement approach especially offers the opportunity for the design of children-sized citizenship. In former days, citizenship used to be a static given and the final destination of childhood (Kirby et al, 2003). Nonetheless, the actual experience of participating in an early age will shape citizenship they show as adults.

The question should not be if children should be regarded as active citizens, but rather how citizenship can be adapted to children. It is interesting to look at how this social involvement can be seen together with other abilities children have, as a basis for actual citizenship and not only as a basis for future citizenship (Jans, 2004). Children who are taught about their rights and responsibilities in a place where these rights are respected by allowing meaningful participation are children who display morally and socially responsible behavior and feel empowered to act (Howe & Covell, 2007 in Covell et al, 2008).

Theoretical framework

This study adopted social constructivism, pedagogy of the oppressed and empowerment theories as its theoretical framework.

Social constructivism

Social constructivism was chosen in an attempt to look at how normalized concepts in individuals limit change and how it is difficult to involve young people when they do not see themselves as a group that can create change (Checkoway, 2011). This theory also presents how ideas such as vulnerability in childhood derive from historical attitudes and presumptions and are a social and political construct, not an inherent or inevitable consequence of childhood itself (Lansdown, 1995).

Social constructivism looks at how individuals create knowledge, make sense of the world around them, and construct reality and a view of themselves and what they see, feel and believe to be real (Teater, 2014). The thought around knowledge development was initiated by philosophers such as Kant, Friedrich Nietzsche and Karl Marx, and psychologists Lev Vygotsky, Jean Piaget and George Kelly but the basic theory was presented by Berger and Luckmann (1991) that aimed at answering the question of how subjective meaning becomes a social fact.

Teater (2014) states that historical and cultural environments have a critical influence on how an individual interprets an experience and how experience shapes the individual's reality. Through social interchange within a culture or

subculture, knowledge and meanings are created, influenced and sustained by the various institutions within that culture. Therefore, the environment, culture and subculture of individuals influence how they view the world and process experiences. Individuals function and behave according to their beliefs and value systems and therefore, interpret the world through this lens.

Berger and Luckmann (1991) explain how human 'knowledge' is developed, transmitted and maintained in social situations and how sociology of knowledge is used to analyze the social construction of reality. Berger and Luckmann ask how notions on concepts such as freedom or childhood in our case have come to be acknowledged without questioning them and how their 'reality' is maintained in society. This theory looks at the general ways that realities are taken as 'known' in human societies and the processes by which any body of knowledge comes to be socially established as reality. Berger and Luckmann (1991) strive to answer how subjective meanings become objective facts.

Pedagogy of the oppressed

An alternative to the way reality is constructed can be sought in Freire's work. Freire (1970) argues that knowledge construction can be achieved in a more authentic way while generating meaning and social action. Freire (1970, 1973) speaks of the normalization of poverty and inequality and the internalization of oppression but suggests a pedagogy where the oppressed reflect on their oppression which leads to the necessary engagement in the struggle for their liberation.

Freire's primary concern was the contradictions he found in the social world; he identified two key opposing groups: the oppressors and the oppressed (Roberts, 2015). He provided an alternative ideology of integration of one's context rather than adaptation. Integration is a consequence of one's capacity to adapt to reality adding critical capacity to make choices and to transform the reality. Freire argued that "knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other" (Freire 1970 cited in Lilyea, 2015). Sewpaul and Ntini (2015) refer to Freire (1970) when they speak of emancipation to free ourselves from historical, cultural and political domination; to connect with ourselves and with others; to examine continuously our common sense, taken for granted assumptions and the world around us and in this way, and to be liberated from the constraints of society.

Empowerment theory

Teater (2014) stated that there is a distinction between theory and method when talking about empowerment. As a theory, it sees individuals as holders of power and control over their lives in the sense that they are in reach of the resources to cover their needs and rights and are free to develop. It also predicts, explains or

hypothesizes a behavior or a situation. The method of empowerment provides techniques, steps, or actions such as use of language and political advocacy, that can be used towards a goal of the individual being empowered and fostering change. Zimmerman (2000) explained empowerment in terms of process and outcome; the theory states that actions or steps may be empowering and outcomes are the result of being empowered.

The empowerment process is a collaborative process where the oppressed self-define their problems and actively engage in interventions to acknowledge and combat oppression (Lee, 1996 in Teater 2014). What this study aims to do is to use both an empowerment theory that sees children as holders of power but also apply an empowerment method where children are free to reflect and define their own oppression, that is, the start to their liberation process. Teater (2014) states: "Empowerment-based approaches are anti-oppressive in nature." According to Perkins and Zimmerman (1995), the basic components of empowerment are participating with others to achieve goals, helping to gain access to resources and having a critical understanding of the sociopolitical environment.

Methodology

A participatory action research design and a qualitative approach were adopted for this study. Data were collected using an experimental Forum Theatre project through which children had the opportunity to reflect on their experiences of participation and express their associated views.

Theatre of the Oppressed

Theatre of the Oppressed is a method that strives by using artistic productions, promotion of social dialogue and concrete social actions to transform reality (Santos, 2016). This type of theatre is a learning process, not a spectacle that fosters critical thinking following Paulo Freire's approach to liberatory education; an aesthetic education that promotes a transformative model of learning based on dialogue (Picher, 2007). Augusto Boal, influenced by the work of Paulo Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed, departs from the belief that dialogue is the common, healthy dynamic between all humans; when dialogue becomes a monologue, oppression starts (Boal, 2000). Participatory, improvisational and dramatic forms are used to examine critically power relationships and explore how humans oppress each other in physical and psychological ways while empowering participants to liberate themselves and others (Boal, 1995, 1998 in Saldaña, 2005).

Forum Theatre is one of the methods of Theatre of the Oppressed and is used in this study. It is understood as an emancipatory process of consciousness raising and as a process of problem solving. This process is both aesthetic and social; it follows phases, which result in development of a Forum Theatre Play. In this play (or scene), some kind of oppression is indicated and is shown twice. During the replay,

any member of the audience ('spect-actor') is allowed to shout 'Stop!' and step forward to take the place of the oppressed character, showing how they could change the situation to enable a different outcome. Several alternatives may be explored by different spect-actors. The other actors remain in character, improvising their responses. A facilitator (Joker) is necessary to enable communication between the players and the audience. The key lies in turning individual, subjective experiences into theatre and reflecting on them with the help of theatrical methods. It focuses first and foremost on (re)presenting, analyzing and changing power relations, from the point of view of people who are 'powerless' (Wrentschur & Moser, 2014). By raising awareness of the oppression, people are led to liberation. Forum Theatre is based on two fundamental principles: "to help the spec-actor transform himself into a protagonist of the dramatic action and rehearse alternatives for this situation so that he or she may then be able to extrapolate into his or her real life the actions he has rehearsed in the practice of theatre" (Boal, 1995, p. 40 in Rae, 2013). Through the process of externalization, Forum Theatre helps individuals to step out of their own reality and to assess their situation clearer and from a more distant standpoint that creates a safe space where concerns can be approached indirectly (Nunes, 2014).

Forum Theatre as a tool for data collection

Forum Theatre (FT) was chosen as the data collection tool in this study in an attempt to encourage meaningful participation of children involved. According to Hammond (2013), FT is a way of working creatively to elicit and advocate the voice of children and young people.

In addition, when choosing this tool, the fact that all children can participate in issues that affect them, provided that they are given appropriate support and adequate information, to express themselves in any way that is meaningful to them — pictures, poems, drama, photographs, (Lansdown, 2011), was taken into consideration. Moreover, as mentioned earlier, the theory behind Forum Theatre is that of participation, dialogue and empowerment, which combine processes such as gaining understanding and awareness, rising with the search for change in one's individual, social and political real life, which is one of the objectives of this study.

Finally, FT was chosen considering Hammond's (2015) view that this method can be adapted to age and language limitations by offering alternative means of communication; it emphasizes the meaning of play as it is through play that children express their curiosity and actively give meaning to their environment. Lastly, it recognizes observation as an active form of participation and points out that not all children participate in the same way and also that a big part of a right is the right to decide whether to exercise it or not (Hammond, 2015).

Study population

Twelve children from a neighborhood of the eastern part of Cascais, Lisbon, Portugal, participated in this study. The age range was 6-12, a rather wide range but intentional to be able to understand different experiences. The study was carried out in a didactic play center where three workshops and three performances took place. Access to these children was granted by collaborating with a Portuguese NGO called GTO-LX that had already permission for running FT activities in the specific center and supported the researcher in the implementation of the project. Participants were children that belonged to families of low socio-economic status that originated from African ex-colonies such as Cape Verde and Guinea Bissau.

Data collection

Observation and semi-structured interviews were the primary methods of data collection used in this study. The concepts observed were derived from themes that came from the literature review. With this, an observation sheet was drawn up to carefully evaluate children's responses to the theme in question as well as their views on their participation in everyday life practice. Descriptive field notes and journal reflections were kept for further analysis. After being granted permission, all workshops and performances were video-recorded to facilitate capturing detail and rich data. Observations focused on experiences of the workshops and performances and interactions between participants. The workshops lasted approximately 2 hours each and were done in three consecutive days during the Easter Holidays when children were on vacation as one of the leisure activities offered by the didactic play center. These three workshops led to the development of a scene that was then presented. The presentation was done through three performances that took place the day after the last workshop to other children attending different activities offered by the didactic play center and then two more during the two weeks following Easter; one outside for the other children of the neighborhood and one at a local school. Each performance lasted between 1 and 1.5 hours and among all three audiences were also adults either working at the center and the school or caregivers of the children. The observations were supplemented by 6 semi structured interviews that were audio-taped and transcribed. Children selected for the interviews belonged to quieter members of the group in an attempt to give them a different option of expressing themselves and the questions were based on the themes that emerged in the workshop performances. The interviews were conducted in the week later and the last evaluation session was held the following week. In total, the whole project lasted a month.

Data analysis

Deductive content analysis of the data was conducted. For each of the research questions, an unconstrained categorization matrix was developed partly from the literature review and partly from the data collected. The data was coded according to the categories and In Vivo coding was used to preserve the meaning given by the participants, something essential when looking at children's views. An observation sheet was drawn up in accordance with the categories mentioned. The analysis was done by repeatedly reading the field notes and carefully re-consulting the video recordings and the transcriptions of the interviews, which enabled comparisons to be made.

Findings and discussion

To give context to the findings, a brief description of the workshops, performances and interviews is provided below.

Workshops

During the first workshop, the facilitator and children attending discussed the concept of rights and it took some time for the children to realize that participation was also one of them. They could recognize education, food and shelter as rights but when a child stated having a phone as a right, the facilitator took the opportunity to clarify that having a phone was not a right but negotiating to get one was. In the next two workshops, when asked to act out a scene showing an example of them not being allowed to exercise their right to participate, they found it difficult to include referring to the right itself. For this reason, the facilitator gave them Article 12 the CRC in writing. It was interesting how in the beginning they memorized it but eventually they managed to incorporate it in practice.

Performances

The workshops led to a scene that was presented in three different performances. Each performance was different because the group acting was influenced by the spect-actors' comments and suggestions which lead them to a deeper understanding of their voice and their power each time. In the first performance, the main scene showed "a girl" who wanted to go surfing but not being allowed by her "father" without enough explanation. This resulted in her frustration which led to her breaking her tablet and then trying to avoid punishment. The focus from the acting group and spect-actors was how to avoid the punishment like hiding the broken tablet or hiding from the "parent". They also showed full understanding that the girl had done something wrong and that "the father" had every right to punish her because it was very expensive. What stood out was a boy from the audience who mentioned that he would probably get yelled at or even perhaps beaten if he had

done something like that. He also said that he could do nothing to avoid it; therefore, he would not even try to run away. In the second performance, the scene was presented by the acting children in a way that encouraged the audience to look at as the “breaking of the tablet” would bring any solution to the problem. They proceeded to demonstrate other ways of expressing “the girls” frustration by either getting angry and demanding to know why she could not go surfing and then breaking the tablet or going anyway but hiding it from “the parents”. Children in the audience identified that the solutions were not very effective and looked at ways to negotiate a mild punishment, for example, apologizing or mentioning that they had fulfilled their responsibilities like doing chores and studying so they had “earned” the right to go surfing or play. They also tried out different ways of asking why they were not allowed to do what they wanted by using family members or having older friends talk to the “parents”. Immediately, a change is identified in both groups of children actors and spect-actors: asking why, expressing themselves to their parents and thinking of solutions instead of simply feeling frustrated about something they felt was unfair. In the final performance, it was clear that the group had had the time and space to reflect on the previous workshops and performances and presented the same scene. This time, there was no action worth the punishment: the “the girl” tries to speak with the “father” who is watching TV without paying attention by asking him to switch off the TV and look at her. The spect-actors showed that they related to this scene. They had experienced it in their everyday lives, and tried to get the “father’s” attention and asked for reasons she was not allowed to go surfing.

Interviews

During the six semi-structured interviews, children had more time to describe their experiences regarding participation in making decisions on matters that affected them. The questions were about whether what was being acted out during the Forum Theatre plays was something that happens, why they thought this was and what could be done to change it. All the children agreed with what had been presented in the performances saying that they themselves had been in similar situations or had heard of friends who had, and agreed with many of the suggestions made by the spect-actors such as doing chores to earn their right to do things they liked or having older friends or siblings speak to their parents on their behalf. They also explained how adults do not have the time or the patience to listen to them. One of the youngest members of the acting group that was interviewed gave an example of when she tries to talk to her mum and she is busy, the mum covers her ears.

Discussion

The findings discussed below answer the study questions beginning with question number one.

What are children's perceptions regarding participation?

Findings are discussed based on literature that portrays participation as a right; a sense and process of empowerment; and as a form of citizenship. All 12 children involved in the study understood the concept of participation as a right. Considering participation as a sense and an action of empowerment, it was interesting to see how in the beginning they seemed to be more passive when it came to their willingness to participate in matters concerning them and how this changed during the workshops and performances. Finally, the children demonstrated clear signs of understanding participation as a form of citizenship and the responsibilities that come along with it.

"Participation is our right" (An 8-year old child from acting group-8)

The children were able to understand the concept of rights as a whole as well as the specific right of participation but for this, they needed to be encouraged to reflect first. Reflecting on the concept was achieved through a process that was facilitated through several games and activities that aimed at encouraging critical thinking. The finding that children can understand difficult concepts but might need help in reflecting to reach a full understanding, Covell et al (2008) argue that children even as young as three years old have the capacity to understand difficult concepts such as rights, but have problems with demonstrating this capacity spontaneously. Another interesting finding was that children in the study gave examples of their participation in their homes where they negotiated their right to play or different punishments, advocated by Alderson (2010). Alderson explains that exercise of the right to participation starts in the less-observed private world of the family. The importance of children in identifying their oppression in the context of the family is significant because it is the first experience with standing up for one's rights and may define how participating later on in life will go for them as well (Lansdown, 2005).

"I don't even run anymore" (Young boy spect-actor)

It was very clear, especially from the children in the audiences that had not been in the workshops and thus were presented with this subject and reacted to it spontaneously, how deep and internalized their oppression was with regard to participation. Many children in the audience when asked by the facilitator if they had experienced or heard of friends experiencing similar situations; not being allowed to go play with very little explanation, confirmed this to be the rule of thumb. Similarly, Lansdown (2005) explains that children are usually not encouraged to ask questions but to do as they are told. Even though they found many of their parents' decisions unfair, they accepted that was how it would be without questioning at all or trying to negotiate. They believed that it was something they had done that caused them to be deprived of play. However, it was soon evident that their empowerment was connected to the information they received. Freire (1970) states that empowerment is giving information which leads to the development of

critical consciousness. It was necessary to liberate children from the acting group as well as children in the audiences from the notion that ineffectiveness of their participation was their fault. Confronting and acknowledging the influence of external systems on our thinking is the first step toward understanding and undoing oppression (Sewpaul & Ntini, 2015). As their understanding of their right grew with the sharing of Article 12, so did their empowerment, something that was confirmed by the question “why” being asked more frequently. Actually, their empowerment was seen mostly in the change of mindset, the biggest evidence of which was the difference in the scenes they presented at the beginning and at the end of the project. There was a shift in focus from how to deal with the result of their oppression-being punished for “breaking the tablet” to how to avoid the “breaking of the tablet” altogether through dialogue.

“Children have rights but also responsibilities” (Young girl actor)

Children from both the acting group as well as the audience expressed understanding how upset “the father” must have been when “the girl” broke the tablet explaining that the tablet was an expensive item. This way, they showed their capability of taking other people’s perspectives and understanding the value of money. Hart (1992) explains that this ability of taking the perspective of other people is at the core of true participation. It was also evident from observing children during the workshops when they were left to assign roles and to form the scene they would be presenting that they were able to work through democratic processes. All these findings are about citizenship and stress the need to see and value children as people now; people that have views that should be listened to as they are significant contributions with regard to what children need. Lansdown (2005) stated that learning that they will have their views taken seriously will lead to children understanding that other people’s views must also be listened to and respected, giving children the opportunity to understand the reciprocal and mutual responsibilities that arise with rights. Citizenship as a form of participation is described in the literature as one of the elements that actually defines citizenship as presented by Delanty 2000 in Jans 2004. To this Jans (2004), adds that active citizenship today has become a learning process in itself for both children and adults.

How can child participation be improved?

In answering the second research question, it was made clear that in order to achieve effective ways of participation by children, it is essential that adults ensure that children are in fact learning and processing the information, not only memorizing it. Participation needs to be worked on in a safe space using appropriate tools and allowing each child to go at his or her own pace. Finally, the power relations between children and adults also stood out in hindering meaningful child participation.

Understanding the concept of participation

During the workshops, children were asked to incorporate Article 12 of the CRC in their scene. It was given to them in writing and they memorized it. This shows that children are used to learning through a rather passive way, which is not effective. Even though this can be attributed to the general educational system that mostly relies on non-critical traditional methods, such as rote teaching (Print, 2007 in Covell et al, 2008); nevertheless, this finding gives a different perspective and makes one wonder which steps are taken when encouraging children to participate. The children participating in the workshops and the children in the audiences of all three performances were asked if they knew exactly what the right to participate was. They answered in the affirmative; however, many of them had not understood it. In addition, the first reaction of the children to memorize Article 12 of the CRC in an attempt to work with it strongly implies that a step in reaching effective participation among children is being skipped. There is an assumption that sharing information with children is enough to lead them to use it. What is missing is helping children to value this right which leads to motivation in using it. By skipping this step, children are participants of a passive experience in which they are simply expected to retain information imparted by knowledgeable adults instead of becoming active learners that take ownership of their learning (Freire, 1993 in Hammond 2015). It is one thing to know something and another thing to actually understand its impact and its importance. When teaching children about their right to participate and being heard, we expect a direct leap from knowledge to action. However, when this “knowledge” is memorized or socially constructed and taken for granted without questioning (Berger & Luckmann, 1991), it is impossible to have meaningful participation. With the realization of the value and the power of the right comes also the motivation for action which is essential in change.

However, we learn through socially constructing our reality.

We need to go from this:

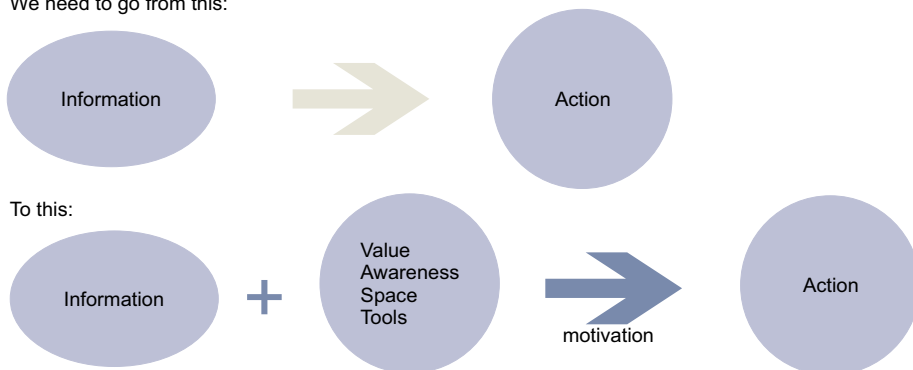


Figure 1.1 From Information to Action
Author's illustration.

Space/ time/tools

Comparing the first workshop to the last and looking at the three performances, the evolution in the children's understanding of participation showed how children need time and space to reflect and realize the value of their right and tools in order to exercise this right more efficiently. The fact that it took many activities, workshops and a facilitator asking questions throughout the workshops and performances shows how child participation is not a matter of action-reaction, but a process that is unique depending on each individual; it requires space, time and tools to be effective. This is why FT proves to be a perfect example of the "space" factor. As Boal explains, by acting out the alternatives that come up in the theatre, they serve as a rehearsal that may be extrapolated in real life (Boal, 1995, p. 40 in Rae, 2013). In this space, ways such as dialogue, praxis and critical consciousness (Freire, 1970) are shared with the children. They have the opportunity to actually try out how to use them.

In the workshops, the right to participation was discussed thoroughly. However, to turn this information into motivation and action, the children needed the opportunity to practice. This implies that in order to realize effective child participation, their environment should also be supportive, that is, to reach meaningful child participation it is essential that children consider the home and school as safe spaces to do so. Lee (1996) in Teater (2014) describes oppression as a structurally-based phenomenon often embedded in the individuals' cultural and societal norms, values and structures and thus is normalized. It requires a focus on the individual and their environment at the same time. The objective from this study was to give the space to children participating in the workshops and performances to practice their right and then take this competency into their environment and show what they need to the adults in their lives. For example, what they do when it comes to IT devices (Lansdown, 2011), by sharing their knowledge on effective participation, thus influencing transformation in their environment.

Child participation and adults

Finally, even though this study focuses on children's perspectives, it should be acknowledged that adults were a part of this study because they were guided on effective child participation. The project was adult-initiated and the facilitator was also an adult but the researcher who remained an observer throughout the project. Based on the principles of FT, the facilitator was aware of the way to act. However, there is a need to understand that participation is a function of power that should be recognized by adults in order to talk about effective child participation. Adults' resistance is often at the root of this issue. Adding to this is an ongoing lack of capacity among adults and children to promote and support children's participation, due to the wide range of skills and experience it requires (Malone & Hartung, 2010). It was also interesting to get the views from the adults in the audiences who said that they were not aware that children thought this way or that they felt

oppressed. "An additional benefit of child participation is the increased adults' awareness of children's needs, opinions and wishes" (Kränzl-Nagl and Zartler, 2010). This shows how adults should become more aware of the children's wishes and needs and to realize the impact their actions and words have on children, something that was seen in responses of the 6-year-old girl's interview who said that her mother was usually busy when she wanted to talk with her. In other words, Article 12 imposes an obligation on adults, in their capacity as parents, professionals and politicians, to ensure that children are enabled and encouraged to share their views and participate in the decisions made. For change to occur, what is needed is the realization of the power or impact that our actions or words have and providing space and continuous education with tools on how to exercise it more effectively. As mentioned by Freire (1970), it is the co-learning between youth, children and adults that can facilitate critical dialogue, awareness and skills that lead to change.

Conclusion

This study assessed child participation from a child's perspective and put light on some key issues that came up concerning its effectiveness. Even though children involved in the study showed a favorable response to the participatory tool of Forum Theatre which led to a more in-depth realization of their right to participate in matters affecting them and the strength of their own voice, it is still only a small step toward more meaningful participation for children. Steps are important but in order to reach effective child participation, it is not enough to focus on how children understand and respond to these concepts. Attention should be paid to their environment, including helping adults to change mindset to actually allow children to participate more. For effective child participation to become possible and not idealistic, it is adults that should assume their responsibility and allow children the space, time and tools to express their views. Instead of waiting for children to grow up or reach the appropriate development stage to be heard, there is a need for adults to meet the children half way by collaborating with them and acknowledging that different forms of expression may correspond to different ages and stages, which deserve due attention.

In order for every child to be able to share his or her views no matter the age, it is the duty of adults, especially professionals to participate by encouraging children and assisting them to express their views in every context: at home, school, health services, courts, etc. Thus, the importance of the role of professionals in each of these contexts should be recognized. Social workers can play an active role because they work with community members, especially those who are marginalized. As seen in this study, using art creates a powerful learning space and by combining the tools of art and academics, community building is promoted (Lilyea, 2015). With regard to Forum Theatre, social workers can learn a lot because it is an exemplar method that is needed to re-focus services into a reality (Houston, 2001). With social work changing from using the problem-solving approach to

strengths perspective, FT is one of the tools social workers should be equipped with because it facilitates getting closer to the lifeworld of disadvantaged communities. It also facilitates building partnership between professionals and vulnerable groups in producing knowledge, something that is necessary especially when empowering children and raising awareness regarding their participation in decision making on matters that concern them.

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Chapter 2

Youth participation in peace building in Gulu District, Northern Uganda Opportunities and challenges

Kris Hartmann¹

Abstract: Between 1986 and 2006, one of the most brutal armed conflicts in recent African history affected Northern Uganda. Despite the efforts of the Ugandan government, civil society organisations and development partners to promote recovery in the region, the Acholi youth remain a marginalised group. The overall youth situation remains dire; it is characterised by acute poverty, unemployment, low literacy rates, and political exclusion. Yet, the youth play a pivotal role in building peace; they can either threaten peace, or promote peace and peacebuilding. This chapter presents a qualitative case study that explored opportunities and challenges for Acholi youth regarding participation in peacebuilding activities. The study's definition of participation is based on the UN guiding principles on young people's participation in peacebuilding. Qualitative data were collected using four interviews and four focus group discussions with youth who were engaged in peacebuilding activities in Gulu district. In addition, four key informant interviews with local NGO staff were conducted to complement data collected from the primary participants. Qualitative data were analysed using the thematic analysis method. Findings indicate that opportunities for youths' participation in peace building included increased awareness concerning issues on peace through drama and dialogues about main drivers of conflict. Challenges that undermined their participation in peacebuilding included economic marginalisation and the lack of awareness regarding relevant opportunities. Economic empowerment for the youth and creation of more participation spaces will enhance participation by the youth in peacebuilding in Gulu district.

Keywords: Youth participation; peacebuilding; post-conflict; power; Northern Uganda; Gulu.

Introduction

After 20 years of civil war, Northern Uganda has recently embarked on the path towards recovery. Despite efforts of the Ugandan government, civil society organisations (CSO) and development partners to promote recovery, the Acholi youth remain a marginalised group in society. Combined with the demographic pressure of one of the youngest populations worldwide and compounded by forms of social, economic and political marginalization in the post-war society, Acholi youth are at

1 Erasmus Mundus MFamily Master Programme, 2nd edition, E-mail: krishartmann7@gmail.com

risk of becoming a source of new insurgencies. The youth play a crucial role in peacebuilding; they can either threaten peace, or be the catalyst for peace and peacebuilding (McEvoy-Levy, 2001; UNDP, 2007; Hilker & Fraser, 2009). This chapter analyses opportunities and challenges concerning participation in peacebuilding for the Acholi youth in Gulu district, Northern Uganda. Because social work in post-war settings is particularly constrained by the impact of structural and direct violence on young people (Spitzer & Twikirize, 2014), the chapter will enrich the empirical knowledge base on the Acholi youth and facilitate an understanding of young people's ideas of social cohesion and ways of harnessing their potential for social change.

Uganda was under the British colonial rule from 1888 until 1962 when it gained independence. Many of the subsequent conflicts in postcolonial times are rooted in the British Protectorate arrangement, notably the division of the country along ethnic and regional lines (Vorhölter, 2014). This was illustrated by three main channels supporting ethnic antagonism. First, the colonial rulers divided Uganda into ethnically demarcated areas and favoured collaborators within the state administration. Second, the colonial rule promoted racial theories along differentiation into inferior and superior ethnic groups. Third, the consolidation of economic and educational development in the Southern Uganda while Northern Uganda was favoured to offer military support to the government (Ndikumana & Nannyonjo, 2007). In 1981, Yoweri Museveni and the National Resistance Army took up arms and launched a guerrilla war against Milton Obote's second government. As Museveni seized power in 1986, various rebel groups resisted the government, notably the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). The war between the LRA and the government forces lasted from 1986 to 2006 and was characterized by internal displacement and abduction of thousands of children and young people in Northern Uganda. During the war, both the Ugandan army and the LRA committed profound human rights violations against the local civilians. Thousands of people lost their lives, mostly members of the ethnic Acholi population (Vorhölter, 2014). The resettlement of Acholi people and reintegration of former child combatants were the immediate challenges after the truce agreement in 2006. The traditional Acholi society in pre-war times was characterized by patriarchal, lineage- and clan-based structures and was led by male elderly and spiritual leaders, who dominated youth and women. This leadership had a powerful internal authority in Acholi society (Baines & Gauvin, 2014; Vorhölter, 2014). Moreover, Acholi culture is described as communal, so the unity of the community is more valued than the individual, and based on specific normative rules interpreted by the leadership (Vorhölter, 2014).

Because of the LRA war, displacement of the majority of the Acholi population into camps significantly weakened traditional structures in terms of social, economic, ethical and political spheres (Branch, 2011; Vorhölter, 2014). Impoverishment in various spheres of life caused by the prolonged stay in camps eroded gradually the social norms, values and practices of the Acholi people. It is perceived by many Acholi people that the forced displacement in camps "caused a breakdown of the Acholi culture and particularly their formerly established economic practices, political and social relations, norms and values" (Vorhölter, 2014,

p.22). The final evaluation report of the UN Peacebuilding Fund programmes in Acholiland (2012, p.9-10) identified the realm of peacebuilding corresponding to current conflict dynamics and their drivers, which were attributed to the LRA activities in neighbouring countries. These include land-related issues, the remake of traditional justice systems, gender-based violence, lack of formal employment opportunities, mental illnesses, widespread alcohol abuse, etc.

There is growing international consensus that young people are a decisive element in constructively shaping conflict situations and in preparing the ground for peaceful societies (Del Felice & Wisler, 2007). It is also the affected governments' obligation to enable youth in post-conflict settings to participate in all spheres of development (African Union, 2006; Global Forum on Youth, Peace and Security, 2015). The forms and formats of youth participation differ, but in the post-conflict contexts, youth participation can be defined based on the UN Guiding Principles on Young People's Participation in Peacebuilding (UN-ICYD, 2014). UN-ICYD (2014) proposes four different approaches to defining youth participation, namely (i) a human rights-based approach, (ii) an economic approach, (iii) a socio-political approach, and (iv) a socio-cultural approach. These four approaches to participation in the aftermath of conflict are described as follows:

- (1) A human rights-based approach, grounded in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the World Programme of Action on Youth;
- (2) An economic approach that identifies young people as central to the economic development of their country, and promotes their access to economic opportunities as essential for their own development;
- (3) A socio-political approach that connects young people to civil society and the political arena, and provides them with opportunities, training and support for their active engagement and participation in public life; and
- (4) A sociocultural approach that analyses the roles of young people in existing structures and supports dialogue, including intergenerational dialogue about these structures (UN-ICYD 2014, p.1).

Due to these various benchmarks of youth participation in peacebuilding, youth participation was defined as 'the space for youth to participate in decision-making processes, contribute to decisions, and require accountability'. Cardozo et al. (2015, p.4) reported that economic, socio-political and socio-cultural dimensions in peacebuilding were interlinked, referring to the "inter-connected nature and the distorting effect of identifying or engaging with one dimension independent of the others". McEvoy-Levy (2006) emphasizes the significance of examining how youth perceive issues of conflict, post-conflict and the peaceful future. Accordingly, voices of the youth should be included in peace-related interventions, particularly in programmes and policies focused on peacebuilding. Yet, there is no singular conception of youth; youth have to be understood as a variety of young people's experiences and identities contextualized across their social, economic and political

environments (McEvoy-Levy, 2006; Del Felice & Wisler, 2007; International Youth Foundation, 2011).

In the Ugandan context, a strategic key role of the youth is illustrated by the National Youth Policy (Government of Uganda, 2001), and more specifically by the Peace, Recovery and Development Plan for Northern Uganda (GoU, 2011), which targeted youth employment and reintegration of vulnerable people, as well as overall mitigation of drivers of conflict. The National Development Plan of Uganda 2010/2011-2014/15 (GoU, 2010) in accordance with the National Youth Policy (GoU, 2001) identified entrepreneurship as a key strategy for addressing youth unemployment. As a result, the Ugandan government introduced recently two major youth entrepreneurial schemes. These are the Youth Livelihood Programme (YLP) and the Youth Venture Capital Fund (YVCF).

However, recently published research shows that Northern Ugandan youth remain at the margins of society (International Alert, 2013; Advisory Consortium on Conflict Sensitivity, 2013). The International Youth Foundation (2011) conducted a qualitative study in several districts of Uganda and found that participants communicated an overwhelming sense of being marginalized and manipulated within the political realm; the marginalisation and exclusion was mainly linked to their status as youth. Furthermore, social hierarchies and cultural expectations may also hinder political engagement among the youth (Fincham et al., 2013). A study in Colombia showed that young people were often stigmatized due to violent acts by fellow youth (Berents, 2014). Consequently, stigmatisation erodes the societal bases of young people striving for peace and diminishes the overall opportunity for them to participate in rebuilding in the community. Stigmatization of the youth further solidifies their poor strategic position to alter the challenging environment.

In summary, youth perspectives need to be considered for analysis and development of communities, policies and programmes. Thus, examining youth participation in peacebuilding in post-war Gulu district contributes to a broader understanding of participation of the youth in Uganda.

Study Area and Context

This study was conducted in the rural sub-counties of Awach, Unyama and Paicho in Gulu district, Northern Uganda. The literacy rate in Gulu district was far below the targeted rate at 85% by the National Development Plan in 2013/2014. While the national literacy rate in rural areas averaged at 67%, the literacy rate in Gulu district was 64% (Gulu District Local Government, 2013, p.21). The major source for income in Gulu District was subsistence farming practised in the context of customary land holding (Gulu District Local Government, 2013). Although the poverty level in Northern Uganda had significantly decreased since the end of the war in 2006, it was still the poorest region of Uganda. The national poverty rate was at 19.7%, whereas the poverty rate in Northern Uganda amounted to 43.7% in 2012/13 (GoU, 2014, p.11). A similarly poor picture was exhibited in terms of reproductive

health and health services in Gulu district. Accessibility to health services was poor; over 37% of the population had to move more than five kilometers to reach the next health facility (Gulu District Local Government, 2013, p.60); the major means of transport were bicycles. Due to the history of Northern Uganda characterized by 20 years of war, displacement and resettlement of the majority of the Acholi people, Gulu district was also characterized by a huge presence of CSOs and international organizations.

Methodology

The current study adopted a qualitative approach involving a case study design. This choice was influenced by the need to explore and contextualise youth participation in peacebuilding within the post-conflict setting of Gulu district. The case study design facilitated zooming into the lived experiences of the youth and enabling them to voice their views regarding participation in peacebuilding.

The sample was selected from the Acholi youth who comprised the primary participants in this study. The definition of youth was based on the framework adopted by GWED-G's project, that is, youth were young people aged between 14 and 30 (NUHRP, 2016, p. 6). Selection was done among the youth who were beneficiaries of the GWED-G project that was located in Gulu town and a member of the Northern Uganda Human Rights Partnership (NUHRP)². The NUHRP youth project was one essential component of the Human Rights Capacity-Building Programme (HURICAP) that was initiated by Amnesty International Netherlands (AIN) and implemented in 2011-2015 (Awich & Lubaale, 2016). GWED-G implemented the youth project in Gulu district and had ongoing contact with the youth groups. The sample was drawn from five out of the ten established youth groups. In addition, four members of staff of GWED-G and Agency for Cooperation and Research in Development (ACORD) were recruited as secondary participants. The NGOs were implementing peacebuilding activities in Gulu district. Four semi-structured interviews and four FGDs were conducted with the youth. The selection criteria included being leaders of the youth groups in addition to willingness to participate in the study. Most of youth participants in the study were aged between 20 and 30. This means that most of the participants were born between 1987 and 1996, and hence their childhood and adolescence were heavily affected by the civil war and subsequent displacement of the Acholi people into camps.

A research assistant was employed to assist me with data collection. The research assistant spoke the local language (Acholi) and was familiar with the local culture and context. The collected qualitative data was analysed using the thematic analysis method (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The research followed the ethical

2 For detailed information, visit <https://www.amnesty.nl/media/huricap/to-wards-a-human-rights-culture-in-northern-uganda>

framework suggested by Diener and Crandall (Diener and Crandall, quoted in Bryman, 2012, p. 135), which requires the research to consider the following ethical values: no harm to participants, voluntary participation of participants, informed consent by participants, no invasion of privacy and no deception to participants.

Findings and Discussion

There were different perceptions of youth participation reported by the NGOs' staff and the youth. For the local NGOs' staff who were people in positions of power compared to youth, youth participation in peacebuilding was a much broader concept and related to regional and national peacebuilding mechanisms. For the youth, the reality of participation in peacebuilding was related to their opportunities and challenges within their immediate social environment. For them, peacebuilding had several interpretations, but these were always framed by the following themes: unity of the community, freedom to express oneself, and livelihood generation.

Opportunities for youth participation in peacebuilding in Gulu District, Northern Uganda

The following four themes emerged from the data: provision of counselling and mediation of conflict issues, increased awareness through drama and concerts, active involvement in community work and income-generating activities. Most of the reported peacebuilding activities in which the youth participated were initiated by the youth project of GWED-G. They included training youth in conflict management, creating awareness through drama in the community, running Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs), imparting skills for income-generation, and collaborating with local authorities.

Moreover, the youth in various sub-counties of Gulu district were actively involved in counselling and mediating conflict issues in their communities. These conflicts were mainly attributed to excessive alcohol consumption, land-related disputes and violence in general and gender-based violence in particular. In addition, all the youth who participated in this study had also participated in performing drama and concerts to sensitise people on conflict-related concerns. Consequences of conflict were pitched to alert community members to the dangers of conflict.

What we have done is performing drama in the community and even in the market places. In the drama, we have been showing peace, the benefits of peace and negative effects of violence and conflicts in our community and households (P3, male FGD, Awach).

Many participants stated that creating awareness through performing in drama and mediating various conflicts enabled them to address drivers of conflict and contribute to peacebuilding in the Acholi community.

People have been listening to us because before we started violence was highly prevalent in our community. Men would take alcohol and fight their wives, but when we started sensitizing community members and household members, we saw a reduction in the cases of violence in our community (P1, female FGD, Awach).

The stated drivers of conflict were similarly reported by previous researchers (e.g., UNPF, 2012), and suggest the need for continuous peacebuilding efforts in the Acholi region. In addition, many youth who participated in this study were involved in community work. Such community work contributed to the social peace of the community. Community work comprised voluntary cleaning of communal spaces such as water sources, health centres, or markets, and informing sub-county authorities about broken boreholes or impassable roads. Finally, the youth who participated in this study were also engaged in income-generating activities in the form of VSLAs implemented within the youth project. Hence, they tried to gain livelihood support and influenced the economic dimension of peacebuilding. VSLAs programmes involved a group or community, saving money by depositing their money usually once per week in a common pool. The saved money provided short-term loans with lower interest rates to group members. These interest rates on the borrowed funds and on the accumulated savings assisted the group members and supported them further. A proportion of the saved funds was paid to each member annually (Cameron & Ananga, 2015, p.1028). In general, CSOs supported many different programmes for youth participation in peacebuilding and the youth acknowledged their efforts and perceived them as influential non-state actors.

Peacebuilding activities concerned several ways in which the youth were being engaged to contribute to a peaceful society and to creatively cope with the challenges of living in a post-conflict setting. For example, the youth started self-support initiatives in the economic realm, which included VSLAs and brick-laying groups. Besides, youth in one of the sub-counties of Gulu district started several income-generating activities, including piggery, rearing bulls for ploughing land, farming, and making, selling and laying bricks. This is explicable due to the early establishment of the youth group in 2011. Moreover, one of the youth leaders defined an empowering concept, which was integrated in their ploughing services:

Therefore, it is as if we give it to them at a reduced cost. I think that is how we help our fellow youth and other vulnerable people. We plough for them the garden at a minimum cost (Interview with a male youth, Awach).

Such an initiative did not only underline their efforts to create new perspectives for them, but also emphasised their interest in empowering other community members and hence contributing to a peaceful co-existence. It could be noted that the longer the group was established, the further opportunities it created.

Generally, income-generating activities among other peacebuilding activities was much appreciated by all youth who participated in the study due to the possibility of gaining livelihood support and addressing unemployment. It became even more comprehensible with regard to Northern Uganda's poverty rate of more than 40% (GoU, 2014), and the high unemployment in Acholiland (UNPF, 2012). Moreover, some youth also created economic spaces as the opportunity to display their enterprises and to motivate to them to join, or create their own income generating activities.

What we are doing now, which I see is attracting many youth to come and join us, is the programme of Savings and Loans Association. At the beginning, we were encouraging all the interested youth to join us in saving money. At the end of last year, some of them who had saved with us earned much money and this encouraged other youth to join us. Therefore, this year a lot of them joined our Savings and Loans Association (Interview with a female youth, Awach).

It was found that activities of the youth concerning peacebuilding were mainly undertaken at the local levels, that is, the family, village, parish and sub-county. Young people were involved in these spaces on a regular basis and within these spaces; their actions were recognised. In addition, issues of limited transport and mobility constrained their scope of participation in peacebuilding and directed it to the local levels. Similarly, the interviewed workers of the two NGOs viewed local levels as the spaces that attracted youth participation in peacebuilding in Gulu district.

The absence or interruption of formal education reported by youth and staff of the NGOs who participated in study suggested the corresponding opportunity for promoting peacebuilding; i.e., bringing them together, imparting relevant skills and educating them to create livelihood supports.

Really, we have to do something; for example, providing some vocational skills to the youth who had their education interrupted by war so that they get the required skills to survive because it is not easy to survive here (Interview with a male youth, Awach).

The demand for technical and vocational education training programmes (TVET) among the youth was understandable because these programmes aim to link education to employability and could lead to poverty reduction. Consequently, TVET interventions contributed to community harmony and enabled the youth to contribute to economic development, which would lead to social and political participation in the community (Moberg & Johnson-Demen, 2009; Walton, 2010; Peterson, 2013).

Challenges for Youth Participation in Peacebuilding in Gulu District

A number of themes concerning challenges for youth participation in peacebuilding in Gulu district emerged from the data. These are poverty associated with

unemployment, excessive alcohol consumption, lack of information about youth programmes and institutionalised participation mechanisms as well as negative perceptions of the youth by the rest of Acholi society.

Participants reported that poverty and unemployment among the youth were the biggest challenges that undermined their participation in peacebuilding activities in Gulu district. The following quotation illustrates the view that poverty limited participation of the youth in peacebuilding activities:

There are many youth who are unemployed; therefore, ... that makes them vulnerable. It prevents them from being responsible community members and engaging in peacebuilding initiatives (R3).

Excessive consumption of alcohol among the youth was also reported as one of the main drivers of conflict and a hindrance to their participation in peacebuilding. In particular, participants stated that excessive consumption of alcohol often resulted in violence.

The main problem here is excessive alcohol consumption among the youth; they tend to drink much alcohol. If they get some money, all they think about is drinking alcohol (P4, female FGD, Awach).

Many youth consumed excessive alcohol because they wanted to forget personal problems concerning livelihood.

People are too poor, a reason that forces the youth to engage in behaviour that help them to forget situations they are facing, including consuming much alcohol (P1 — male, mixed FGD, Unyama).

These accounts suggest that a vicious circle of unemployment, poverty and alcohol abuse occurred among the youth in Gulu district. Furthermore, they also show that participation by youth in peacebuilding was undermined by complex and multidimensional challenges such as poverty and excessive alcohol consumption.

Moreover, while the cultural leaders in Acholi region locally known as 'Rwot-Kweri' were described as highly knowledgeable about community, culture, and land boundaries, the youth described these cultural leaders as biased, not being able to make fair decisions, for instance with regard to land-related conflicts:

[...] most people do not consider the village leadership as fair because they have biases. For example, they are related to certain people; therefore, people tend to mistrust their judgements (P1 — male, mixed FGD, Unyama).

In addition, one NGO staff reported that while she viewed local leaders as a source of information about Acholi culture and traditional conflict management procedures, they were biased and corrupt. Either way, youth participation in

peacebuilding activities was influenced since social hierarchies and cultural expectations limited youth's involvement (Fincham et al. 2013). Due to the patriarchal Acholi community structures spearheaded by informal community leaders, contributions of youth to peacebuilding were minimal because they were often not involved in informal leadership.

Whereas some youth reported that they lacked information about government programmes designed to reach them, the NGO staff reported that several programmes had weakness. Some of the programmes that targeted the youth were the YLP and the YVCF. Some NGO staff criticised both programmes for the associated bureaucracy that limited youth from accessing them. For example, eligibility requirements for these programs included evidence of collateral, a specific level of formal education and ability to read or speak English, which many youth did not have. In other words, government programmes, even though they were designed to economically empower the youth, they did not often benefit them because of the stringent eligibility criteria. As a result, most the reported economic approaches to youth participation in peacebuilding were initiated and greatly shaped by the youth themselves or supported by CSOs; for example, VSLAs.

Participants reported that because the youth grew up in IDP camps, they had developed a habit of expecting and receiving free-handouts. In particular, some youth exhibited a "dependency syndrome", which undermined youth participation in peacebuilding. Consequently, the immense challenges such as poverty and unemployment combined with the poor socialisation of youth in the camps undermined their patriotism and willingness to participate in peacebuilding. Moreover, the youth despised volunteers who were engaged in peacebuilding activities as the following quotation illustrates.

Most of the youth would not want to associate with what we are doing [voluntary work] because they will not be earning money from it" (P6, male FGD, Paicho).

Another youth stated:

They will ask, 'Is there something like money in that meeting? Once they get to know that there is nothing in terms of money that would be given, they will not attend the meeting (P3, male FGD, Awach).

Therefore, voluntary participation is often considered as a waste of time or not taken seriously. The young people and NGO staff commonly report this. Hence, another challenge to participation in the context of poverty and associated unemployment manifested in the mismatch between the need to participate in peacebuilding activities and the expected gains.

Many NGO staff reported that the youth were ineffectively involved politically. One major example was the limited youth representation and participation in political bodies, such as the District Council or the National Parliament. Whereas one participant reported on the youth's political representation and participation in official governmental bodies, the rest of the staff criticised the

exclusiveness. Exclusiveness was understood in terms of a very limited representation of the vast majority of Ugandans who are classified as youth up to 30 years of age (GoU, 2001, p.9):

We have out of the 460 members of parliament who are elected, only space for four youth members of parliament. That is quite a drop in the ocean; it cannot effectively represent the youth (R3).

The literature shows that there were only two youths who were representing the district (ULII, 1997); an official source for the exact amount of youth members in parliament could not be established. In addition, it was criticised that youth in general lacked information about how to participate consistently in political processes and forums for youth.

The structures [political system] are not strong, and there is not too much transparency about the youth organisations and youth structures. There has not been a lot of transparency about that, I am sorry to say (R1).

The fact that the youth did not mention those political decision-making forums demonstrated the lack of transparency and marginalisation with regard to their participation in political peacebuilding. Even at the local level, many young people did not feel invited to participate in political forums such as sub-county meetings. Others were not aware of their possible attendance. Consequently, they were less informed about the government's programmes and interventions for youth.

In most cases, you find that there are certain issues that the youth ought to be invited for because some programmes specifically target them. However, you will also find that we are not invited. One only hears that these people have been there and they will try to tell you something like the youth have not contributed (P5, male FGD, Paicho).

Such exclusion from political bodies such as the Sub-County Council demonstrates an oversight of the young people's potential to constructively engage in the political realm (McEvoy-Levy, 2006; Helsing et al., 2006). In addition, such political exclusion can lead to violent reactions by the youth who seek to voice their frustrations because of limited opportunities to participate in community leadership (McEvoy-Levy, 2001; Hilker & Fraser, 2009).

Moreover, the youth were remarkably affected by the war since their socialisation was based on the camp life and lacked meaningful experiences and knowledge of a community before the LRA war. Hence, an inconsistent feeling of identity and belonging shaped their reintegration.

Only what you know is what transpired in the IDP camps. Some kids were telling us that they did not even know where their homes are, especially the child-headed families (R4).

They [youth] are not sure of where they belong. They don't know what they are supposed to actually be doing for their own lives, for their own development, and for the development of their community (R1).

Because of the resettlement in the camps and return of former abductees, the youth have been perceived by the NGO staff as fueling conflict, in particular by selling family land to earn quick money.

[...] they have been putting a lot of pressure; they have been disorganizing many systems in their community, because they are looking for quick ways of earning income including selling land (R1).

The lack of socialisation in the Acholi norms and values was often perceived as the cause of the unbecoming behaviour among the youth. The NGO staff stated that youth often were violent because of their broken childhood and thus were stigmatised in the community. Collective stigmatisation associated with violent acts by some youth further eroded the limited opportunities to participate in peacebuilding in Gulu district (Berents 2014). The interrupted or lack of formal education due to war and displacement were also identified as a contributing factor to the negative perceptions about the youth. Moreover, the youth felt despised even by their peers as illustrated in the following quotation.

[...] you know, we have some youth here who have attained higher levels of education; so, they look at us as the stupid ones and they do not like to associate with us. Our group entails people who have not gone to school; so, they do not like to join because we are not at their level of understanding (P3, female FGD, Awach).

Generally, the communities did not socially recognise the youth; they instead were seen as people who did not know what to do with themselves. All youth groups from the different sub-counties and NGO staff agreed that the communities regarded them as inferior to the rest of the members.

[...] the general perception here is negative. We are being looked at as a group of people who are hassling with life, I would say. Hassling to survive, we need this, we need quick money, we need to try many options (R2).

In general, the image of inferiority among the youth affected significantly their lives in Gulu district. The youth also associated their limited political participation at the sub-county level to this poor image because *"they think that there is nothing good that can come from us"* (P3, male FGD, Paicho). Because the traditional Acholi society has a male-leadership composed of elders, power relations between the elders and the youth were unstable. Moreover, elders had lost their authority during the time of war and displacement (Branch, 2014). Although the youth and NGO participants reported that elders hardly recognized their activities in trying to contribute to a peaceful co-existence, they acknowledged that this perception was steadily changing.

To me, there have been many negative comments about our group, especially by the old people. Some would say, 'look at these young people who think they can advise old people'. For me, I cannot attend those meetings which are taught by the young people'. Nevertheless, as we went on, they started appreciating our work and started speaking well about us and we started observing a reduction of incidences of physical violence (P1, female FGD, Awach).

Therefore, right now you find the youth engaged in so many activities in different fronts to ensure that they positively influence perceptions of community members (R3).

The youth perceived unity and togetherness as core bases of their power. Moreover, many young people viewed unity with their peers as a precondition for realising greater societal participation, and contribution to a peaceful co-existence. This was expressed through forming more youth groups, opening effective communication platforms, and sensitizing and raising awareness among community members on issues of peace and peacebuilding by the youth and other stakeholders.

Conclusion

Experiences of the youth regarding participation in peacebuilding were framed by their struggle to obtain reliable sources of livelihood. Their precarious economic conditions on the one hand were the basis for the youth to create relevant opportunities for income-generation, including forming VSLAs and brick making and brick-laying groups. On the other hand, they presented the youth with various challenges including the vicious circle of unemployment, poverty, excessive alcohol consumption and violence that undermined their efforts to participate in peacebuilding. Moreover, minimal support to the youth in terms of government programmes for livelihood support existed. Accordingly, the youth lacked information about such programmes or did not meet the eligibility criteria for benefiting from them. Consequently, youth participation was undermined by the lack of information about institutionalised participation mechanisms as ways to contribute to peacebuilding. In addition, non-state actors such as CSOs, informal community leaders and elders were very influential in rallying youth participation in peacebuilding endeavours. However, all of them except the CSOs had significant weaknesses that limited youth participation in peacebuilding. Despite the challenges, a gradual change towards appreciation and dialogue was taking place where young people's impact through their peacebuilding activities was beginning to be acknowledged. For the youth themselves, perceptions of participation in peacebuilding were related to what was practical. Many youth were concerned with motivating other community members to join peacebuilding activities to help each other by showing solidarity. Economic empowerment should be considered as the strategy for consolidating participation of the youth in peacebuilding. The government should capitalise on the large population of the youth in Uganda by

creating opportunities for their participation in peacebuilding and national development and removing the stated barriers to their effective participation.

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Chapter 3

Significant social relations in coping with health-related problems of street-connected girls in Dhaka City, Bangladesh

*Billal Hosen*¹

Abstract: The number of street-connected girls² in Dhaka city, Bangladesh, is rapidly increasing despite the efforts of government and non-Governmental organizations to address their problems. Limited knowledge about coping strategies used by street-connected girls to deal with reproductive health problems in Dhaka city, Bangladesh undermines interventions of health and social workers in this area. This qualitative study examines how street-connected girls harness social support in their social relations to cope with reproductive health problems they face. Eight street-connected girls and four service providers in Dhaka city, Bangladesh were interviewed using semi-structured interviews. Findings show that the street-connected girls exhibited self-care agency in obtaining material, emotional and informational support from their social networks. These findings suggest the need for the health and social workers to mobilize and engage social networks of street-connected girls to augment provision of reproductive health services in Bangladesh.

Keywords: Street-connected girls, social relations, health, coping strategies, Bangladesh.

Introduction

Despite efforts of governments and development partners to ensure safety and wellbeing of citizens, homeless people still exist worldwide. Such homeless people unfortunately, include children whose need for care and protection should be prioritized (Aptekar & Stoecklin, 2014). The United Nations International Children's Education Fund (UNICEF) first introduced the term "street children" in 1979 when observing the year as the 'International Year of the Child'. In 2001, it was estimated by the United Nations that the population of street children in the world was 150 million (Dabir & Athale, 2011).

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- 1 Erasmus Mundus MFamily Master Programme, 1st edition, E-mail: billal045_scw@yahoo.com
 - 2 In this study, I prefer to use street-connected girls instead of street girls or street-involved girls. This concept is more comprehensive for two reasons: it focuses on girl's emotional attachment and recognizes the capacity of girls as social actors who are capable of developing meaningful relationships on the street (Thomas de Benitez & Hiddleston, 2011). It also gives us the possibility to understand their attachment with the street rather than being confined to social determinants of their situation (Aptekar and Stoecklin, 2014).

The United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is the most widespread and accepted international instrument for protecting rights of the child because it has been ratified by most countries in the world. Notable exceptions in this regard include the United States of America (USA), Somalia and South Sudan. Despite the wide ratification of the UNCRC, millions of children still live on the streets and thus remain neglected in many countries' policy agenda, especially in the low- and middle-income countries. To uphold the rights of street children, 12th April every year is recognized as the 'International Day for Street Children' by NGOs.

Some studies have attributed the phenomenon of street-connected children to endemic poverty, particularly in the low- and middle-income countries (Alexandrescu, 1996; Conticini & Hulme, 2006). Other contributing factors include wars and displacement, natural disasters such as floods and famine, inadequate state protection, lack or loss of formal identification and child trafficking (Council of Europe Congress of Regional and Local Authorities, 2008). In general, children who live on the streets experience a significant risk of abuse and exploitation (Aptekar, 1994). Such abuse includes being sexually assaulted, used in committing crimes such as robbery and theft; most of such children are usually boys. The gender ratio of street children is particularly lower for girls since they are raised to be at home in most cultures (Aptekar and Stoecklin, 2014). However, girls who live on the street are often at a higher risk of contracting HIV and AIDS because of being perceived as sex objects due to their sexual behaviour and occupation.

Even though children who live on the streets experience significant adversity, street life plays a vital role in shaping their lives. Street life in particular provides children with an identity and defines their life outcomes with regard to health and education, especially for those who live without family support and institutional care. A paradigm has emerged in childhood studies, which requires researchers and practitioners to focus on children's agency and their social relationships (James & Prout, 1997) to understand effectively their everyday life from the children's perspectives. This paradigm stipulates that children have capacity to construct social networks on the streets without adult's supervision and to generate social support, which protects them from harm and violence; give them shelter and identity and enables them to meet some of their basic health needs (Aptekar & Heinonen, 2003). Moreover, children can learn coping skills and strategies while living on the streets based on relations of solidarity and reciprocity (Beazley, 2003).

As the case with many other low-income countries, the phenomenon of street-connected children is highly prevalent in Bangladesh. Research conducted by Appropriate Resources for Improving Street Children's Environment (ARISE) in 2005 indicated that approximately 700,000 children lived on the streets in Bangladesh and that this would increase to roughly 1,600,000 by 2024 (ARISE, 2005). It is further estimated that a quarter of the children who were connected with the streets in Bangladesh were girls (Mozdalifa, 2012). Such street-connected girls survived by doing some of the worst forms of child labour, including commercial sex work that make them vulnerable to sexually transmitted infections including HIV and AIDS. Because of the highly patriarchal Bangladesh society, street-connected girls were usually at a disproportionately high risk of sexual violence and abuse

(UNICEF, 2009). Yet, such girls also lacked access to health care services in general and sexual and reproductive health services in particular. Because of the lack of considerable interventions by government and NGOs in addressing the plight of the street-connected girls, they often devised modest coping strategies within the context of their social relations to deal with sexual and reproductive health challenges. Therefore, this study aimed to explore the complex relationships of street-connected girls in Dhaka city, Bangladesh and how such relationships assist them to cope with health-related problems. Findings will contribute to the paucity of data available on the street-connected girls and facilitate relevant policy development and programming in this area.

Methodology

A qualitative research approach was adopted in exploring experiences of street-connected girls regarding coping with health-related problems in Dhaka city, Bangladesh. This approach facilitated gaining insightful information regarding social networks of street-connected girls. Twelve street-connected girls and four service providers including social worker, counsellor, outreach worker and shelter mother were purposively selected from the beneficiaries of LEEDO and INCIDIN Bangladesh³. Participants were interviewed in their shelter homes because it was easier to contact and make trustful relationship within a short of time. The organizations were selected purposively because they allowed me to access their beneficiaries in shelter homes and open-air schools.

Selection of street-connected girls as participants in this study was based on the following criteria: (i) girls living on the street for more than six months, (ii) girls aged 13 to 18, and (iii) being a client of LEEDO and INCIDIN, Bangladesh. The first criterion allowed differentiating street-connected girls from other girls on the streets and the second criterion was essential to understanding the significance of their networks on the street. Street-connected girls who were beneficiaries of LEEDO and INCIDIN Bangladesh were interviewed in their shelter homes, which facilitated getting contact and making trustful relationship with them in a limited time. The age group of 13 to 18 years was chosen because it is the average age of menarche and cognitive development. Previous research showed that the average age of menarche is 12.8 years in Bangladesh (Rah et al, 2009) and at the age of 12 years, a person usually reached a high level of cognitive development.

This study used “network maps” developed by Kahn and Antonucci (1980) in their theory of ‘convoy model of social relations’ for identifying social relations and support in convoy’s relationship of street-connected girls. This theory allowed understanding the emotional proximity and importance of a person in the network on the street by using three concentric circles: inner circle, middle and outer circle, which indicated the level of closeness (Antonucci et al, 2004).

3 Non-governmental organizations working for destitute and street children in Bangladesh.

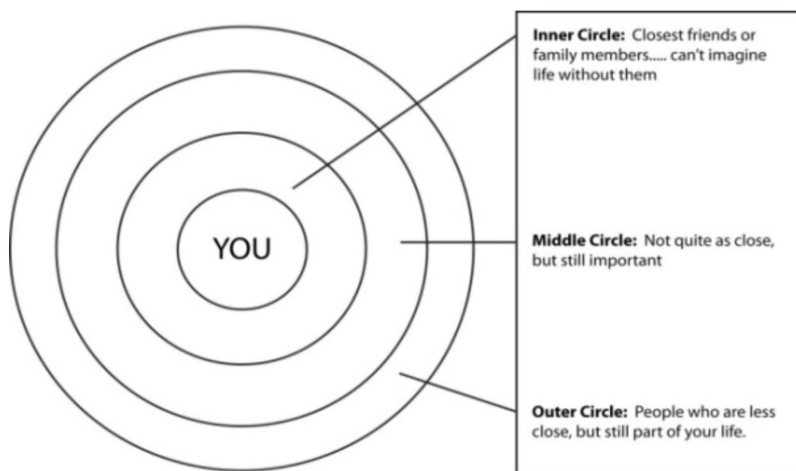


Figure 3.1 Example of a network map

Thematic analysis method was used to analyse the collected data. Qualitative data were coded into categories of similar meanings which is called “meaning categorization” (Kvale, 1996). A framework method developed at the National Centre for Social Research (Bryman, 2012) in the UK was used. Main themes and sub-themes are represented in a framework, which derived from thorough reading and re-reading of the transcribed interviews and field notes.

Considering the ethical considerations, participants were assured of their right to choose to participate or not. They were also assured of anonymity. Throughout the study, a female researcher helped to carry out the interviews in the shelter homes and open-air schools. In addition, safeguard policy provided by Save the Children, which was considered as an ethical tool to work with children, was strictly followed throughout the study.

Findings and Discussion

Two themes regarding the significance of social relations in coping with health problems among street-connected girls emerged from the data. These themes are (i) health problems of street-connected girls, and (ii) social relations and support among the street-connected girls. Below, I consider each of these themes.

Health-related problems of street-connected girls

Participants reported that street-connected girls experienced common diseases and reproductive health problems. They were concerned that the girls had a

significant risk of contracting HIV and AIDS because most of them were involved in commercial sex work. The following health related problems and risks were reported in this study.

Common diseases

Street-connected girls usually slept in open spaces in the stations or footpaths and were involved in hazardous work. They were deprived of their basic human right to shelter and food. Participants in this study reported that the street-connected girls consequently suffered from a range of common diseases, which include fever, skin diseases, chest pain, cold and cough, physical injuries and headache. The following quotation illustrates the view that common diseases were prevalent among street-connected girls:

I got sick when I was in the launch terminal. I was suffering from high fever. I used to sell water in the terminal but I could not work at that time. (Fahima, 17-year-old girl)

Children were often observed on the street in railway stations and launch terminals. Unhealthy and harmful practices were common. For example, they were eating dirty foods, wearing dirty and unhygienic clothes, walking without shoes; carrying heavy luggage of passengers, etc., which all undermined their physical and mental health. Physical health problems related to their living and working conditions were reported; these include being involved in prostitution and living in open and cold places. UNICEF (2012) also reported that the frequency of falling sick is high (76%) among the children who live in Dhaka city. Fever, cough and cold, headache, dysentery, diarrhoea and skin disease were reported as the most common diseases among street children. Other studies (Ahmed et al., 2003; Uddin et al., 2011) also reported common diseases among street children which were attributed to their working and living conditions on the street.

Physical injuries

Participants reported that street-connected girls often suffered from physical injuries. Some injuries were caused by accidents during work and some were related to physical and sexual abuse. One of the participants narrated her experience concerning physical injury as follows:

I was traveling by train with other street children and suddenly I fell down. I was injured on my head; I did not know what to do at that time. Then my friend took me to the medical centre where I was admitted for a long time (Rani, a 15-year-old girl)

This account shows that children often travelled by train without tickets. Moreover, such children often boarded speeding trains, travelled outside the trains,

quite often on the roofs of the compartment, which resulted in accidents and severe injuries.

Apart from the above, members of the public inflicted some injuries on children as the follow account shows:

Many members of the public do not like us. They often beat us with sticks if they find us at the train station. Sometimes we are injured; sometimes we run away when we see them in time. (Sati, 15-year-old girl)

Accidents and associated injuries, which street-connected girls often suffered, have similarly been reported in previous research. For example, the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS, 2003) stated that 48.2% children suffered from work related injuries while 68.7% sustained cuts/wounds.

Abnormal menstruation

Painful monthly periods (dysmenorrhea), irregular bleeding, whitish discharge, and pain in lower abdomen were reported to be common among the street-connected girls in Dhaka.

Yes, they have some problems like other girls such as pain in lower abdomen; sometimes [they experience] irregular menstruation, infection in vagina or something like that. They always share their problems with us especially if they suspect any symptoms of pregnancy, e.g. irregular menstruation. And I think pain is common to all of them (Social Worker)

Most of the street-connected girls reported problems during their menstruation, which have also been reported in previous studies among adolescent girls in urban areas of Bangladesh. Parvin et al. (2008) found that the majority of urban girls (83%) reported problems during menstruation periods, which included pain in lower abdomen, white discharge and pain in inner parts of the vagina.

Poor knowledge of family planning methods, HIV and AIDS

The findings suggest that some of street-connected girls lacked relevant knowledge regarding family planning methods (FPM), HIV and AIDS, which put them at increased risks of contacting unwanted pregnancies, HIV and AIDS. Those who were familiar with family planning methods reported that condom (*packet/balloon*) and Oral pill (*Bori*) were the most known methods they used. One street-connected girl commented on condoms as follows:

Yes, I saw it; we call it balloon. We used to make balloons in our village and play with other children. I did not know it is a family planning method. Now, I know. (Imana, age 13)

In this study, girls reported that they were not interested in using condoms during sexual intercourse, thus they were at increased risk of being infected with HIV. One social worker stated:

Girls take oral pills frequently. They do not like to use condoms because they are doing sex for entertainment and sometimes it depends on their customers. However, we encourage them to use condom instead of oral pills (Social worker)

Previous studies on knowledge of reproductive health (Mitra SN et al., 2001) revealed that adolescents were not well informed about family planning methods and sexually transmitted diseases.

With regard to health-related problems of street-connected girls, the findings suggest three different types of primary appraisal on the street. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) reported that appraisal is an outcome of continuous evaluation of person-environment relations. Street-connected girls lived on the street without family support and institutional care. They were involved in prostitution and experienced physical and reproductive health problems. Some of them had limited knowledge of family planning methods. The risks and problems related to the primary appraisal included actual harm; potential harm; and challenges (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Street-connected girls experienced physical and sexual violence at home and on the streets, which is actual harm according to transactional model of stress and coping. In addition, this study showed that their physical and reproductive health problems arose from their living and working conditions. Their occupation, living condition and lack of knowledge about reproductive health care were risks that made them vulnerable to being trafficked and/or raped on the street. Street-connected girls constructed social relations on the street as a survival strategy where they generated material, financial and emotional support to meet their health needs. They learned new skills to cope with their situations within the confines of their network relationships. Coping was a big challenge for the street-connected girls because at times they were misguided by peers on issues concerning reproductive health. Finally, they had complex appraisals on the street life because they experienced physical illness, and violence on the street. Nevertheless, they found street as the alternative place to escape violence, which puts them at risks in their homes.

Social relations and existing support

The findings show that the street-connected girls had capacity to create social networks as active agents with or without adults' support. Sometimes, they created social networks as a survival strategy, while at other times; they were involved in a

group for self and social protection (Hagan & McCarthy, 1997). The current study applied the convoy map suggested by Kahn and Antonucci (1980) to understand the proximity and ties of street-connected girls' social relations by placing them in three concentric cycles, which represent three levels of closeness, namely inner group, middle and outer circle. Street-connected girls considered social support to make arguments about social relations on the street.

It is assumed that the more social ties that individuals have, the more incorporated they are in social networks (Mattson & Hall, 2011); it also means that such individuals are more influenced positively with regard to health and wellbeing. In this study, five supportive groups were identified from the interviews with street-connected girls and service providers: peers, service providers/professionals, influential adults (job provider/adult/street family), family members and romantic partners. Findings of this study show that street-connected girls received material, emotional and informational support from their network relationships, which is considered as actual support in the analysis. Three key questions were answered in this study: what is said; what is done; and what is given during their health problems. Street-connected girls received the following forms of support from their network relationships:

Financial aid and medical support: Street-connected girls reported that, they received financial help from their network relationships. They got direct financial help either from their peers or from adults who gave them shelter and work on the streets. Instead of direct financial aid, service providers offered settling expenses of medical care. Fahima (age 17), who lived in Sadharghat, got financial aid from her employer when she had fever. Like other street-connected girls, Rahana mentioned that she received financial help from network members when she got sick. She stated:

I got a loan from my friends when I needed money. I also supported them when I had to. Sometimes, I asked for help and sometimes they helped me willingly if they found me sick or injured (Rahana, a 17-year-old girl)

Professionals reported that they did not provide direct financial aid but medicine and other necessary treatment for street-connected girls as the following account shows:

We do not give them financial support but we pay their medical expenses, for treatment, tests or medicine (Social Worker)

Previous studies also reported that material support existed in network relationships of street children. For example, Mizen and Ofosu-Kusi (2010) in their study in Accra, Ghana found that reciprocity of material help in social relations of street children was common. Uddin et al (2011) also stated that street children got help from adults on the street who gave them jobs and shelter in Bangladesh.

Nursing care: Girls received the necessary nursing care from their network relationships on the streets. Lavli, a 13-year-old girl commented on receiving primary care from her network relationships.

The wife of Rasel Bhai who I call my Bhabi (sister-in-law) washed my head when I was suffering from fever. One day, Sharmin (another street-connected girl) helped me with medicine. She gave me a tablet to take for my cold. (Lavli, a 13-year-old girl)

Street-connected girls lacked adequate knowledge about health care but still endeavoured to help one another in times of need. Imana (aged 13) said that she received nursing care from her friends when she had headache. She stated, "They poured water on my head". These findings are also validated by previous studies (Uddin et al, 2011, Oino & Auya, 2013).

Provision of menstrual pads: Street-connected girls reported that they received menstrual pads from members of their social networks. They also sometimes received rags, cotton and sanitary napkins from such networks.

When I was eleven years old, I had my first menstruation. I was working with others on the street. Then I informed my friend who gave me cotton to use as napkin under my pant (Rahana, a 17-year-old girl)

Many girls reported that they use only cloths and cotton as napkins during their menstruation. Sometimes, they also received help from their sexual partners. For example, Lavli (age 13) reported that her boyfriend sometimes bought her sanitary napkin.

Provision of contraceptives: Many street-connected girls (five out of eight) were involved in prostitution. Participants reported that they were familiar with condoms (*balloon/packet*) and oral pills (*Bori*) as family planning methods. They received contraceptives from their networks if required. Here, romantic partners played important role in buying condoms for them. For example, Lavli (age 13) stated that she got help from Shohel (a street-connected boy). They also borrowed condom sometimes from other girls who were also involved in prostitution.

Actually, I am not a bad girl. I do not use condoms frequently, but if I need them, I ask Moushumi (another street-connected girl) and she gives them to me if she has some (Sathi, a 15-year-old girl)

It was reported that the street-connected girls were not provided with condoms by the NGOs. One social worker stated:

According to our organization's policy, we do not provide contraceptives to children under 18. Nevertheless, we organize awareness meetings where they learn about those contraceptives. We know this is a big dilemma to work with child sex workers. (Social worker)

It is thus surprising that the street-connected girls did not receive contraceptives from the NGOs considering that they were at a high risk of contracting sexually transmitted infections, including HIV. Sometimes girls received direct help from their peers and at times, they just got information, which also helped them to cope with reproductive health problems. Peers and romantic partners were the main sources of contraceptives for the street-connected girls.

Emotional support: Findings show that street-connected girls received emotional support from their peers and service providers. Sometimes romantic partners helped them emotionally if they got sick as Lavli (age 13) mentioned. Empathy and assurance were two common forms of emotional support that they received from their network relationships.

Yes, sometimes Apa (worker) and Sharmin (another street-connected girl) asked me if I stayed alone in a shelter home. Sharmin also stayed with me and sometimes made fun. We also go out often to watch movies. (Rani, a 15-year-old girl)

Girls who were beneficiaries of NGOs sometimes received emotional support from counsellors, especially when they had menstruation-related challenges.

Sometimes they feel scared; it happens to those who are new in this shelter home. We also inform them; this is not a disease; it is a natural experience for women and this is the first step (Counsellor)

Emotional support was very important for street-connected girls because it alleviated loneliness and gave them a sense of belonging. Professionals and peers were two prominent groups who provided emotional support to the street-connected girls.

Informational support: Street-connected girls received the necessary information from their peers and service providers.

Counsellor Apa (worker) told me about that (condom). She suggested that we use that (condom) if we meet someone (for sex) on the street. (Rahana, a 17-year-old girl)

Sometimes, network relationships worked as a source of information. When girls got information about the shelter and health services, they shared it through their networks. In addition, they got practical information from networks as Imana (age 13) stated, “I learned from my friend how to use a piece of cloth during menstruation”. They received practical information about reproductive health care from professionals as well. One counsellor stated that they offered some services to the street-connected girls.

We provide sanitary napkins and medicines to reduce pain during menstruation. We always discourage them from having sex during menstruation because it is unsafe for them (Counsellor)

The findings of this study suggest that street-connected girls received material, emotional and informational support from their convoy's model of social relations. Kahn and Antonucci (1980) stated that members of convoys generated at least few forms of social support (Levitt et al, 1993). Street-connected girls received social support from their peers, service providers, adults, family members and romantic partners. Peers and service providers particularly played a prominent role in supporting the street-connected girls. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) also viewed social support as an environmental resource, which helped individuals to cope with their primary appraisal. It is revealed that street-connected girls experienced harm, threat and challenges on the street where they received social support from their network relationships, which facilitated them to meet their health needs and prevent risks.

Conclusion

The findings of this study show that street-connected girls were vulnerable because of their living and working conditions. These were characterised by risks such as physical and sexual abuse, inadequate knowledge about family planning methods and inadequate health care services. However, the street-connected girls developed capacity to generate social support during the times of need. The following recommendations are made based on the findings.

The Bangladesh government and NGOs should provide financial aid and re-integrate the street-connected girls with their families. Many of them reported that they were from dysfunctional families who were unable to provide care and protection. In this case, policy makers should focus on protective measures instead of material aid. Permanent shelter homes can be the solution to protect destitute street-connected girls from potential harm on the streets. Few NGOs provide shelter to the children until 18 years; however, the number of shelters is still not sufficient given the number of the street children in Dhaka city. By providing institutional care, it will be easier to protect them from risks such as HIV and AIDS. In addition, awareness campaigns at the community level should be conducted to reduce the flow of child migration to the streets. In this case, NGOs can work with influential persons (e.g. schoolteachers, religious leaders) to enhance the campaign program.

Advocacy-based intervention is important to work with the street-connected girls to protect their rights as children. In addition, street-connected girls use trains, buses and launches to arrive in Dhaka. In this case, NGOs should involve the people who work in those areas and sectors to protect them from trafficking. They can also provide the necessary information about new children to service providers. Gender, occupation and age were the important factors in convoys of social relations of street-connected girls. Girls felt comfortable to share their problems with their female peers. They also received informational, emotional and material supports from female peers who lived and worked with them. In this case, a peer worker approach can be effective in supporting the street-connected girls. NGOs

should engage female children in their activities to provide reproductive health care support. Street-connected girls got involved in prostitution by force or by choice but they did not have ready access to family planning methods from NGOs, which put them at a high risk of HIV infection. Prostitution is legal in Bangladesh but street-connected girls were not allowed to sell sex by law. It was a big dilemma to work with child prostitution from the child welfare perspective. In this case, professionals should be flexible to provide the street-connected girls with necessary services because they were already involved in prostitution. Finally, a gender-based street children policy is required to address all sorts of health problems and potential risks of street-connected girls with specific attention to the best interests of child.

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Chapter 4

Resilience among children and young people in impoverished urban areas in Uganda Strengths and the importance of context

*Anna Richardson*¹

Abstract: The concept resilience suggests a positive view of child protection, which in the face of adversity children do not only cope with but also grow and positively adapt to their situations. Understanding and enhancing resilience has generated much interest from researchers, policy makers and social work practitioners, applying the strengths-based approach rather than the deficit focused model. The purpose of the present study is to develop an understanding of resilience processes for children and young people living in impoverishment in urban Uganda. Using the Child and Youth Resilience Measure comprising 28 items (CYRM, Ungar et. al. 2008), the nature of resilience, factors that contributed to processes of resilience and the meaning of concept of resilience among social workers and other key stakeholders in Uganda were assessed. A total of 135 children and young people participated in this study, in both dialogue sessions and the survey. In addition, eight key informant interviews were conducted. A mixed-methodology involving both qualitative and quantitative approaches was adopted. Findings show that resilience processes were common among children and youth in the sample population compared to normative data ($p = 0.00$). Quantitative results indicate that individual and contextual factors contributed to resilience processes more than family/caregiver factors in the sample population. This finding was replicated in qualitative data. Physical and psychological caregiving was less of a contributing factor. Overall, these findings support a culturally relevant definition of resilience. For the children and young people in areas of urban impoverishment in Uganda, this involved relying on individual and contextual factors, such as their own attitudes, knowledge and strong religious beliefs to positively adapt after adversity.

Introduction

The concept resilience has been the focus of scientific research and practice interest since its conception in the 1970s (Luthar, Cicchetti & Becker, 2000; Rutter, 2000). Resilience gives us a positive view of child protection, capturing the “dynamic process encompassing positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity” (Luthar et al., 2000, pg. 1). It challenges how people perceive normal and abnormal human development and demonstrates that adversity does not always lead to

1 Erasmus Mundus MFamily Master Programme, 2nd edition, E-mail: acl.richardson@gmail.com

abnormality or maladaptive coping. Indeed, adversity can also result in positive adaptation.

Understanding resilience processes and the ways of promoting resilience is critical for policy and programming, especially for the risk populations. Linked to the strengths perspective in practice, resilience gives us the opportunity to understand how individuals negotiate and mitigate adverse life experiences to lead fulfilling lives (Boyden & Mann, 2005). Resilience is generally understood in two ways: a set of processes occurring within an individual, and a sum of interactions between the individual, family and the wider contextual environment (Boyden & Mann, 2005).

There is limited research on resilience in at risk populations living in low- and middle-income countries. Adversity affecting children and young people in Uganda includes extreme poverty, malnutrition, child labour and child marriage (United Nations Children Fund [UNICEF], 2015). A situational analysis of children in Uganda by UNICEF (2015, pg. 8) showed that there were 17.1 million children in Uganda. More than half of these children were either critically or moderately vulnerable. Living without parental care is a huge challenge for many children in Uganda; moreover, a total 14% of children were orphans mainly because of AIDS (Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development [MoGLSD], 2011, pg. 4). In Kampala city, there were an estimated 27,400 child labourers (Walakira, Bukenya & Dumba-Nyanzi, 2014, pg. 6).

Despite experiencing significant adversity, some children and young people are able to navigate and negotiate their circumstances to acquire resources they need to achieve positive developmental outcomes (Ungar, 2011). In the Ugandan context, no study has investigated resilience among children and young people experiencing significant adversity. This study sought to document and assess factors that contribute to resilience processes and positive adaption among children and young people living in urban and slum areas in Kampala city, Uganda. This study assessed resilience processes across individual, family/relational and contextual domains to gain a context-sensitive understanding of how children and young people develop resilience.

Literature review and theoretical framework

Masten (2007) provides an account of the four waves of resilience research and how scientific thinking surrounding this concept has evolved over time. Generally, the first wave of resilience research described how people coped following adversity through identifying isolated variables within children or their environments (Lipsitt & Demick, 2012). The second wave of research examined the underlying processes of resilience such as biological interactions, attachment relationships or levels of social support. The third wave of research attempted to identify the impact of prevention and intervention programmes on resilient functioning for at-risk populations (Weissberg, Kumpfer & Seligman, 2003). These authors employed measures to assess programmes, particularly in educational environments,

which explained positive adaptation despite adversity. The fourth and current wave of research, according to Masten (2007) views resilience as a dynamic process that occurs as a function of interactions across different levels of a person's life (Lipsitt & Demick, 2012). However, some authors have argued that it is not possible to fit all resilience research into these categories; in fact, many studies address multiple components of resilience (Lipsitt & Demick, 2012).

A notable shift in research and thinking about resilience occurred during the 2000s when researchers began to realise methodological problems associated with previous approaches to the study of this concept. Rutter (2000, pg. 653) stated that environmental risk indicators were not necessarily environmental risk moderators; actual and proximal risk mechanisms were hard to determine and individual interpretations and lived experience of risk played an important role. Furthermore, it is unusual for risks to occur in isolation, creating difficulty to define and measure risks when they are compounded. There are also multiple outcomes because different people experience risk, coping and positive outcomes in unique ways.

Rutter (2000, pg. 654) explains this through using an analogy of disease. When a person experiences disease, immunity may develop, chronic illness may occur, or a full recovery may be achieved. Resilience can be understood in much the same manner. Sometimes, positive adaption may not look positive when measuring resilience. An example used by Rutter (2000, pg. 659) is sickle-cell anaemia, a condition in which a person has deformed red blood cells that result in low iron levels. However, even though this condition is negative, sickle cell anaemia has the positive outcome of preventing malaria. Factors contributing to resilience can equally be understood; perceived negative outcomes can also have positive effects.

Rutter (2000) also highlights the influence of biopsychology in association with resilience; brain structures often change because of stress and adaptation. Rutter (2000, pg. 657) used the example of skydivers; first time divers experienced heightened anxiety and cortisol levels, while more experienced divers exhibited low levels of anxiety and cortisol. Similarly, if a person experiences a happy separation from caregivers, this may provide some protection against future separations. However, resilience is neither constant nor consistent over time. Resilience needs to be considered as a process not a trait or a characteristic that remains stable over time. Both genetics and biopsychology play a role in the process of resilience, as does the interpretation and meaning placed on an individual's own experience of risk and positive adaptation (Rutter, 2000, Ungar, 2012).

Masten (2001, pg. 227) stated, "resilience is common and usually arises from the normative functions of human adaptational systems". Here, Masten (2001) explains the ordinary magic of resilience and that everyone has the capacity to adapt and thrive. Masten (2001) also suggested that it is vital to focus on the ordinary processes of resilience, rather than on extraordinary processes. Two major conceptualisations of resilience, namely (i) variable-focused approach and (ii) person-focused approach, aim to explain the variations in children's reactions and coping following their experiences of significant stress (Masten, 2001, pg. 229). On the one hand, variable or factor-focused approaches tend to use multivariate ways

to measure the degree of severity of the stress, outcome and potential personal or environmental variables that could result in positive adaption. On the other hand, person or individual-focused approaches tend to focus mainly on comparing people, their qualities and attributes and how these may mitigate effects of stress across time (Masten, 2001, pg. 229-230). However, both approaches have significant problems. Masten (2001) argues that the variable or factor focused approach misses the real human experience of risk and resilience, while the person-focused approach misses the variation across different adverse experiences.

Recent research has focussed predominantly on the interactive processes between individual, family and contextual factors to promote resilience and has moved towards a multilevel perspective (Rutter, 2000; Luthar et al., 2000; Cicchetti, 2003). Resilience is now universally understood as a dynamic and multilevel process that encompasses positive outcomes despite exposure to adversity (Liebenberg, Ungar & Van de Vijver, 2012). Researchers now call for a multidisciplinary and contextual approach to researching resilience (Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000; Cicchetti, 2010; Ungar, 2011).

One critical aspect of resilience worthy of attention is the process as it relates to the environment in which the child or young person is located (Ungar, 2008). As a construct emerging from investigations predominantly conducted in developed countries, researchers have begun to question and critically evaluate its cross-cultural applicability and usefulness (Ungar & Liebenberg, 2011; Boyden & Mann, 2005). As Ungar (2011, pg. 4) stated, the study of resilience requires a "broader focus on processes in complex environments that interact to foster good developmental outcomes of relevance to culturally diverse communities". Ungar and Liebenberg (2011) further stated that while an increasing number of researchers are calling for more research in cultural relativism studies of resilience, there remains little methodological innovation, particularly in quantitative studies. There is a clear need for further research in understanding the expression of positive adaptation in the face of adversity in diverse social cultural contexts.

Ungar et al. (2007) made a significant contribution to understanding and capturing resilience processes across a variety of contexts. The International Resilience Project, conducted in 14 sites across 11 countries, identified global, cultural and context specific aspects of children's lives that contributed to resilience processes (Ungar et al., 2007; Ungar, 2008; Ungar & Liebenberg, 2011). Through their research involving over 1,500 youth globally, they showed that resilience processes were laden with contextually and culturally bound meanings (Ungar, 2008, pg. 218). The research demonstrated that contextual influences were relevant to the levels and patterns of resilience expressed in an individual (Ungar, 2008). Context defines meaning and opportunities available for an individual and is a defining feature of how resources are navigated and negotiated towards resilient pathways (Ungar, 2012). Tensions experienced between culture and context reflect highly specific relationships between aspects of resilience for an individual (Ungar, 2008). Ungar (2008) advocated a culturally and contextually sensitive definition of resilience:

In the context of exposure to significant adversity, whether psychological, environmental, or both, resilience is both the capacity of individuals to navigate their way to health-sustaining resources, including opportunities to experience feelings of well-being, and a condition of the individual's family, community and culture to provide these health resources and experiences in culturally meaningful ways (Ungar, 2008, pg. 225).

Such a definition provides a pathway to understanding resilience in cross-cultural contexts. Some authors (Boyden & Mann, 2005; Ungar, 2005) refer to the contextually biased nature of resilience research and challenge normative conceptions of what constitutes *risk* and *protection* in contexts outside the United States and Europe. Most resilience research reviewed comes from the minority world and reflects normative assumptions about the vulnerabilities and capacities of individuals (Ungar & Liebenberg, 2011). New methods of understanding resilience in different cultures suggest that social constructivist knowledge is crucial for understanding individuals' own perceptions of their lives and experiences (Liebenberg et al., 2012). These perceptions and understandings are important for studying resilient pathways. The contextually biased nature of much of the current literature on resilience overlooks cultural context as part of the experience of capacity and vulnerability (Ungar & Liebenberg, 2011).

There has been an increase in the shift of emphasis from risk to resilience among those working in the field of social sciences (Rutter, 2012, pg. 33). This trend involves moving away from examining maladaptive coping, risky behaviours and psychopathology to looking at the positives, strengths and assets of individuals and how these can be promoted and enhanced. Such an approach is encapsulated in the strengths perspective in social work practice. The strengths perspective is not a theory, nor a model, but represents a lens through which we can appreciate experiences (Saleebey, 2006). It emphasises capacities and strengths of an individual in the same way resilience as a construct does. Weick et al. (1989) proposed the strengths perspective as a practice model based on the assumption that all people have inherent strengths. This new set of ideas aimed to orientate practice to enhance and build on the inherent strengths of a person, even when that person was perceived as traumatised, vulnerable or with psychological problems. The present research aims at addressing the knowledge gap on resilience by applying techniques employed by Ungar and colleagues (2007) and Ungar (2008) to the Uganda context to promote understanding of resilience of children and young people living in impoverished urban settings.

Methodology

The present study adopted a small-scale mixed-methods design in analysing the dynamic processes of resilience in children and youth in Kampala. A mixed methods design was selected to build on existing tools and cross-cultural studies of resilience (Ungar & Liebenberg, 2011). The study used both quantitative and qualitative approaches to answer the following questions:

Table 4.1 Sample description and data collection methods

Method	Participants	Age range	Number	Data collected
Dialogue session 1	UYDEL beneficiaries - Bwaise	17-24	17	Qualitative
Dialogue session 2	UYDEL beneficiaries - Masooli	18-22	19	Qualitative
Dialogue session 3	UYDEL beneficiaries - Masooli	10-17	18	Qualitative
Survey - CYRM-28 administration	UYDEL beneficiaries -across 8 sites around Kampala	10-17	79	Quantitative
Key informant interviews - Social Workers	UYDEL social workers	n/a	6	Qualitative
Key informant interviews - Key stakeholders	UYDEL head office, Makerere University	n/a	2	Qualitative

1. What is the nature of resilience according to urban children and young people in impoverished urban areas in Kampala?
2. What factors promote resilience among urban children and young people and how do they differ across the individual, family/caregiver and context domains?
3. How do the key stakeholders dealing with child welfare policy and practice in Kampala understand resilience?

By adapting methods of cross-cultural research on resilience developed by previous researchers (Ungar et al., 2007; Ungar, 2008; Ungar & Liebenberg, 2011), the present research assessed children' and young people's voices through dialogue sessions. The data collected during dialogue sessions were used to create site-specific questions for the survey. Key informant interviews with social workers at the study sites and with other key stakeholders facilitated collection of contextual knowledge. This knowledge facilitated grounding the results and providing further information about the organisation where the research took place and about the study population. Such an approach is consistent with research conducted by Ungar and colleagues in similar contexts (Ungar & Liebenberg, 2011).

The research was conducted among services and staff of a non-governmental organisation known as Ugandan Youth Development Link (UYDEL). This organisation was chosen due to its ability to provide access to the target population in a safe and supportive environment with social work support. The children and young people in the study were already accessing UYDEL's vocational training and social work support at outreach centres. The sample was selected using purposive sampling techniques with geographical considerations. Approximately 8 UYDEL outreach centres were visited in and around Kampala during the two weeks of fieldwork to sample participants across a variety of impoverished urban contexts.

Qualitative Methods

The dialogue sessions included three sessions with young people and children who were associated with UYDEL as either current or former service users. Semi-structured interviews with social workers (n = 6) of UYDEL and other key informants (n = 2) were conducted at the same time as the survey. The interviews aimed at understanding each drop-in centre, the cases they came across, the challenges experienced by children and young people growing up, the ways in which children and young people cope or deal with adversity and the level of understanding of resilience as a construct in the Ugandan context. The qualitative data generated through the dialogue sessions were processed using a matrix and analysed using thematic techniques. Substantive significance or consistency of themes across and within the data sets was found (Floersch et al., 2010, pg. 408).

Quantitative Methods

The study followed the work of Liebenberg et al. (2012), Liebenberg, et al., (2013) and Ungar and Liebenberg (2011) in using the Child and Youth Resilience Measure (CYRM), which comprises 28 items. This survey tool was chosen due to its cross-cultural validity and application, and the youth version of the tool was selected as the most appropriate in line with the age range in the sample. The Child version of this tool is for children below 10 years, who were not part of the sample population. The CYRM Youth measure was developed through interviews with young people and adults in 11 countries globally with 1,451 youth participating in the pilot measure and qualitative interviews with 89 youth to construct a culturally sensitive 28-item measure of youth resilience (Ungar & Liebenberg, 2011).

The CYRM was administered during two weeks of fieldwork. Children and young people were invited to participate and were made aware that their participation was anonymous, voluntary and no payment would be made. The consent form was read to each eligible individual who was then asked to mark the consent form to confirm that they had understood. The survey was translated and administered on an individual basis in the commonly spoken language in central Uganda (Luganda) with the help of a research assistant. Probing questions were kept to a minimum; however, they were used to confirm answers and to build rapport between the participant and the research assistant. In some cases where Luganda was not understood, an interpreter at the UYDEL centre was used to translate into a language that participants were comfortable with. The researcher ensured that a social worker familiar with each participant was present and available at the time of administering the survey.

Limitations

The limitations of this study include the smaller sample than I had desired to interview. In particular, there was limited time to complete the fieldwork and limited access to the study population. As a result, findings cannot be generalised but

remain indicative. In addition, a mixed-method study is not easy to conduct. Bryman (2012, pg. 672) stated that there are fundamental arguments against combining two different methodological approaches, and that many researchers simply use quantitative and qualitative approaches in tandem rather than truly combining them. To address this, the researcher sought ways to incorporate the quantitative and qualitative measures as much as possible through triangulating methods and incorporating site-specific questions. Inherent in cross-cultural research is the issue of language and barriers that exist in expression and interpretation. To mitigate this, the survey tool was translated and administered in a one-on-one session. This allowed the participant and research assistant to clarify on issues as necessary. Unfortunately, there were also issues in the reliability of the quantitative tool. The context subscale had a level of 0.56, which is below the cut off of 0.7 suggesting limited internal consistency of items (Bryman & Cramer 2011, pg. 78). Using SPSS analysis, it was found that if item one in this subscale "I have people I look up to" was deleted, the highest achievable Cronbach's Alpha of 0.63 was possible, bringing it closer to reliability. Therefore, this item was deleted from the subsequent analysis.

Results and Discussion

This section provides an integrated analysis of the qualitative and quantitative results. The qualitative data from the dialogue sessions and interviews was analysed with thematic analysis, using a socio-ecological approach to resilience and looking at the processes influencing resilience at the individual, family/caregiver and context levels. The quantitative data from the surveys was analysed using SPSS and compared to normative data across the individual, family/caregiver and context subscales.

In the dialogue sessions, participants frequently reported individual aspects of resilience including beliefs and behaviour. In all dialogue sessions, hope and patience were frequently reported as necessary for positive adaptation following adversity. One respondent, a girl aged 17, in describing people who grew up well despite facing problems stated, "*they are passionate, determined and maintain a hopeful attitude*". Individual behaviour was also reported frequently during the dialogue sessions. For example, gaining knowledge, avoiding negative or "bad" behaviour, asking for help when needed and utilising resources when they were available were reported. Behaviour such as negotiating safe sex or food were also reported in the first dialogue session. Pro-social behaviour such as not stealing, being open and kind to others and being respectful were reported as facilitators of improved well-being for individuals. Interestingly, participation was a key behaviour reported during the dialogue sessions. Children and young people viewed participation in activities at the UYDEL centres as fundamental in coping with adversity.

Family and caregiving aspects of resilience were not reported as frequently as contextual and individual aspects in the dialogue sessions. This was a surprising finding because previous studies of resilience (Rutter, 2000; Malindi & Theron,

2010) showed that supportive relationships were critical components of children's ability to bounce back following adversity. However, supportive relationships were discussed in one of the dialogue sessions, particularly the need for constructive friendships. In the first dialogue session, one girl aged 23 stated that walking together with fellow girls and in groups protected them from rape. Relations including families and parents were viewed as a resource when available. Yet more frequently, the lack of supportive relations and the possible negative impact of peer groups were salient as responses. Negative relationships and the impact of "bad friends" or the lack of supportive family environments were frequently reported in response to "what does it mean when bad things happen". The negative impact of peer relationships highlights the contextually defined nature of resilience in that for the children and young people growing up in impoverished urban environments, peer relationships could result in maladaptive development pathways.

The contextual aspects of resilience reported in the dialogue sessions frequently related to knowing and utilising services available, specifically those offered by UYDEL. The health, education, counselling services and associated activities at the centres, as well as at the residence facility, were reported as helping children and young people to cope and as part of their perceptions of what it means to be healthy. Knowing and adhering to the rules and regulations of the UYDEL programmes and residence facility were reported as essential to growth. This aspect of the context was important for the children and young people in urban contexts to promote structure and balance in daily life, but also to create a sense of belonging. As Ungar and Liebenberg (2011) stated, resilience is about negotiating the path to resources available and sharing those resources with family, friends and the community. Participants frequently reported that knowledge about those resources was an important part of maintaining well-being even when faced with adversity. One young person stated, *"I found UYDEL and other services which helped me to get off the streets"*.

The influence of religion was an important theme across individual, family/relationship and contextual domains. Religious beliefs and behaviour were reported frequently and in all the three dialogue sessions. Many participants reflected on their belief in God and rituals such as praying as a coping mechanism when bad things happened. One girl, aged 24 years, stated that praying before going to do commercial sex work was a way she prevented negative consequences such as being infected with HIV. Praying and the belief in God were ways in which children and young people found strength in adverse situations. They stated that their religious beliefs were motivating; they enabled them to feel cared for as one young person stated, *"going to church gives me hope and counselling"*. Individual beliefs and behaviour associated with religion appeared in some way to compensate for the lack of supportive relationships in the lives of the children and young people. Religious beliefs could equally be coded as contextual because religion is strongly practised in the Uganda (Pereznieta et al., 2011).

The individual, family/relationship and contextual factors described through the dialogue sessions support the notion that pathways to resilience

are contextually and culturally determined (Ungar 2008). The individual behaviour (pro-social and participation), family/relationship aspects (negative relationships) and contextual aspects (knowing where to get help) were included in the survey as context-specific items. These findings were used to give weight and add context to the quantitative component of the study. In a resource poor context characterised by impoverishment, knowing the services available and how to access them were most frequently reported as important facilitators of positive adaptation among children and young people. Even though the children and young people in the study had limited access to basic services, the dialogue sessions highlighted the strengths that existed among them, their families and the context.

One girl, 13 years old narrated: She lost both her parents and her grandmother adopted but mistreated her. She was sent to Kampala to work as a house keeper. The woman who was employing her mistreated and refused to pay her. Then another woman with whom she now stays adopted her. She came to Kampala to work when she was about 10 years. She said, *"I believe that everything is possible"*, which helps her to keep healthy. This supports the work of Saleebey (2006) in starting from the premise that all people and communities have inherent strengths and that all individuals have the propensity to change and adapt. Furthermore, the strong influence of behaviour and beliefs reported through the dialogue sessions supports research that links a person's beliefs and their capacity for resilience (Benard & Truebridge, 2006). Much of what the children and young people reported as resilience processes were related to individual beliefs and behaviour.

Quantitative data was collected through the CYRM survey. There were 79 CYRM questionnaires administered during fieldwork across the eight research sites. Respondents included 53 girls and 26 boys ranging from 10 years to 17 years. All respondents had dropped out of school and were beneficiaries of UYDEL programmes. The survey collected some demographic information to complete the background characteristics for the study sample. The overall score on the CYRM gives an indication of resilience levels according to individual, relationship and contextual factors, representing the multiple pathways and processes that are embedded in the dynamic process of resilience (Ungar & Liebenberg, 2011). The high overall scores on the CYRM in Table 2 reflect a sample population that demonstrated processes of resilience, managed to negotiate and navigate their way to the resources that they needed. The difference between the sample mean of 123.51 and the normative data mean of 107.15 was found to be significantly different at the two-tailed probability level of 0.00. The t-test performed found that the chance of this difference occurring by chance ($t = 9.52$) and the standard error of the mean is high (1.2). The high scores demonstrate that children in impoverished urban contexts in Uganda showed that they had the capacity and skills to contribute towards resilient pathways (Ungar, 2008).

The CYRM also examined the scores across individual, family/relationship and contextual subscales. For individual factors, all cases average scores were slightly higher than the normative data for complex needs among the youth (Table 3). If we compare the mean for the whole subscale of 49.43 for *individual* with the mean for the normative data on the subscale, we see a significant difference

Table 4.2 CYRM total scores in sample compared to normative data for youth (10-17) with complex needs

	Sample		Norm (complex needs youth)	
CYRM Score	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation
CYRM Total Score	119.05	11.108	107.15	17.168

($p = 0.00$). The high scores on the CYRM suggests that individual factors are highly relevant for resilience processes in the sample population. The findings suggest that children and young people in urban contexts relied frequently on their own abilities and skills to navigate their way to the resources that they needed. Cooperation, problem solving, sense of belonging and social and practical skill development were all important for the sample population in adapting well despite the adversities they faced.

Table 4.3 Scores and means of the Individual Subscale: sample compared to norm

	Sample		Norm (complex needs youth)	
CYRM Score	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation
Individual	49.43	5.168	43.85	6.443
Personal Skills	4.73	0.428	3.87	0.632
Peer Support	4.06	0.944	4.04	0.998
Social Skills	4.45	0.531	4.10	0.755

The family/caregiver subscale is a measure of the physical and psychological caregiving as expressed by the individual. In Table 4, we can see the differences between the sample means for this cluster of questions and the normative data for complex needs among the youth. On physical caregiving, the mean appears lower than the normative data. For psychological caregiving, it appears slightly higher. In applying the one sample t-test to compare the overall means of the relational subscale, a significant difference ($p = 0.15$) was not found between these two means.

Table 4.4 Scores and means of the Family/caregiver Subscale: sample compared to norm

	Sample		Norm (complex needs youth)	
CYRM Score	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation
Family/caregiver	26.43	5.101	27.27	6.196
Physical Care-giving	2.85	1.121	4.04	0.922
Psychological Care-giving	4.15	0.736	3.84	0.987

There are some noteworthy observations in this finding. Firstly, that some participants in this study were from the residential facility ($n=10$). This may have been a confounding factor since they did not have the immediate attention of their parents/caregivers. However, one could argue that the residential staff should be providing this in such cases. Another possible confounding factor is that physical caregiving also relates to having enough to eat, which, as expressed in all dialogue sessions was not always the case for children and families living in impoverished urban contexts. Nevertheless, the non-significant difference between the sample and norm mean is interesting, particularly given that for other subscales, the scores were higher than the normative data. The non-significant finding suggests that in the sample population, family/caregivers were not contributing to resilience processes as much as the other factors.

The contextual subscale is a measure of the spiritual, educational and cultural factors that positively contribute to the process of resilience as expressed by the individual measured by 10 questions. If we look at the means of each cluster of questions related to contextual variables, we can see that they are scoring slightly higher than the normative data for complex needs of youth (Table 5). A one-sample t-test to assess the difference in the overall mean for the context subscale was applied, and it was found that this difference was significant ($p=0.00$). The higher scores for the context subscale indicate that contextual factors in the sample population were important for resilience processes. Religious beliefs, being part of a community, education and traditions were important factors as reported by children and young people in coping with adversity they faced and adapting positively.

Table 4.5 Scores and means of the Context Subscale: sample compared to norm

CYRM Score	Sample		Norm (complex needs youth)	
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation
Contextual	43.19	2.957	36.03	7.856
Spiritual	4.71	0.506	2.81	1.146
Educational	4.97	0.136	3.87	1.083
Cultural	4.71	0.445	3.97	0.816

It is important to note that this finding may also have confounding factors. Education questions may have been higher than normative data as children and young people were engaged in vocational training at UYDEL. The responses about spirituality were also high scoring among the contextual cluster questions. This finding is interesting because it indicates the importance of religion to the sample population. This was also reported in many of the dialogue sessions; praying and a belief in God were a source of strength for children and young people in impoverished urban contexts. The importance of religion and spirituality as a factor contributing to resilient processes is similar to the one that was reported in Tanzania

Site by the International Resilience Project (2006) where religious beliefs and practices were found to be a strong contributor to resilience processes and the source of strength for children and young people.

The understanding of resilience as a construct was found to be high among the key stakeholders, despite the fact that *resilience* as a term was not well known. Social workers in particular highlighted the strengths and capacities of an individual as a fundamental approach to working with this population. Social workers also articulated the real adversity of growing up without a supportive family environment, and the resource-poor contexts that lacked necessities. Other key informants reported the vicious nature of poverty, affecting individuals and families in negative ways. Supportive relationships for children and young people in impoverished urban contexts were not mentioned as frequently because many reported mainly individual and contextual factors in resilient pathways.

All key informants described individual, family/caregiver and contextual aspects of resilience. Most frequently reported were individual abilities to navigate pathways to the resources that they needed. For example, social workers stated that the UYDEL programme aims to empower and teach children and young people skills that they need so they can make right choices. Encouraging self-esteem, self-confidence, self-understanding was found to constitute large components of the UYDEL programme. One key informant stated,

We need to learn from children... Because many times we present ourselves as Christmas fathers, you know, social workers, and yet we do not meet all the needs of the child.

The high scores on the CYRM in the sample indicate a population that was coping well despite adversity. Individual attitudes and beliefs were fundamental in describing how children and young people coped with adversity. The key informants spoke about certain individuals who had overcome significant adversity. These included children who formerly lived on the street but managed to live healthy and happy lives later. One key Informant stated in accordance,

Children come into the city and have been engaged in prostitution; they have been living on the street; they have been busy collecting scrap metal to survive. We have cases of children who are able, probably by luck, get money, are supported by adults and are able to move out.

Resources and abilities within the individual were reported as critical aspects of positive adaption and also were core areas of intervention in the UYDEL programmes.

In the final analysis, contextual adversities were most salient for children and young people growing up in impoverished urban environments of Kampala city. Key informants frequently reported the lack of resources and basic services such as health. Both informants at the policy and programming levels reported the "*vicious cycle of poverty*" and its associated disadvantage. Social workers frequently reported difficulties faced by clients attributed to poverty and an inadequate

education system. In all interviews, less emphasis was put on the individual level, and more placed at the family and contextual levels. The poor choices available to individuals, such as coping through the use of drugs, criminality or commercial sex work were not reported as a problem at the individual level but rather, as contextual circumstances that left individuals with few or poor choices.

The lack of parental care and supportive family environments were described as one of the biggest challenges faced by urban children and youth at the UYDEL centres. Family breakdown was reported as a common adversity faced by many children and young people who participated in the study. One social worker in particular noted, *"the family is where it all starts"* with parents not taking adequate care of their children. Parents and families were described as the primary source of support and guidance for children and young people through teaching values and supporting education. If this was disrupted, the child or young person often resorted to other ways of finding the needed support whether, physical, emotional and economic. For the key informants who were not social workers, family breakdown and/or orphanhood were named as two top adverse experiences of children and young people in Kampala city. The strength of the findings on the family/care-giver subscale is supported in international literature on the importance of the right of the child to grow up in a supportive family environment (Williamson & Greenberg, 2010).

Conclusion

Resilience presents the opportunity to identify and promote the strengths and abilities of children and young people to enable them access the needed resources. In impoverished urban contexts of Kampala, a unique and dynamic process of resilience among children and young people was observed. Children and young people participating in the UYDEL programmes demonstrated resilience processes, scoring higher than normative data on the CYRM. The nature of resilience, the factors that influenced resilience and the understanding of resilience by key stakeholders exemplified the socio-ecological and contextually bound construction of resilience. The findings demonstrate that many children and young people had adapted and coped with adversity in unique ways. Despite being surrounded by adversity, many children and young people stayed healthy or positively adapted facilitated by religious beliefs, personal behaviour, and the support they received from their environment. Many of these factors represent unique pathways and can only be understood within the resource poor context. Resilience as it relates to children and young people in this context suggests individual skills and capacities were most important for securing economic stability and overcoming social stigmatisation by adapting positively to adversity.

Most frequent were the individual factors used by children and young people to navigate towards resilient trajectories. Children and young people in urban contexts relied frequently on their own abilities and skills to navigate their way to the resources that they needed, such as cooperation, problem solving, sense of

belonging, social and practical skill development. The results demonstrate that resilience, as a construct, is useful to understand the strengths and capacities of the child or young person at the individual, family/caregiver and contextual levels in negotiating and navigating resources that they need in culturally meaningful ways.

Children and young people in impoverished urban contexts need to be encouraged to uphold their resilient ways. In dialogue sessions and face-to-face surveys, young people reported clearly how they were able to move past the adversities of growing up in a resource poor environment and to adapt positively. The social workers understood and worked with the children and young people remarkably well to enhance their skills and capacities towards positive adaptation. However, more could be done. Programmes such as UYDEL's vocational skills training, should be enhanced through addressing all three dimensions subscales of resilience as indicated in the CYRM; individual, family/caregiver and contextual. For the individual, fostering the positive view of self and the future is essential. Families and caregivers could be supported to stay together through UYDEL or similar programs offering financial assistance to prevent family separation and dysfunction. Contextual factors were highly significant for the children and young people in this study and these factors need to be valued by social workers. It is refreshing that even in resource poor environments such as Kampala, children and young people can manifest resilience and the possibility of thriving often against the odds.

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Chapter 5

Family resilience in post-reunification of former Filipina immigrant single mothers with their children in Norway

*Brian Ven C. Bag-ao*¹

Abstract: The purpose of this research was to examine the strengths and resilience exhibited by Filipina immigrant families in Norway. Previous studies concerning reunification of immigrant families are problem-focused. Guided by the social work ethics of valuing family relationships and resilience perspectives, the study describes the family's enduring capacity to remain integrated upon reunification of Filipina immigrant single mothers with their children in Norway. A phenomenological qualitative research involving ten participants was conducted. Participants included mothers who had left their children for several years in Philippines and were subsequently reunited in Norway. Purposive sampling was conducted by selecting people who were knowledgeable about the study topic. Narrative interviews were used to elicit rich description using the participants' words regarding the strengths of participant families. Thematic analysis was used to identify, analyse and report themes that emerged from the data. Ethical clearance and approval for the study was sought from the Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD) in Norway. Results show that a number of factors fostered resilience among Filipina immigrant single mothers following reunification with their children in Norway. These factors include using adaptive parenting strategies, showing commitment and acceptance of shared parental responsibility, developing a bicultural way of life, empathizing and supporting children's adjustment, spending quality time with children, commodifying love and undertaking collaborative problem solving. Furthermore, belief in God enabled families to appraise situations that were challenging with hopefulness. Financial capability was among the strengths that enabled Filipina immigrant single mothers to meet the needs of their children. Moreover, the mothers earned income mainly from paid wages and child allowance provided by the government of Norway. The mothers and their families also benefitted in times of critical need from informal social support networks that included relatives and friends. The findings show that Filipina immigrant families exhibited considerable strengths that facilitated adaptation and growth in the context of family reunification.

Keywords: Single mothers, Filipina, immigrant families, children, family resilience Family Reunification.

1 Erasmus Mundus MFamily Master Programme, 2nd edition, E-mail: brianvenclimaco@gmail.com

Introduction

There is limited research on Filipina immigrants despite the steady increase associated with family reunification programs in Norway. Therefore, the present study aims to understand how former immigrant single mothers and their children experienced reunification. Specifically, the study seeks to identify factors that enabled families to maintain the reunion despite the recognized acculturative challenges and stress. Estimates indicate about 8,233,172.4 Filipino labour migrants around the globe, which is about 10% of the total population of Filipinos (Rodriguez, 2010). Needless to say that the Philippines is among the major source-countries for immigrants in the world. The number of immigrant Filipinos has increased in many countries largely through family reunification with their immediate family members. From 2013 to 2014, out of 16,200 non-Nordic persons who arrived in Norway as family immigrants, 12,300 or 76% represented family reunification programs. About 3,900 of the immigrants came to Norway to establish families, mostly through marriage; these were mainly from Thailand, Philippines and Poland (IMO Norway, 2016).

Numerous studies have been conducted on family reunification in immigration contexts (Arnold, 2006; Artico, 2001; Black, 2005; Glasgov & Gouse-Sheese, 1995; Hine-St. Hilarie, 2008; Hernandez, 2009; Ko & Perreira, 2010; Kotuby, 2003; Lam et al., 2005; Lashley 2000; Rosseau et.al., 2009; Smith et.al, 2004; Suarez- Orozco, Todorova & Louie, 2002; Suarez- Orozco et. al., 2008; Suarez- Orozco et. al., 2011 cited in Schapiro et.al, 2013). However, those studies highlighted problems and challenges faced by immigrant families but did not focus on their resilience and strengths. The studies also reported disruptions in attachment and acculturative stress in the context of social integration among immigrant families (Black, 2005; Lopes, 2010; Arnold, 1997; Agyeman, 2004). Guided by the ecological resilience framework, this study sought to understand and describe resilience factors that manifested in the reunification of immigrant single mothers with their children in Norway. The construct of strengths examines the means by which families managed and developed amidst challenges (Allison et. al., 2003; Lietz, 2006; 2007; Patterson, 2002; Thomas et al., 2005; Walsh, 2002 cited in Lietz & Strength, 2010).

Much has been written about problems associated with reunification of immigrant families (Arnold, 1997). In the case of single mothers, these challenges are further complicated by tasks involved in single parenting. Because of the relatively long separation, parents often have problems in the reunified relationships (Arnold, 2006). When the reunited adolescents become unruly, they are often sent back home to be cared for by relatives (Smith, 2004). Considering the associated challenges, one wonders why family reunification continues to occur. Assessing the factors that foster resilience of reunified families contributes to a clearer understanding of family reunification in Norway. The study focuses on the families of single mothers who immigrated and later were reunited with their children in Norway. The following questions guided the current study: (i) What strengths do Filipina immigrant families have following reunification in Norway? (ii) How did the resilience factors help in keeping the Filipina immigrant families reunited in Norway?

Theoretical framework

The strengths perspective propounded by Saleebby (1997) was adopted as the theoretical framework for the study. This perspective postulates that humans irrespective of their situations have strengths that can be identified, developed and utilized to meet their needs and solve problems. Rather than emphasizing acculturative stresses in the reunification and post reunification experiences of immigrant families, this study focuses on their strengths. Saleebby (1997, pp. 12-15) described five tenets of strengths perspective. First, every individual, group, family and community has strengths. Second, trauma and abuse, illness and struggle may be injurious but they may also be sources of challenge and opportunity. The third tenet assumes that you do not know the upper limits of the capacity to grow and change and take individual, group, and community aspirations seriously. Fourth, we best serve clients by collaborating with them. Lastly, every environment is full of resources. Departing from the traditional deficit approaches, the strength perspective emphasises the resources, capacities, energies and survival skills of people rather than their pathologies and problems (Saleebey, 2004; Payne, 2014).

The concepts strengths and resilience are often used interchangeably. In this study, family resilience is anchored on the ecological model developed by Bronfrenbrenner (1986). This model states that resilience of a family pertains to factors prevalence in the family itself, community and the wider contexts. Walsh (2012) describes family resilience as the family's potential for recovery, repair and growth in the context of challenges. By using this perspective, there is a shift from seeing immigrant families as damaged because of separation but as challenged and with the potential for recovery.

Methodology

A phenomenological qualitative research involving narrative interviews was conducted among Filipinas immigrant single mothers in Norway. A qualitative design is helpful for the participants to express their views because they allow researchers to probe and gain in-depth understanding of the phenomena being studied. Participants were enrolled using purposive sampling. Participants were Filipina immigrant single mothers who left children in the Philippines under the care or supervision of kinship for at least a year, and the children had subsequently been reunited with their mothers in Norway. The selected families were those in which Filipina immigrant single mothers were living together with their reunited children for at least one year. In this context, children had not been sent back to the Philippines because of any unresolved challenge including acculturation stress. In addition, the selected families had not been in contact with child protection services in Norway. Only families that expressed willingness to participate in the current study were enrolled.

Ethical clearance and approval were obtained from the Norwegian Centre for Research Data. Utmost confidentiality and anonymity were assured to the

participants. Participants were informed that the data to be collected would be used exclusively for academic purposes and be kept under strict confidentiality. Written consent was also obtained from each eligible individual before being enrolled in the study. The informed consent form was written in both English and Tagalog for ease of comprehension. Participation in this study was fully voluntary and individuals were free to decline their participation in the course of the interviews if they considered it necessary. However, all individuals who gave consent fully participated in the study.

The interviews elicited information regarding participants' demographic characteristics including age and number of children as well as the narratives concerning experiences with regard to family reunification in Norway. All the interviews conducted in Tagalog were later translated in English for eventual data analysis. Data was analysed using the thematic analysis method. Themes emerged from the data in relation to the research questions.

Findings and Discussion

The themes and subthemes which emerged from the data are summarised in the table below.

Table 5.1 Perceived contributing factor to resilience of families upon reunification

Factors	Responses
Adaptive parenting strategies	All
Commitment and acceptance of parental responsibility	
Developing bicultural way of life	
Empathizing and supporting child/children's adjustment	
Spending quality time	
Commodifying love	
Communication (open/positive)	All
Collaborative problem solving	
Spirituality	
Most	
Belief in higher being and practices	
Prayer	
Income	All
Capable to provide needs	
Shared financial responsibility	
Ability to save child's allowance for education use	
Social Support	
Receiver of Support	
Informal Social Support	All
(Family/Relatives/Friends	
Formal Social Support (government social services)	All

Adaptive parenting strategies

This theme comprises a number of subthemes as considered below.

Family commitment and shared parental responsibility

Family commitment and shared parental responsibility were reported as contributing factors to families' post reunification experiences. Commitment in keeping the family intact amidst challenges and interests of husband to have a full custody through legal adoption of the reunified children was commonly reported. Perla stated:

... My husband treats my son as if he is his own. He even becomes protective of him than me. It was him who suggested that he will adopt my son and started to inquire about the necessary steps for adoption...

Family commitment is also shown in the acceptability of the husband to be a father figure/parent even if he was not the biological father. It was described as the willingness of the husband to provide the needs of the children and to fulfil parenting responsibilities such as disciplining and invoking the sense of independence.

Developing bicultural way of life

All of the participants reported that one factor that helped their children in adjusting and eventually living with them is developing a bicultural way of life. Examples were given concerning the food they prepare at home. The study participants reported that most of the time, they prepared two dishes: one for their children and another for their foreign husband and in respect to one's preference. They even use Filipino and Norwegian languages in their homes. Inday stated:

... I see it that I know what food my child likes for me to prepare. I also cook other dishes for him to try. We speak Filipino language which also my husband can now slowly understand. I think it is necessary not to forget that we are Filipino even if we are in Norway...

Having a bicultural way of life was also found to be one of the protective factors in the study of Latino immigrant parents (Perreira et. al, 2006).

Empathizing and supporting children's adjustment

All participants reported that they showed affection and support to their children at times when making adjustment was difficult. There were different experiences

pertaining to school adjustment. While previous researches reported that the educational system became a challenge in terms of adjustment (Lashley, 2000; Glasgow, Gouse-Sheese, 1995 in Schapiro et. al 2013), rarely was it reported that bullying was experienced by reunified children. In their children's adjustment, they showed support in ways they could. Expressing affection also was paramount. Jalila stated:

... I always tell my daughter of her achievement; I always appreciate her success at school even in little ways...

Because school adjustment was rarely mentioned, in this study, the researcher thought it was not a challenge for many children. It appears that the school was an institution that helped in children's adjustment in Norway.

Spending quality time

Another strength that contributed positively to the adjustment of children was the initiative of the families to spend quality time together. Previous researchers also reported the importance of parents taking off time from work to be with their children following family reunification (Black, 2005; Boss & Greenberg, 2010 cited in Schapiro (2013).

Participants made sure that they had bonding moments with the children and husbands. According to the participants' narratives, it was not difficult for them to give time for their children because it was mentioned that they only had 6-8 hour-work during the day. They left when their children were in school and arrived from work most likely at the same with their children.

Commodifying love

Commodifying love was also reported as factor responsible for filling in the lost times by mothers for their reunified children. All participants reported stories of how they filling in by material things, which they thought their children lacked. But according to the participants, this strategy was only used for the first few months and they agreed to buy only what was necessary and to value being frugal with money. Nening stated:

...When he came, he got everything that he wanted like toys. We took him to the malls and bought what he wanted. It helped him not to miss home...

Communication

Communication emerged as a common experience in the narratives of the participants. Communication was also reported in a previous study by Pereira (2006)

among Latino immigrant parents in the United States of America as a protective factor for reunified families. It was recommended that immigrant parents should speak openly and honestly about adjustment issues with their children. Previous research (Black, 2005; Abrego, 2009) showed that reunified children and youth experienced mixed emotions of being sad about leaving their country of origin, but were excited about being reunified with family members. Some participants reported that during the first few months of reunion, they called caregivers frequently through skype because the reunified child/children missed home (Philippines). Gloria reckoned:

... of course, in the first year she thought of my mother (referring to the grandmother) everyday but we called often almost every day especially during the weekend; we spent most of the day talking with my mom.

Communication also was used as a collaborative problem-solving strategy; at times, the adjustment became a problem between and among couples and reunified children. Daday in her narratives revealed:

... I told my husband that he should understand my daughters because they are still adjusting. When we are in trouble, I don't fight with him instead I just listen and explain to him that we should work it out; that we should widen our patience, that time will come and this will be solved. After we have talked, we reconcile...

Jalila also stated that communication assisted in overcoming rivalry among siblings:

... I really communicate with them and make them understand. I explained to them why I am upset. Every time they have trouble. I intervene by talking with them inside their respective rooms. And I always make them understand that despite the fact that they are not biologically related they must treat each other as sisters...

Previous researches on reunification show that reunification with immigrant families consisting new siblings or step parents was challenging (Lashley, 2000; Hine-St 2008; Suarez-Orozco, Todorova, Louie 2002 in Schapiro et. al, 2013). But several narratives in this study showed that because of the initiated open and positive communication, immigrant mothers were able to overcome the challenge such as the acculturation stress (Baker, 2001; Congress, 1997 cited in Agyeman, 2004) and disruptions of attachment bonds and other parenting issues (Black, 2005).

Hence, when families were able to discuss and understand the situation at hand, evidently, they were moving from surviving the adjustment to adapting to the current situation. Indeed, open and positive communication is one of the strengths of the family (Lietz & Strength, 2011).

Spirituality

Spirituality was reported as a common theme amongst participants. Spirituality for the participants did not mean being obsessed with religious activities. However, it was a means by which participants sought solace in times of worry. Spirituality was understood as believing in God and the ritual of prayer. Inday stated:

... I am not active in church. I do not often go to church but I always pray. You know what, I really believe in God and the intercession of Mama Mary. God always answers my prayers every time difficulty comes in terms of adjustment in our family.

Previous research shows a significant relationship between religiosity and/or religious attendance and limited impact of depressive symptoms (Wright, Frost & Wisecarver, 1993 as cited in Corcoran & Nicholas-Casebolt 2004). In addition, it was found that belief in God offered positive health outcomes associated with coping with stress among adults (McCullough, Larson, Hoyt & Koenig, 2000 as cited in Corcoran and Nicholas-Casebolt, 2004). Surprisingly, unlike other immigrant studies, church as a form of informal support was not mentioned as expression of their spirituality but only their personal relationship with God. Perreira (2012) also reported this finding in her study amongst Latino immigrants in United States of America.

Income and shared financial responsibility at home

Income and shared financial responsibility contributed to the reunification of the immigrant families. Financial capability was also documented in the previous research amongst immigrant families (Bonizzoni, 2009; Abrego, 2009).

The financial capacities of the study participants enabled them to provide for the needs of their children in addition to financial support they received from their husbands. Daday stated:

... In terms of the household expenses, we decided that we should contribute fairly. I feel it's just normal for a couple to help one another.

Because of this financial capability of these mothers, it was believed that they did not frustrate their children in their expectation to live a comfortable life compared to Philippines. They were consistent in what they gave whenever they payed visits; this indicates that they could afford their children's needs. They had comfortable houses and other basic necessities were provided. This finding differs from findings in previous research by Lashley (2003) and Lam et. al. (2005).

Social support

Social support emerged as an essential strength in the experiences of reunified families. Informal and formal networks were paramount in maintaining the reunion of the family. In-laws and friends of the participants, the NAV social services and schools contributed in the reunification process of immigrants' families.

Receiver of Support: Informal Support (extended families, friends): Extended families, relatives/in-laws, and Filipina friends in their own capacities contributed to keeping the reunion of the family. Participants considered parents-in-laws in Norway and siblings as extended families. Perla stated:

... I could really feel the support of my in-laws. They get my son every weekend and he spends it with them in their house or they go to swimming, ice skating, watching movie and buying stuff that my son likes

All of the participants considered the immense support of the extended families and friends that offered social and economic support at times of difficulty.

Formal Support (government organizations)

All of the participants reported that the child allowance given by NAV (Social Services in Norway) was essential in supporting immigrant families during reunification. Some participants also mentioned that schools helped their reunified children to adjust in Norway. Daday stated:

... we feel safer in here (Norway) compared to Philippines. Norway is a child friendly and family-oriented country. It is the best country in which to raise a child and a family. I can't get many benefits in the Philippines like the child allowance that my daughters are receiving.

Participants also stated that it was easy for their children to get along and learn because they drew support from the schools they attended. Juanita accordingly stated:

.... There is actually a school that helped my daughter; it was a teacher who spoke Tagalog and Norsk. They can talk together anything under the sun. She helped her as a tutor...

Conclusion

The findings of this study show that Filipina immigrant families in Norway indeed exhibited strengths in adapting to issues concerning reunification which include acculturative stress. In view of the ecological framework, the family strengths

identified in this study manifested in adopting adaptive parenting strategies, effective communication, spirituality and development of social networks for support. Such capacities enabled families to remain unified amidst challenges in Norway.

The findings suggest an interplay between family strengths, community and cultural factors that facilitated stability following family reunification. Furthermore, the findings also support the strength-based conceptual framework for understanding families worldwide even in the context of reunified transitional families (DeFrain & Asay, 2007). The findings give significance to the literature on immigrant families. They facilitate an understanding of protective factors for eventual reunification amidst the challenges during the family separation by explaining what was found helpful stemming from the experience.

Finally, it is the aim of this study to promote understanding of resilience by utilizing the inherent strengths of the families with the surrounding protective factors. To promote strengths and minimize risk, it is critical for professionals dealing with welfare of immigrant families, especially children, to understand the lived experiences of separation and reunification of these families grounded in the contextual cultural interpretation. This study brings relevance to the immigration policies and social services agencies in the Philippines and Norway, especially to the Commission on Filipinos Overseas whose function is to provide welfare and cultural services that promote economic, political and cultural activities and facilitates integration of migrants in the host country. Family-centred support to immigrant parents who are in family separation and reunification is relevant to promoting family stability and functioning. Social workers should uphold the tenets of the strengths and resilience framework in working with the service users, especially immigrants in Norway.

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Part II | Immigration parenting and gender experiences

Chapter 6

Russian immigrant mothers in Portugal

Integration and parenting styles

*Anastasia Korolius*¹

E-mail: a.korolius@gmail.com

Abstract: Russian immigrants in Portugal have notably increased over last few decades. Many of them who initially arrived in Portugal for such economic reasons as finding work eventually have become residents and been reunited with their families, especially children and compatriots. Considering the unique cultural and social contexts of Russia and Portugal, Russian immigrant mothers² often undergo significant integration processes, which also influences their parenting practices. The aim of this study was to examine the integration of Russian immigrant mothers and how such integration influences their parenting practices in Portugal. Examination of parenting styles was based on the classification of parenting styles by Baumrind (1967) and the ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). Integration of Russian immigrant mothers in Portugal was studied through such dimensions as housing, language, participation in the labour market, perceptions of Portuguese culture, values and lifestyle, social networks and contacts with their home country. In particular, family dynamics (e.g. sharing responsibilities and time management) and children's experiences in the new country (such as schooling and making friends) were examined. To achieve this aim, a qualitative study involving 10 Russian-speaking immigrant mothers in Portugal was conducted. Participants were selected using purposive and snowball sampling methods. Data were collected in Russian language through in-depth individual interviews. Some field notes were also written based on non-participant observation that was conducted. Findings show that Russian immigrant mothers had adapted their parenting styles after internalizing lifestyles and values of the Portuguese. Adaption in parenting styles was influenced by their children's age and mother's socio-economic status and the associated feelings of empowerment or helplessness while living in Portugal. These findings suggest important implications for social work practice with immigrant families in Portugal.

Keywords: Immigration, parenting styles, parental practices, family integration, Russian immigrant mothers, and Portugal

Introduction

In the last few decades, Portugal has changed its immigration policies transforming from being largely a source to a recipient country for immigrants. The associated dynamic immigration phenomenon in Portugal has not been sufficiently

1 Erasmus Mundus MFamily Master Programme, 3rd edition, E-mail: a.korolius@gmail.com

2 Editor's note: In this chapter, the term Russian immigrant mothers refers to ethnicity rather than nationality. While most interviewees are Russian nationals (seven), three hold other nationalities.

studied. Thus, there are few published articles on “*imigração do leste*” (Eastern immigration) (Baganha et al., 2004), social networks (Hellermann, 2006), immigrant associations (Sardinha, 2009), social characteristics (Mendes, 2009; De Almeida Vieira Monteiro & Serra, 2011) and perceptions of the immigrants by the Portuguese (Mendes, 2011). Little research has particularly been conducted on Russian-speaking personal and family experiences (including children’s experiences) of immigrants in Portugal (Tereshchenko & Araújo, 2011). The current study aims at examining experiences of parenting among Russian immigrant women in Portugal, dimensions of integration of these parents, their parental practices and parenting styles.

A considerable Russian-speaking community resides in Portugal. According to the Foreigners and Borders Service (SEF, 2015), there were 388,731 international immigrants in Portugal by the end of 2015; of these immigrants, 35,779 were from Ukraine, 6,948 were from Moldavia and 4,263 were from Russia. These three Russian-speaking nationalities contributed over 12% of the total immigrant population in Portugal. Yet, defining the Russian immigrant population is often a challenge to researchers because Russians constitute a highly multicultural and multi-ethnic population. Moreover, following the collapse of the Soviet Union (USSR), different nationalities found themselves mixed in the borders of the vanished country; thus, big Diasporas naturally appeared in the ex-members states. In these circumstances, it appears that Russian citizenship is not synonymous with nationality. For the purpose of the current study, I focused on persons who originated from one of the ex-USSR republics, auto-declared Russian ethnicity and used Russian as their mother language.

To understand how Russian immigrants represented the realities of their life in a new country, constructed their family dynamics and if there was an interdependence between these two ideas, I conducted 10 in-depth interviews with Russian women who resided in Portugal together with their children. The first topic considered was the integration levels of Russian immigrant mothers and their relations to the Portuguese society through such dimensions as geographical insertion, social networks, career, language, culture and lifestyle, citizenship and construct of home. Subsequently, a detailed analysis of parenting styles of Russian immigrant mothers and their perception of the differences in family dynamics and parental responsibilities in Portugal and in Russia was undertaken.

Findings of the current study are anticipated to contribute to improved understanding of the realities of life of Russian immigrant families and their children in Portugal. They will also focus academic attention on the processes of integration among Russian immigrant families and their children in Portugal thereby filling the knowledge and research gaps in this area. Furthermore, they will facilitate examination of integration processes among the increasing number of Russian-speaking immigrants in Portugal, allow social service organizations to facilitate this process and improve services delivery to this population. Russian immigrant parents with children will be particularly well prepared to adapt in Portugal, a country that highly culturally different from Russia.

Literature review and theoretical framework

Parents are ideally responsible for providing care and protection to their children. They are the first and main agents of socialization for their children. Their roles include teaching children languages and imparting social and culture norms, traditions, values, skills and attitudes to them. However, many parents find meeting these societal expectations regarding parenting challenging. Mourik et al. (2016) stated that a large number of parents are often uncertain about effective ways of raising children. Consequently, many parents need to consult professionals or experienced persons outside their families to address concerns regarding parenting and child development. Such a need is highly prevalent among “parents of young children, ethnic minority parents and parents with low income levels” (Reijneveld et al., 2008; as cited in Mourik, 2016, p. 345). Being an immigrant parent is a massive challenge for anyone (Fleck & Fleck, 2013). Immigrant parents usually get frustrated because of the necessary adaptations concerning parenting they need to make. Adaptation is necessitated by the changes in the parents and children’s social norms and language.

The terms *parental practices* and *parenting styles* are often used as synonyms in social work literature; however, Darling and Steinberg (1993) argued that these terms differ. In particular, *parental practices* refer to parental behaviour in general as well as specific ways of conduct used for socialisation of the child while *parenting style* is a general emotional climate in which children are reared (Darling & Steinberg, 1993). Thus, it is justifiable to say that parenting styles are in some way constructed by parental practices. Spera (2005, p. 135) reported that there is a considerable body of literature on parenting styles based on such dimensions as “responsiveness/unresponsiveness (Baldwin, 1948; Freud, 1933; Rogers, 1960; Sears et al., 1957; Schaefer, 1959), democratic/autocratic (Baldwin, 1948), emotionally involved/uninvolved (Baldwin, 1948), control/non-control (Schaefer, 1959), acceptance/rejection (Symonds, 1939), dominance/submission (Symonds, 1939), and restrictiveness/permissiveness (Becker, 1964)”. While many of the above theories are applicable to many studies regarding parenting, I adopted Baumrind (1967)’s influential theory of parenting styles for the current study. Baumrind’s (1967) theory suggests to researchers to assess two dimensions of parenting: (i) parental responsiveness, which includes moral support and encouragement of individuality, and (ii) parental demand, which includes supervision and disciplinary measures. Different combinations of these elements create three parenting styles, which are (i) authoritarian parenting style, (ii) authoritative parenting style and (iii) permissive parenting style. An authoritarian parent is high in control and low in parental sensitivity; the parent has a certain set of norms and beliefs that a child should obey without question. An authoritative parent has a high level of maturity demands and at the same time provides emotional proximity. Such a parent gives explanations in support of his or her actions that are closely connected to children’s internalization of parental values and their general moral development. A permissive parent scores moderate or high in proximity, but low in control, often questioning his/ her decisions based on the children’s desires. The parents’ exercise of power is

close to absent, obedience by children to external rules imposed by anyone, including parents, is not encouraged in this type of parenting. Parents of this type position themselves as a source of support but not as active agents of shaping children's behaviour and personality.

A relationship between parenting style and the maturity of children, children's independence and educational achievements exists. Several researchers (Baumrind, 1967; Baumrind, 1989; Dornbusch et al., 1987; Lamborn et al., 1991; Steinberg et al., 1989; Rudasill et al., 2013) found that children of authoritative parents often showed better maturity, higher independence levels and better educational achievements. Authoritative parenting style also influenced positively the adolescents' average grades in school (Steinberg et al., 1992). Adopting different parenting styles therefore results in unique consequences for children. In the case of Asian, African and Hispanic children (Dornbusch et al., 1987; Steinberg et al., 1992), other factors in addition to the parenting style, such as socioeconomic status and cultural values influence children's outcomes. Thus, inclusion of the ecological theory is important for current research in terms of acculturation of the parents and their parenting practices. An important variable in the ecological theory is geographic mobility that affects the developmental process of a child. It influences "the index of the instability of the family environment that is a major predictor of the child's subsequent development in adolescence and early adulthood" (Bronfenbrenner, 1986, p. 736).

While studying minority families, Garcia Coll et al. (1996) found three different categories of factors that influence the developmental process of a child and also influence each other. These are (i) social factors (e.g. racism and discrimination existing in the host society), (ii) family (economic resources, cultural values and goals, family structure), and (iii) child factors (age, gender, psychological and physical features). "At the interface of these three factors is an adaptive culture that involves a social system that differs from the dominant culture" (Pereira, 2006, p. 1385). One important determinant for changing parental behaviour is the change of socialization goals that "might vary due to different societal demands on families" (Ogbu, 1981; as cited in Spera, 2005, 139). Thus, the family's change of a place of residence determines parenting practices. It is not rare that the family structure also changes in the immigration process and children become agents of socialization for the parents (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Pereira et al., 2006; Jun & Ha, 2015).

At the same time, it does not mean that an immigrant parent will adopt a model typical for local parents; she or he may become flexible in adopting a parenting style. Parenting practices that are valued in the country of origin are often internalized and adopted while those, which are disapproved in the host society, are adapted. For instance, law, in some European countries, prohibits administering corporal punishments to children. Thus, parents ought to stop such a practice because they attract negative legal consequences for them and their children. Parents who fail to change the practice of administering corporal punishment live in constant fear of the social services or have to send children back to the country of origin to be raised by members of their extended families.

However, there are more reasons other than culture that lead to the changes in a parental behaviour. Different macro social factors affect the process of immigration; in the first place, it is the lack of the resources, e.g. material resources and language, knowledge and skills, and loss of professional and social status. It all deprives the children of many opportunities and affects them through parental stress. As it was discussed above, the parenting practices are classified according to the balance of parental control and discipline with parental responsiveness and child-parent communication, which differs from culture to culture and could be notably impacted by socioeconomic challenges in the new country (Mesman et al., 2011). In general, "stress, socioeconomic disadvantage, traditional ideas about parenting, and lack of acculturation... [lead to the] use of authoritarian discipline" (Prevoo & Tamis-LeMonda, 2017, p. 34).

Many scholars argue that an essential part of the social environment, especially in immigration, is the concept of social capital that provides important social and psychological support, which are especially valuable for compatriots because of the similarity of their cultural background and commonness of their language. Thus, it brings its own advantages and is noted especially in reference to new-coming immigrants (Jun & Ha, 2015; Ryan et al., 2008). In-group support is also very important for families as a source of childcare; in the first place, it is the help of extended family, namely maternal grandmother. For example, Bianchi (2006) stated that the connection between a young mother and her own mother could be as important for the family as the connection between a mother and a father of a child. Thus, the role of grandparents is important in immigration and even the full nuclear family in immigration might be seen as a transnational one. Despite the positive outcomes of social capital for immigrants, there are negative influences associated with it, for example, exclusion of outcasts, constant control and restriction of individual freedom and stigmatization (Beresneviciute, 2003) inside the ethnic group as well as in the larger society. Another outcome is: Russianness, especially when intersecting with gender and inter-ethnic marriage, may imply negative and stigmatising attitudes in various European countries" (Heyse, 2010, p. 68).

According to Berry's (1997) concept of acculturation strategies, during the engagement between cultures the representatives of both dominant and non-dominant ones have certain preferences in two directions: a desire to maintain their ethnic culture and identity and a desire to have daily interactions with the individuals outside the group, in the larger society. The behaviour of minority group representatives forms the acculturation strategies; an opinion of the dominant group about the standard of this behaviour is called acculturation expectations; and the attitude of the dominant group to ethno-cultural minorities is measured by the concept of multicultural ideology (Berry, 2003). The current study is focused on the strategies of the minority groups who are the immigrant Russian mothers in Portugal.

As also noticed by Berry (1997), acculturation is a stressful process that implies settling in new lifestyles, new roles and identities. The challenges faced during immigration cause psychological distress and often put an individual in a situation of adversity. Despite the potential risks, the majority of immigrants successfully deal with the new realities because of their resilience. Masten (2011,

p. 494) describes resilience as the “capacity of a dynamic system to withstand or recover from significant challenges that threaten its stability, viability, or development”. The resilience theory is based on the strengths that are acquired by a person overcoming a challenging situation. Thus, instead of being helpless in the face of problems, an immigrant can obtain resources that not only promote his/her well-being but also give him/her certain advantages in the country of destination. For example, immigrant children often do better in school than their local peers (Spera, 2005). Indeed, many interviewees stated that they passed through many difficulties and lost important parts of their lives such as student years or infancy of their children while struggling with the challenges of immigration. However, they do not regret them as it made them stronger and more adaptable to situations in the present and future. At the family level, the closeness of its members promotes their resilience and that of a child in particular in the first place (Gungor & Perdu, 2017). Following the ecological perspective to acculturation, Gungor and Perdu (2017 p. 3) argue that different social contexts determine acculturative options as well as the relevance of resilience resources. An individual who has adopted both his native culture and one of the host countries has a greater level of resilience and better chances to cope with immigration challenges, than a mono-cultured person does. Thus, the acculturation strategy of integration seems to be more preferable than the others with regard to diminishing an immigrant’s stress. The strength-based perspective was used in this research as a theoretical base for collecting and analysing data.

Methodology

A qualitative study involving 10 Russian-speaking immigrant mothers in Portugal was conducted. Participants in this study were selected using purposeful and snowball sampling methods. As it was discussed in the introduction, there was a challenge of identifying the studied population. According to the statistics (SEF, 2015), there were only about 4000 Russian citizens residing in Portugal, at the same time as it was expected, many interviewees auto-declared having the Russian nationality, in spite of the absence of citizenship. Thus, it was decided to focus on women immigrant from post-soviet counties who auto-declared Russian ethnicity; were mothers of minors; and were living with them in Portugal for at least one year. The selection of participants was based on purposeful and snowball sampling methods, primarily using Facebook groups “Russian speakers in Portugal” and “Our mothers in Portugal”. Using Facebook to recruit participants was advantageous on the one hand and disadvantageous on the other hand. On a positive note, it enabled fast and easy access to a big Russian-speaking population, which was important considering the short period available for data collection. On the negative note, only women, who were empowered, had access to information about immigration and collective wisdom by means of Facebook were selected. This means that the sampling of participants may have left out relevant stories of immigrants who lost money and trust in compatriots being deceived by the “so called helpers”, the situation which was common a decade ago (Hellermann, 2006). This fact underlines the limitation of generalization that is natural

to qualitative methods (Bryman, 2012). In total, 10 participants were enrolled in this study (see appendix 1). Although all the interviewees auto-declared Russian ethnicity, they came to Portugal not only from Russia but also from different post-USSR countries, such as Ukraine, Moldavia and Lithuania. The age of participants ranged between 24 and 40, and the age of the children was between 2 and 17. Participants had lived varying periods in Portugal, ranging from one to sixteen years. There were three groups that could be visibly distinguished: newcomers (1, 2 and 3 years), middle-term immigrants (7 and 8 years) and long-time residents (14, 15, and 16 years). The sample was quite homogenous in terms of education and marital status. There were three cases of intermarriage in the sample. Four participants had immigrated to Portugal with their partners from their previous countries, two participants met their partners while already in Portugal (notably the cases of co-habitation) and the other three participants' marriage was their reason to immigrate to Portugal. Five women out of nine had relatives in Portugal. The children in the sample were of different ages: pre-school (6 children, 2 to 4 years old), primary school group (4 children, 7 to 10 years including) and one teenage girl of 17 years, all of them except one were incorporated in the Portuguese education system by attending school/kindergarten for at least half a year.

Data were collected in the Russian language through in-depth individual interviews. Data collection was undertaken in Lisbon Metropolitan Area in consideration of the limited time and other resources. In-depth individual interviews were considered useful because they attribute particular values to participant's opinions and points of view reproduced during the discourse (Bryman, 2012). The elaborated interview guideline consisted of six main sections: socio-demographic information about the participants, immigration path, integration indicators, family dynamics and family practices, child's experiences, future plans and aspirations with the focus on a desire to stay in Portugal/ return to the country of origin/ immigrate elsewhere and reasons for that. Some field notes were also written based on non-participant observations that were conducted during the interviews. Non-participant observation was possible since more than a half of mothers brought their children for the meeting with the researcher or even suggested that interviews be conducted at their respective homes.

Data were analysed using the method of thematic analysis. There were two main sections for the analysis: family integration (including language, job and career path, social capital, cultural homogeneities and differences between Portugal and the country of origin, Portugal and Portuguese by the eyes of immigrant mother) and family dynamics. The analysis of the mentioned indicators enabled finding out the dimensions of integration of the participants and distinguishing the types of their parental practices and the level of participation of the children.

Findings and Discussion

Participants described the Portuguese society as welcoming and open to immigrants. It was also noted that there were favourable policies that allowed immigrants to get long residence permits, acquire citizenship, bring their families and offered children access to formal education and basic health assistance. The

Portuguese government also ran programs that helped immigrants to negotiate the bureaucracy and facilitate learning of the Portuguese language (e.g. CNAI); these were highly appreciated by the participants. Thus, the Portuguese state empowered the immigrants and the Portuguese society adopted a model of multiculturalism that in turn enabled immigrants and their children to choose the path of integration. It is important to state that the participants reported they felt empowered. They were looking forward to their future and taking their first years in immigration (that they often address as “a transitional period”) not as adversity but as a unique school of life that provided them with specific skills and experience that neither their compatriots at home, nor local population had.

Table 1 provides an overview of “weak points” of integration discovered for every participant. It is not a surprise that the group of newcomers reported the most in this “anti-rating”. At the same time, the personal experiences of the immigration, reasons and resources available for immigration influenced person’s desires and abilities to integrate. In other words, interviewees faced more challenges in integration if the immigration was caused by unfortunate economic or political situations in their countries of origin rather than personal inclination to change the place of residence. Such factors as perception of immigration as a temporary measure, interpretation of immigration as an “act of betrayal of the homeland”, a challenge for finding a good job and balancing it with family responsibilities and personal development hindered the process of integration. There was a particular case of Alena, which was interesting because, despite being unintegrated in the Portuguese society by all the studied dimensions, she did not display many features of “Russianness” either, but a high level of acceptance of different cultures without focusing on a specific culture.

Although many participants reported a “high similarity of Russian and Portuguese mentalities”, they also discussed differences that they saw between Russian and Portuguese ways of raising a child, as well as differences between their parental behaviour in immigration and the behaviour that they had (would possibly have) in their countries of origin. Although all of them stated that it was only their personal opinion and, of course, the practices varied from family to family; different women named many things in common. Everyone agreed that Russian parents were stricter, more demanding, asking for a higher level of discipline from children, putting more responsibilities on children and setting extra goals than Portuguese women. The lack of exigence was reported for the schools and extra education activities available in Portugal; parents wished the institutions could push harder on their children to facilitate them achieve greater academic results. This initial lack of discipline was also reported by many participants including violation of some “basic rules of society” and health recommendations. Thus, the participants stated that children, teenagers and young adults were noisy in public places, sitting on the floor that was considered cold and dirty, etc. Regarding routines, mothers stated that they often saw small Portuguese children in cafes or walking in the street with their parents until very late, but for their own children they would not allow it: 9-10 p.m. was reported to be a time to go to bed for children aged 2 to 10. In general, the Portuguese way of raising a child was characterized as too permissive.

Table 6.1 Dimensions of the mothers' integration

Name	Rents a flat	Weak level of Portuguese language	Never had a job in Portugal	Lack of local social capital	Partner resides in Portugal for less than 10 years	Doesn't have a Portuguese passport	Considers a possibility to migrate back/ elsewhere	Total lack of dimensions
Alisa	✓			✓	✓	✓		3
Nina					✓			1
Elena		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	5
Alexandra	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		4
Daria								0
Irina								0
Alena	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	7
Larisa								0
Tamara							✓	1

At the same time, lack of demandingness was seen as an advantage in certain situations. Children in Portugal and consequentially the whole society were reported to be more open, cordial, easy-going and enjoying life. The education and topics discussed in Portugal were not that tabooed as in Russia (e.g., sex education, including sexual orientation and religion). Participants stated they liked the fact that Portuguese people did not make drama out of the child's desire to go "alternative way" from what was prestigious in society, feel obliged to show off just to prove something to the others, or stop their impulses just because of the opinion of the crowd. In general, it was stated that Portuguese people tended to be *simpler*.

Participants agreed that Portuguese people were more family-oriented especially with regard to belonging to the extended family because they kept close and frequent relations with relatives. They also noted that although children were loved and cared for, they did not become a centre of Portuguese families. Many women thought that Russian parents, mothers in the first place, often sacrificed their own interests and desires to give to the child an opportunity to reach the high levels they set up with their demands; they were overprotective and "suffocated children with care". It was further noted that fathers normally did not play an important role in child rearing and caregiving, unlike Portuguese fathers who were seen as more loving and caring for their children. It is interesting that despite having much value for the family, Portuguese people did not rush to start a family of their own.

With regard to their own parental behaviour, many women said it was different from what it used to be back home or it would be different if they were still living in their countries of origin. First, they said that difference in the presence of social capital and social status (building a career in the first place) would make them take different decisions about their family structure (e.g. having more children). Second, many participants thought that their way of parenting changed after they came to Portugal; the mothers seemed to be internalizing certain rules, accepted in Portugal. The information collected during the interviews allowed for the analysis of parenting styles of the

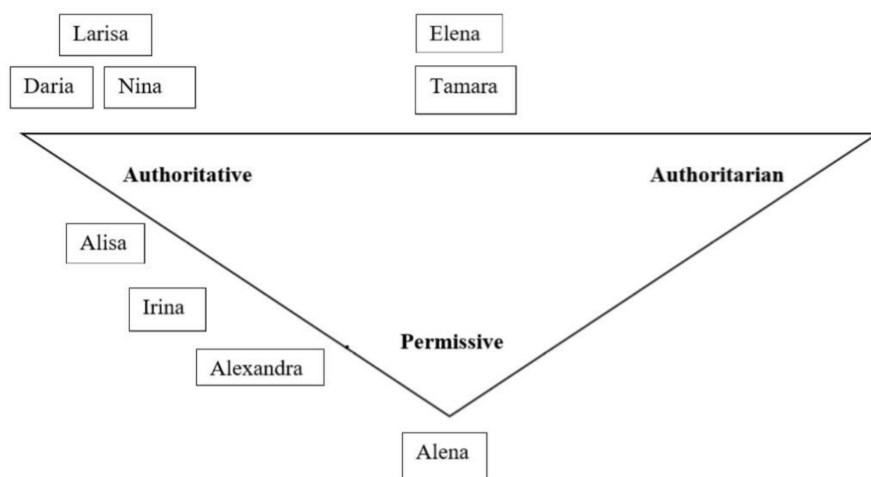


Figure 6.1 Parenting styles of the interviewees

Russian women, using dimensions of parental demandingness and parental responsiveness that form authoritative (high level of both), permissive (high sensibility and low level of demandingness) and authoritarian (low responsiveness, high demandingness) styles. Thus, the following scheme (Figure 1) illustrates the typology of the sample in frames of the parental practices they practised.

All the women who worked full day schedule (Larisa, Alisa, Elena and Tamara) reported a high desire to participate actively in the lives of their children, but because of certain circumstances only Larisa could do so. Alisa was raising the child alone; Tatiana was stressed about losing her job for the second time; while Elena was still homesick and stressed because of losing her social status and agency (e.g. an ability to act on her own in various day-to-day situations due to her poor Portuguese language). Overall, it was apparent that parental sensibility was getting lower in the face of external problems that conformed to ecological theory (Mourik et al., 2016; Prevoo & Tamis-LeMonda, 2017). Consequently, Tamara and Elena used a mix of authoritarian and authoritative styles in raising their children. However, it was interesting that Tamara became less authoritarian during her stay in Portugal; for example, she stopped using corporal punishments to discipline her children because in her opinion it was less acceptable in Portugal than in her home city in Moldavia. Many participants reported the same trend of “becoming more permissive as the Portuguese were”.

It was noteworthy that mothers of the children of preschool age tended to choose the permissive style of parenting. This was highlighted by repeatedly using such phrases as “in his age”, “he is still too little to do it”, “I wouldn’t do it before he grows up”. Tamara and Larisa used the same explanations of their actions towards their younger children, though the conversation was concentrated around their

elder children; thus, the women got respective places on the scheme. It is plausible to state that when Alisa's, Alexandra's and Irina's children grow up they would also change their parenting styles. However, the same was unlikely to happen in the case of Alena because her choice of the parenting style was primarily influenced not by her daughter's young age but by her intensively displayed multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism. Thus, the parenting styles and parental practices tended to change in a new country but immigration was not the only reason for the change.

No obvious interdependence was discovered between children's adaptation and parenting styles: all of them had friends often both local and Russian-speaking, all the children were doing well at school. They had different extra-curriculum activities and, followed the path of integration chosen by their parents and were internalizing their values of hard work and success. All the parents did their best to help children to integrate and called it their priority. At the same time, it was noticed that in many cases children themselves became agents of integration for their parents in promoting and widening their communication to the larger world. They used Portuguese and gave a reason to find better jobs to support their families.

Conclusion

The theories used for the research (e.g. acculturation and integration, parenting styles, ecological and social capital approaches, empowerment and participation) were highly interdependent in explaining experiences of the participants in the current study. The information on the integration of immigrants and their children was key for a proper policy debate. Participants tended to use the authoritative parenting style with children of school age and authoritative-permissive parenting style with pre-school children. This finding together with the importance of success expressed by the participants matched the studies that proved the interdependence between using authoritative parenting and higher school results for children (Dornbusch et al., 1987). It was also observed during the study that the process of integration into the host society depended on internal and external factors. Much importance was given to resilience (Güngör et al., 2017; Masten, 2011), and to family and in-group support (Hellermann, 2006; Jun and Ha, 2015).

As for the policy recommendations, many initiatives of Portuguese institutions were reported to be functional (e.g. CNAI, State Portuguese courses); therefore, it is recommended that they should be utilised by Russian immigrants in Portugal. At the same time, it will be helpful to provide more clear and well-arranged information about the ways of working of certain Portuguese institutions (for example, health system, SEF). More attention should be paid to making the process clearer and shorten the waiting time (for instance, SEF, kindergarten enrolment process) and adjusting the bureaucracy taking into account the realities of other countries (e.g. differences in educational systems for confirming foreign diplomas). Regarding the children, the continuation of existing educational inclusion is recommended; however, with an additional attention to learning and mastering Portuguese.

Appendix 1

S/N	Name	Age	Origin*	Years in immigration	Marital status	Nº of children (age)	Children born in Portugal	Education	Current occupation	Professional occupation before migration	Partner (origin, education, occupation)	Extended family in Portugal	Pre-immigration social capital in Portugal
1	Alisa	30	Russia (Ekaterinburg)	8	Separated (previously cohabitating)	1 (2,5 years)	+	Higher	Call centre	no	Ukrainian, Secondary, Labourer	mother	mother
2	Nina	35	Russia (Sochi)	14	Married	1 (10 years)	+	Higher	Tourism entrepreneur**	no	Russian, Higher, IT Specialist	husband's family	partner
3	Elena	33	Russia (Tolyatti)	2	Married	1 (8 years)	-	Higher	Jobless***	Kindergarten educator	Moldavian, Higher, Medical Nurse	-	partner
4	Alexandra	32	Lithuania (Vilnius)	3	Married	1 (2 years)	+	Higher	Housewife***	Logistics specialist	Russian, Higher, IT Specialist	-	-
5	Daria	35	Russia (Volgograd)	14	Cohabitating	1 (7 years)	+	Unfinished higher (2 years)	Jobless***	no	Angolan, High school, Labourer	mother, siblings, mother-in-law	mother
6	Irina	40	Russia (St. Petersburg)	7	Married	1 (3 years)	+	Higher	Photographer**	Head accountant	Portuguese, Higher, Economist	husband's family	partner
7	Alena	36	Russia (Krasnoyarsk)	19 in general, 1 in Portugal)	Married	1 (2,5 years)	-	Higher	Housewife***	Bank insurance specialist	Croat, Higher, On-line entrepreneur	-	-
8	Larisa	39	Ukraine (Donetsk)	15	Married	2 (2 and 17 years)	-/+	Higher	Store manager	Medical nurse	Ukrainian, Secondary, Factory operator	parents, siblings, grand-father	-
9	Tamara	39	Moldavia (Kishinev)	16	Married	2 (4 and 9 years)	+/+	Higher	Currency exchange agent	no	Moldavian, Higher, Factory operator	-	-

*despite the place of origin all the interviewees claimed to be of the Russian ethnicity.

**part-time or freelance occupation.

***distinction between a HOUSEWIFE and a JOBLESS person is based on a necessity of the interviewee to find a paid job.

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Chapter 7

Experiences of mothering in the context of the Norwegian child welfare services among Romanian immigrant mothers

Raquel Herrero Arias¹

Abstract: This chapter explores experiences of mothering among Romanian immigrant mothers in the context of the Norwegian child welfare services. Data were collected using narrative interviews and participant observation. Participants were four Romanian immigrant mothers who had lived in Norway for the period ranging from 2 to 7 years. Framed by the Foucauldian perspective, the analysis provides insights into how Romanian immigrant mothers deal with public intervention in their mothering practices, negotiate, reproduce and resist meanings about mothering. Across the participants' narratives, a shared experience of doing mothering in the context of the Norwegian discourses on childhood and mothering emerged. Romanian immigrant mothers articulated these discourses in their narratives around three main themes. These are conceptualizations of childhood and children; understanding of public intervention in child welfare and family life; and the Norwegian child welfare services. The latter emerged as a prevalent theme across the data as the institution that corrects and sanctions maladjustments to the Norwegian norms of good mothering. Narratives of Romanian immigrant mothers bring knowledge about how their mothering is experienced as a target of public intervention. Perceptions of legitimized norms of childrearing in Norway had a remarkable influence on experiences of motherhood among Romanian immigrant mothers. By sharing Romanian immigrant mothers' experiences, findings depict Norwegian popular meanings of mothering, children, immigration, and contribute to current debates on doing mothering in the Norwegian context.

Keywords: Immigrants, Romanian mothers, children, child welfare system, mothering and Norway.

1 Erasmus Mundus MFamily Master Programme, 2nd edition, E-mail: ariasherre@hotmail.es

Introduction

Living in a globalized world implies that mothers and children give meaning to their relationships under the influence of several discourses on childhood and mothering that are portrayed in legislations, policies, mass media, professional decision-making and expert knowledge. Families are involved in the “politics of culture” (Stephens, 2005 cited in Thelen & Haukanes, 2010, p. 12) in which several actors negotiate meanings about the position of children and parents in institutional and family settings. Moreover, understandings of childhood and mothering are promoted mainly in institutional contexts, which include governmental agencies such as child welfare services (CWS). In particular, the welfare institution that safeguards children’s wellbeing works considering a certain conceptualization of “good” childhood and the factors that cause children to be at risk of abuse or neglect (Parton, 1991). This conceptualization of “good” childhood reflects western middle-class ideals (Vagli, 2009) that are not shared by all cultures or groups within western societies, which include the nuclear family and biologically defined parenthood norms (Thelen & Haukanes, 2010).

As far as immigration is concerned, immigrant mothers experience mothering in a context in which cultural norms travel across national borders, due to the extended use of transnational communication technologies, international legislations and fast means of transport. Therefore, immigrant mothers encounter different and sometimes contradicting understandings of childhood, mothering and the role and scope of public intervention in family issues. In this complexity, they negotiate and redefine their relationships with their children and welfare professionals in host and source societies.

Drawing on participant observation and narrative interviews, the current study explores experiences of Romanian immigrant mothers regarding mothering in Norway. Furthermore, it explores the meanings that Romanian immigrant mothers give to the Norwegian child welfare services (NCWS) as a welfare institution that supports families at the same time that standardizes normative mothering practices. The analysis sheds light on how Romanian immigrant mothers’ mothering practices resist and overlap with discourses encountered in institutional settings. Drawing on the Foucauldian perspective (Cayuela Sánchez, 2015; Foucault, 1982; Gordon, Burchell, Miller, & Foucault, 1991), immigrant mothers’ positions in relation to power/oppression systems are explored in order to enlighten participants’ experiences and reflections on mothering as a target of public intervention.

Mothering and public intervention

As the Ariés School (Thelen & Haukanes, 2010, p. 14) suggests, modern nation states aim to produce “useful” citizens through public interventions that are legitimized by the population for the regulation of reproduction, childbirth, childcare and work-family balance. The shift that families have experienced from being considered part of the private sphere to becoming a target of public

intervention was described by Donzelot (1979) as “policing of families”. Through monitoring parenting practices and developing social policies directed towards children and families, states aim to protect children against harm and the society from the harm that children could cause (Hennum, 2014).

Therefore, mothers do mothering within the “politics of culture” in which there are diverse actors, including welfare institutions that work through policies, legislations, laws, guidelines and professional decision-making and knowledge. In their interaction with welfare institutions, mothers get involved in dialogues and relationships that can be seen as “technologies of control” from a Foucauldian perspective (Foucault, 1978). From this framework, welfare institutions are understood as means to educate mothers in the standardized idea of a welfare state regime on what a “good” life is like.

In their navigation through expert knowledge when encountering welfare institutions, mothers’ subjectivities open up for regulation (Vagli, 2009, p. 219) because professionals’ decision-making and knowledge provides mothers with norms against which to assess their own mothering practices (Rose, 1999, p. 131). Working with the best intentions towards children and families (Gordon, 2008), policy makers and welfare professionals have become active agents in mothers’ daily lives, expecting from them and disciplining them into the “proper” mothering practices. At the same time, mothers are individuals who can challenge the hegemonic ideals on child raising because they might understand childhood and the risks, they should protect their children from, differently.

The Norwegian context

The welfare state regime in Norway is characterized by institutionalization of a great range of areas within society, market and families, high levels of de commodification and universalism (Esping-Andersen, 1990). Civic rights typical of democratic nations are its core values. For instance, citizen’s right to complain about professional treatment is an example of a welfare system that has institutionalized advocacy towards civil society by ombudsman (Means, 1968). The well-functioning of the Norwegian welfare state depends on families’ trust towards the state in the achievement of higher levels of welfare (Esping-Andersen, 2009).

With regard to child welfare, public intervention in childhood and family issues is legitimated in Norway (Hollekim, Anderssen, & Daniel, 2016) under the assumption that children’s protection, equal opportunities and wellbeing are a societal responsibility (Björk, Eydal & Satka, 2006). Norway was one of the first countries to sign and ratify the United Nations Convention on the Right of the Child (UNCRC, 1989) in 1991 and is considered a pioneer in the application of children perspectives in policies and domestic laws (Gilbert, Parton, & Skivenes, 2011; Sommer, Samuelsson, & Hundeide, 2010). In fact, the incorporation of children’s perspectives has been discussed to bring a consensus between society and professionals on the state’s legitimate power to intervene in families (Picot, 2014). In particular, the Child Welfare Act (CWA, 1992) brings the integration of CWS

into the welfare state as a universal system that recognizes children as individuals with their own rights, but also as part of a family (Gilbert et al., 2011). This welfare institution acknowledges the Norwegian state's involvement in family life with a family-sensitive and therapeutic approach, which assumes that most interventions are in-home services whereas out-of-home measures are mostly in foster homes.

While working from a child-centred approach, the NCWS professionals put the focus on the children's wellbeing in their assessments (Krill & Skivenes, 2010). In their study on the NCWS professionals' perspectives regarding their work with immigrant families, Krill & Skivenes (2010) argued that the NCWS decision-making is influenced by the value of equality rather than cultural pluralism. Focusing on the principle of "the best interest of the child", professionals approach immigrant mothers as the main actors responsible for their children "proper" childhood and integration in the host society. Professionals expect from mothers the performance of an ideal mothering that might be difficult to meet by those who are not middle-class Norwegians (Fox, 2009; Romagnoli & Wall, 2012). Focusing on mothers' individual capabilities to raise their children in the "proper" way, professionals overlook the structural contexts in which they do mothering that hinders or promotes the desired child raising (Hennum, 2014). Factors that impact on immigrant mothers' mothering, such as racism (Krill & Skivenes, 2010) and economic inequalities (Hennum, 2014) are then neglected in professionals' assessment.

Methodology

This qualitative study adopted an ethnographic design and narrative approach. Data were collected from February to June 2016 in Rogaland (Norway) through participant observations and narrative interviews. The study was approved by the Norwegian Data Protection Agency, whose ethical guidelines were strictly followed. Study participants were four Romanian immigrant mothers who had lived in Norway for a period ranging from two to seven years, with their children and partners. Three of participants had university degrees but only one worked in her professional field. Participants were in the age range of 26 to 47 years. They were also either married or cohabiting with Romanian partners. The number of children for each participant ranged from one to two and were aged between 18 months and 4 years.

Romanian immigrant mothers were selected as the study participants firstly due to accessibility. The summer before conducting this study, I worked with Romanian immigrant women as a housekeeper in Norway. This experience gave me access to their stories about raising their children in Norway and their opinions and perceptions of Norwegian public intervention in mothering. The workdays provided me with some background information about the context in which Romanian immigrant mothers did mothering and gave meaning to their experiences as mothers in Norway. Some of the Romanian mothers I had worked with were open to participate in this study. Because the focus of the study was on getting rich

data through exploration of actions, talks, beliefs and social interactions, I considered our previous relationship a strength that facilitated the process of immersion in the field, data collection and analysis. My position as an acquaintance and shared basic characteristics with the participants (e.g. as an immigrant and a young woman) facilitated data collection. I considered that participants placed me in meaningful cultural roles that supposed a fragmentation of my “self” during the research process (Kondo 1990, p. 13). Participants emphasized my identity as a labour immigrant in Norway when they narrated their experiences of discrimination and made possible the disclosure of their feelings and experiences. This positioning of my identity by participants also reinforced their distance with the host society that was stressed in our informal talks and the individual interviews. At the same time, participants emphasized those identities they did not share with me (being a mother), which resulted in richer descriptions about a reality that was unfamiliar for me (raising children in Norway). Moreover, the process of data collection can be seen as therapeutic for participants (Sands, 1996). In the current study, Romanian immigrant mothers found themselves in a space in which they could share their own meanings. They stated that this was an opportunity for them to express part of themselves that have been hidden, for instance, with regard to how they positioned themselves in terms of power/oppression concerning the host society and its institutions.

Semi-structured individual interviews that were conducted had a narrative approach covering immigration stories, experiences of mothering, social participation and belonging. Interviews were supported by informal conversations and participant observation at natural settings such as workplaces, homes or parks. The length of these interactions varied from three to 5 hours and the languages used in conducting the interviews were English (three participants) and Spanish (one participant). Fieldwork notes were analysed thematically, and a narrative analysis was conducted drawing on the data collected (Riessman, 2008). The analysis focused on the content of the narratives and was inspired by a latent approach looking for assumptions underpinning the data.

Findings and Discussion

In this section, I present the main themes that emerged from the data. Participants’ experiences are discussed drawing on the Foucauldian perspective (Cayuela Sánchez, 2015; Foucault, 1982; Gordon et al., 1991) that views mothering as a target of public intervention and the tensions that come up between mothers’ practices and values as well as professionals’ expectations.

Conceptualizations of childhood and children

Participants shared stories that contain cultural narratives about children, childhood and mothering. Across the data, Romanian immigrant mothers showed an awareness of the culturally-shaped character of childhood and mothering and

discussed how these constructs are given different meanings in Norway and their country of origin.

Barlow and Chapin (2010) stated that there are some universals in mothering, such as protection and nurturing. These universals were evident across the mothers' narratives of mothering and their reflections on their caregiver duties towards their children. Despite the so-called "universals in mothering", every mother actively gave meaning to her relationship with her children framed by personal values, past experiences and the context in which mothering was being practiced. In particular, the meanings that participants gave to children and their understanding of what "good" childhood is like determined the mothering practices they exhibited. Across the narratives, the so-called "universals in mothering" (Barlow & Chapin, 2010) were present in descriptions of and reflections on doing mothering by Romanian immigrant mothers in Norway. However, two mothering models could be clearly identified. The first model focused on the mothers' protection of their children and provision for their material, religious, educational and physical needs. This mothering model emerged from the narratives of participants who presented an understanding of children as "human becomings" into adults. The second model focused on children's participation (children's right to be heard and have an opinion) and was adopted by mothers who presented a conceptualization of children as human beings.

I had met Oana and Iulia (names changed to ensure confidentiality) when they were working in housekeeping before they participated in my study. They had one child and moved to Norway in order to work. Oana had a University degree, but she had not found a job in her profession after immigration. In their narratives, they presented a mothering practice model that focused on protection and was characterized by undertaking a guidance and protective role with regard to caring for children who were seen as vulnerable. These mothers saw themselves as guides, providers and guardians of their children. Both gave great importance to formal education in their upbringing not only to get a qualification, but also because it imparts in children values considered important such as discipline and obedience. Across their narratives, childhood was described as a learning period in which children need to acquire skills through adult-oriented activities in order to become "good" adults.

Children need rules. You need to tell your child how to eat, force him or her, of course not using violence, but they have to learn. (Oana, 30 years and a mother of 1 child. She had spent 3 years in Norway).

Viewing children as vulnerable who need protection from adults was common before the adoption of the UNCRC (1989) (Reynaert, Bouverne-de-Bie, & Vandeveld, 2009). Childhood was seen as a stage of socialization in which children should learn in order to achieve autonomy in adulthood. Traditionally, parents understood childhood as a life stage that must be free of risks and focused on protecting children against factors they conceptualized as dangerous influenced by their cultural, temporal and socio-economic contexts (Skivenes & Strandbu,

2006). Likewise, Oana and Iulia recognized their children's material and physical needs and defined their duty as providing food, shelter, protection and guaranteeing formal education for their child. In their narratives, there is no mention of other rights acknowledged by the UNCRC (1989) such as the right to participation and freedom of religious choice. Because Oana and Iulia did not speak in terms of children's rights in their narratives, they did not assume an advocate role in order to guarantee that the rights of the child were observed. These participants spoke in terms of children's needs, and for this reason, they presented mothering around their duties to protect and provide for them.

I agree with children protection but not with giving them so much freedom. Children need discipline. You need to explain to your daughter things so that she can understand and be independent. However, in Norway parents wait because they think the child will see and learn. (Iulia, 35 years old, 1 child; had spent 7 years in Norway).

As this account shows, participants who adopted a mothering model focused on protection and provision were more critical of the Norwegian mothering practices that they had observed or encountered. Their descriptions of the Norwegian mothering practices stressed Norwegian's focus on children's participation, which Iulia and Oana thought to be inappropriate to upbringing of children.

In Norway, the concept of sameness is evident in welfare institutions and social life (Krill & Skivenes, 2010). Children's participation and non-competition are highly cherished in public intervention and daily life. For example, educational institutions prioritize equality and democracy over high scores in examinations. Schools and kindergartens give priority to playing and activities in which children can give meaning to their worlds by themselves without adult interference (Sommer et al., 2010). Based on a conceptualization of children as vulnerable and in need of protection and guidance, Iulia and Oana discussed that the Norwegian mothering seems too permissive and unable to satisfy children's needs.

Across the data, participants adopted a more critical attitude towards some of the mothering ideals encountered in Norway, such as participation and equality, because these were unrealistic to them based on their own experiences (Raffaetà, 2016). Oana and Iulia described their childhood in the Romanian Communist regime as a life stage in which values of respect for authority, discipline and collectivism (especially family unity) were emphasized as crucial to having a good life (Shouval et al., 1986 cited in Strier, 1996, p. 2). These participants stressed their experiences of discrimination in Norway, especially regarding the labour market. For instance, Oana presented her disappointment and dissatisfaction with her working life in Norway because she did not find a formal job despite having University degree. Because of living in an unequal and unfair world, Oana and Iulia distrusted the focus on participation and equality as the means to a successful future for children. In particular, they identified a cultural clash regarding mothering in the education systems of their host country and their country of origin. The Norwegian approach to education was described as focused on helping students to develop

their skills by minimizing adults' interventions. The mothers saw this approach as a threat to children's wellbeing as it was likely in their opinion to promote indifference and incompetence.

I do not like kindergartens in Norway. (...) Children only play and that is it. I do not think they learn things (...) Also, teachers are like shepherds. They are there just watching out; they do not interact with children; they do not teach and guide them. (Iulia).

Adults must make children do things, write, read, and learn. If you do not guide children, problems will come up like sex, drugs, and bad life. Here in Norway, people just let children to do whatever they like, Jesus! They do not guide them! Children need guidance; they do not know how to differentiate between what is right and wrong. (Oana).

In the Scandinavia, obedience and violent correction are not promoted as methods or values essential to raising children (Hollekim et al., 2016). Yet, Oana and Iulia recognized that corporal punishment is used in child raising in Romania. Despite condemning violence against children, these mothers stressed that mothers had a duty to provide food and shelter over the methods used to raise their children. Both participants mentioned the Bodnariu family that was under investigation during this research. The five children of the Bodnariu couple, a Romanian father and a Norwegian mother, were placed temporarily in foster homes by the NCWS because of suspected maltreatment.

With the Bodnariu family, I think the problem is with child welfare services and not with this family. Ok, the parents might be a little bit wrong, I do not know. The family has five children; you get crazy with five children, but it is not correct to take them from their family because they are doing something wrong. They have food to eat, they have drinks and they have a place to stay. (Oana).

It seemed that Oana and Iulia perceived the provision of basic needs as the role of mothers. However, Roxana and Ileana narratives presented a mothering practices' model that focused on children's participation. Both mothers had lived in other countries before moving to Norway and had a Bachelor's and Master's degree. However, only Ileana was satisfied with her working situation after immigration. Roxana and Ileana described the relationship they had with their children in terms of support, advocacy and negotiation.

Children are like plants. In order to be strong and nice, they need the right place to be; you cannot have here a cactus because there is much water. In addition, you need the sun, good soil with nutrition and this is our role as parents. If you are like a big tree around them just to unduly protect them, you absorb all the energy around them and they will be very thin and weak (...). My children need to be in a good environment to grow up and I need to be there but not to (overprotect them). (Ileana, 47 years, with 2 children; she had spent 2 years in Norway).

Both Ileana and Roxana perceived their role as mothers as being close to their children and giving them support in order to take their own decisions. Across their narratives, children were understood in line with the UNCRC (1989), as independent human beings with own rights and personal agency. Childhood was constructed as a stage in life in which human beings discover themselves and must experience things to learn and find out their own goals in life.

I allow my child to do much more than Romanians [do]. In Romania, a mother yells to the child, "do not do this, do not do that, and do not put your hand, no, no, no!" I let him be free; he comes, he plays (...), if he is dirty, it is ok (...). Romanian parents are all the time worried about "the baby!" Here (in Norway), it is like something natural and normal. In Romania, you cannot leave a child in the rain because he will be sick. (Roxana).

Based on this conceptualization of childhood, Ileana and Roxana considered playing, arts, sports and participation in their children upbringing to be very important. Their conceptualization of children as individuals who are able to form an opinion prompted their adoption of an advocate role for their children's participation. Because they identified that the Norwegian welfare institutions hold the same understandings of children as individual with own rights, Roxana and Ileana felt supported by the Norwegian context regarding mothering.

Here, I see children playing together, and (...) they have many sports in which parents are involved (...). However, in Romania, parents are much focused let us say on the jobs, and they try to offer children a lot of conditions but not spending so much time with them. This, I think is not ok. (Ileana).

Both Roxana and Ileana were critical of the Romanian education system. They described their childhood experiences in school as an institution that put too much pressure on children and used disciplinary approaches they disagreed with, such as administering corporal punishment. Drawing on their experiences as international students in European Universities, these mothers disagreed with an educational approach that unduly promotes obedience and discipline. They distrusted this approach in ensuring their children "proper" and "happy" upbringing.

Across the narratives of the Romanian immigrant mothers, there were some universals in mothering practices and contrasting understandings of childhood. These understandings of childhood were shaped by mothers' experiences in Romania, their cultures, experiences in Norway and personal values. They influenced the mothers' adoption of a model of mothering practices and mothers' assessment of Norway as a "proper" environment for their children to grow up. For Iulia and Oana, children were presented as vulnerable beings in need of protection. They adopted a mothering model focused on protection and provision and described practices encountered in Norway as unable to ensure their children's "proper" upbringing. For Roxana and Ileana, children were constructed as individuals with own rights. They adopted a model focused on children's participation and

advocacy for children's rights. The upbringing practices encountered in Norway were assessed as appropriate and desirable. For this reason, the mothers felt supported by the Norwegian institutions when doing mothering.

Understandings of public intervention on child welfare and family life

Across the narratives, there were both contrasting understandings of children and mothering models and different conceptualizations of the role that the state should play regarding family issues and child welfare. Iulia and Oana adopted a model of mothering practices focused on protection and provision. Regarding their reflections on public intervention, both mothers described the state as an apparatus that is entitled to intervene in family issues in order to tackle poverty. In their narratives, they extended the focus on provision and protection to the work of welfare institutions. For this reason, Iulia and Oana described how surprised they became when they heard of child welfare cases in which the NCWS had taken out-of-home measures, and compared the role and work of the Norwegian state with that of the Romanian state.

Welfare professionals must leave children with their families (...) Ok, if there are cases of poverty, drug and alcohol abuse, children must be placed out of home. However, I do not know, the children; some children make..., they say "mama screamed and beat me up" when it is not true. (Oana).

This account shows Oana's insistence on a welfare state that should work with a family-centred approach and intervene to protect children who are raised in a context with material deprivation, violence or additions. Oana's reflections on public intervention mirror her understandings of mothering in terms of provision rather than advocacy for children's right to participate and be heard. Moreover, her last sentence shows that Oana gave more importance to parents' accounts than the accounts of children; in her opinion, children cannot be trusted because they might exaggerate situations. This is opposed to understandings of children as competent participants whose voices carry weight, which are present in the current discourses on children in Norway (Hollekim et al., 2016).

Iulia and Oana argued that the state and/or civil society should only intervene in family life when there is a material need. The NCWS was seen as a welfare institution that should intervene in family life to provide protection and assistance for material needs. Family cohesion was prioritized in their narratives; so out-of-home measures were only accepted in case children were in need of shelter, food or physical protection. Thus, they spoke about interventions with families that were facing substance abuse, additions or poverty.

I have never seen something like this. Taking children from their families! The child is the one who suffers the most because a child needs his/her family to grow up. (Iulia).

Children in Romania are not taken from their parents. They are, ok, children must stay with their parents and there are some charities to help them. (Oana).

Iulia and Oana presented an understanding of children as in need of a mother figure that is irreplaceable. Both mothers emphasized family cohesion over individual (children's) rights. Across their narratives, divorce and individual freedom were portrayed as a threat to effective child upbringing that is portrayed as dependent on family unity. Not only was there a focus on collectivistic values, there was also a meaning making of public intervention shaped by their experiences with the Romanian welfare state. Oana and Iulia grew up during the communist time, when the Romanian state interfered in citizens' lives by subsidizing prices on basic goods and controlling access to employment, health and education services in exchange for obedience (Yeates & Deacon, 2011, p. 4). The Romanian welfare state still exhibits aspects influenced by communism, such as state paternalist interference and obedience (Kornai, 1992, p. 16). In addition, as Yeates & Deacon (2011) stated that in Romania, means-tested family benefits seek further eligibility rather than ensuring a minimum-income, which shows the paternalistic character of communism rather than the rights-based democracy. On the contrary, Norway is an example of a country in which social policy went further than tackling poverty to addressing aspects of inequality by combining universality and generosity (Kangas & Kvist, 2013). In the formation of the Norwegian welfare state, there was an evolution from provision for satisfaction of material needs to civic rights' advocacy and recognition.

Roxana and Ileana shared with the Norwegian welfare state an understanding of children as individuals with own rights, rather than dependent on their families. As it was presented before, these mothers adopted a mothering practice model focused on children's participation. They saw themselves as advocates for their children to enable them exercise their rights, and extended this role to the welfare institutions.

I like that children are respected in Norway. They are heard in the school and their opinions are taken seriously. (...) I think that it is better that the system watches over parents, rather than the system that does not care if children are being abused by parents. (Ileana).

For Ileana and Roxana, the state should advocate children's rights and intervene in family issues in order to ensure they develop their personalities fully. Having identified the values of participation, democracy and civic rights' recognition in the work of the Norwegian welfare institutions, which are in line with their own personal values, both participants felt supported by the Norwegian welfare state regarding their mothering.

The Norwegian Child Welfare Services

All participants were concerned about the Bodnariu's case that the NCWS was investigating at the time this study was conducted. None of the participants had had direct experience with the NCSWS but they had been told many stories by their acquaintances about this institution's operations. In the previous themes (understandings of childhood and children, and understandings of public intervention), participants presented two different narratives. However, when Romanian immigrant mothers presented their opinions and reflections on the NCWS, they were quite ambivalent, as the discussion below indicates.

Despite holding different conceptualizations on children, childhood and mothering, Iulia, Oana and Roxana showed their distrust and fear towards the NCWS. This group of mothers stressed that, in their opinions, the NCWS is a welfare institution that was integrated in a system composed of other institutions with the purpose of controlling mothers and their mothering practices. Even Roxana, who spoke highly of the values of equality and participation encountered in the Norwegian kindergarten described her interactions with nurses and teachers as characterized by fear of being assessed as an incompetent mother who would be reported to the NCWS.

I am afraid. My child has bruises on the skin, I do not make them, and it is her. She falls down, and I am afraid of nurses asking what this is. Before I go to the hospital with her, I am very careful, I have to see if there is anything [suspicious]. (Roxana).

This group of mothers was afraid of welfare professionals holding an assessment of risks different from theirs. In their narratives, participants described their encounters with welfare institutions in terms of the Foucauldian concept of "technologies of control" (Foucault, 1978). Nurses, teachers and midwives were perceived as working with a standardized idea of "good" childhood and mothering in which they tried to socialize the Romanian immigrant mothers. In their encounters, mothers felt that they could not dispute the knowledge of welfare professionals because it comes up as the truth. The image of professionals using the legal apparatus and scientific discourse on children as a powerful tool prevailed across the mothers' narratives. When Iulia, Roxana and Oana described their encounters with Norwegian welfare professionals, they referred to their dialogues as "technologies of control" in which professionals aimed to socialize them to adopt the Norwegian ideals on mothering and childhood. If there was a situation in which they did not agree with the professionals' opinions and expectations regarding their children upbringing, the mothers felt afraid of professionals labelling them "deviant" mothers who did not collaborate to adopt the "proper" (Norwegian) mothering practices.

As Studsrød et al. (2014) discussed, parents might be afraid of CWS because of the institution's double function of protection and control. Roxana, Iulia and Oana were afraid because of that "control" component in the role and work of the Norwegian welfare institution. They spoke of being afraid of this institution because of the stories they heard about the Norwegian society assimilating children

with immigrant background through foster homes. Suspicions of an economic interest behind the Norwegian foster families' system were also common in their narratives.

Participants' fears and distrust towards the NCWS were influenced by the stories that circulate within their social networks in both their host country and country of origin. They shared the stories of acquaintances who were also immigrants and decided to go back to their countries of origin due to the fears associated with the NCWS and perpetuated by teachers or nurses who seemed to be "too controlling" and worried about mothering by immigrant women. Iulia, Oana and Roxana said that the NCWS was an institution that also controlled Norwegian mothers' mothering practices. However, at the same time, they believed that immigrant mothers were considered a special target by the welfare state because of the cultural clash in mothering practices.

The narratives of the participants concerning their feelings of distrust and fear towards the NCWS mirror the composition of their social networks in Norway and their distance to the Norwegian society. Iulia, Oana and Roxana narrated that they do not have an extensive social network in Norway, but interact mostly with other immigrants who moved to the Scandinavian country with an economic motivation. The composition of the social networks this group of mothers were part of had an impact on their meaning making about mothering in Norway and the role of the welfare state regarding childcare. In this regard, Putnam (2001) reported that immigrants might build relationships with people who are in the same situation with them in order to get support. He named these networks as "bonding social capital" and argued that individuals "get by" in the host society by building these networks. However, when people establish relationships with others who belong to other groups, for instance, in terms of social class, citizenship or race, these kinds of social networks might help them in "getting ahead" or achieving social mobility. Iulia, Oana and Roxana were very disappointed with their life after immigration, especially due to their working situation and not having succeeded in finding formal jobs befitting their qualifications. Their experiences of discrimination, and cultural clash for Oana and Iulia, were followed by their discursive production of "Norwegians" as a homogenized group different from "us" who were immigrants.

On the contrary, Ileana did not present herself as an immigrant but as an "expat", which is crucial to understanding how this participant constructed and presented her identity as a Romanian mother in Norway. "Expat" is an informal adjective for "expatriate", a word that, according to the Collins English dictionary, means "resident in a foreign country. A person who lives in a foreign country, exiled or banished from one's native country". When Ileana used this word, she stressed her economic and academic resources that protected her and her family from unemployment or an undesirable economic situation. She spoke of moving from one country to another due to her work in the oil industry. Her children studied at the British International School and her family got involved with other "expat" families from the upper class. As mentioned in the introduction, social class plays a great role in mothers' performance of mothering practices and their experiences with public institutions, because the mothering ideal promoted and

expected from welfare professionals represents middle-class values and norms (Vagli, 2009). Contrary to Iulia, Oena and Roxana, who worked in housekeeping with other immigrant (working-class) women, Ileana had Norwegian co-workers and friends who had told them stories that were more positive with regard to the roles of NCWS. Her “expats” friends were also in a favourable position, especially in financial terms, from which it was easier for them to meet Norwegian expectations regarding mothering.

Conclusion

The analysis has explored how Romanian immigrant mothers experienced mothering and associated public intervention in Norway. The cultural undertones regarding conceptualization of children, childhood and mothering are evident in the data presented. Participants identified cultural influences as informing different conceptualizations of childhood, children and mothering. Among the participants, there was a strong feeling of fear and distrust towards the NCWS. Fear and distrust were common in the narratives of mothers whose personal values and mothering practices were different from those encountered in Norway. Likewise, participants who were disappointed with their experiences in Norway, especially concerning their failure to get the anticipated formal employment and had relationships mostly with fellow immigrants were more critical of the Norwegian child welfare system and showed distrust and fear towards it. In this study, I have explored perspectives of Romanian immigrant mothers within the context that frames their experiences and meaning making concerning public intervention in child welfare. As Studsrød, Willumsen, and Ellingsen stated (2014) stated, studies from users’ perspectives shed light on how parents perceive public intervention, which influences the establishment of professional relationships. Amplifying the voices of immigrant families facilitates understanding of their meanings and reasons behind their distrust in the host society and its welfare institutions. This understanding is especially crucial because of the significant influence the state and its welfare institutions have for the wellbeing of immigrant families and their children.

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Chapter 8

Creating a social network post immigration among unaccompanied minors and youths in Sweden

Jayanti Karki¹

Abstract: Unaccompanied minors and youths often face serious challenges including adjusting to new environments and forming new social networks which affect their overall wellbeing in their host countries. This study aims to examine how unaccompanied minors and youths built social networks; factors that enabled them form social networks and those, which undermined their efforts in forming social networks. In addition, the role of social networks in the lives of the unaccompanied minors and youths was examined. In-depth qualitative interviews were conducted with nine unaccompanied minors and youths who had immigrated and had since obtained permanent residency in Sweden. A thematic analysis was conducted to analyse the data based on theoretical concepts such as social capital, social support, transnationalism and diaspora. The findings suggest that participants often built social networks with unaccompanied minors and youths originating from similar countries and those with whom they shared common bonds including language, experience and culture. Social networks played different roles such as providing assistance in expanding social ties, relocating family members back home, practicing various forms of ethnic identity, influencing value changes and facilitating different avenues for social and cultural integration.

Introduction

The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR, 2014) defines an unaccompanied child as a person who is under the age of eighteen... and who is separated from both parents and is not being cared for by an adult who by law or custom has the responsibility to do so. A number of international conventions including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) entail a broad set of rights to provide among others the right to care and protection while being separated from parents (Bakker, Elings-Pels & Reis, 2009). It also entails the responsibility for state parties to ensure that a child seeking refugee status receives appropriate protection and humanitarian assistance (United Nations, 1989). Sweden is among the first countries to sign and ratify the UNCRC in September 1990 (Sheikholeslamzadeh, 2012). Sweden also closely follows the UNCRC in its own

1 Erasmus Mundus MFamily Master Programme, 1st edition, E-mail: Jayanti.karki182@gmail.com

policies in regulating unaccompanied minors (Wernesjö, 2014). Almost 4000 unaccompanied minors arrived in Sweden during 2013; this number was also projected to rise by 7400 new unaccompanied minors applying for asylum in Sweden the following year (Migrationsverket, 2014).

The situation of unaccompanied minors in Sweden is regulated by the Aliens Act, which states, “the best interests of the child should be taken into account in matters concerning them” (Wernesjö, 2014). Moreover, unaccompanied minors who are granted asylum have received permanent residency in Sweden and thus are provided with basic services such as residential care and exercise their rights in the same way as the Swedish (Carlier, Donato & Pavlou, 2010). Despite the largely favourable picture regarding the situation of unaccompanied minors in Sweden, there are some limitations to their full integration and wellbeing. For example, Brekke (2004) reported that the reception system in Sweden for unaccompanied minors was characterized by interchangeability in social relations. Children and young people were frequently transferred from the transitional group-homes where they were initially placed upon their arrival in Sweden to municipalities and possibly to other locations later. Such mobility hindered the building trust and long-lasting relationships among the unaccompanied minors in Sweden (Wernesjö, 2014). Furthermore, the social services system in Sweden often did not deliver diverse and culturally competent forms of support to the unaccompanied minors because of the systems’ relative inexperience with regard to working with this category of immigrants (Backlund et al., 2012, cited in Stretmo 2014).

There has been little analysis to date of the social networks for children and youths in general (Weller, 2005) and even less for those “at the margins of the late-modern society” (Heikkinen 2000, p. 391). The analysis of social networks is important in migration research because it assists in comprehending how new immigrants utilize social ties to form communities, to find out how things work in the host countries, and primarily to accumulate social capital (Bashi 2007; Reynolds 2011). This study aimed to explore how reception and resettlement of unaccompanied minors and youths in Sweden influenced the regeneration of social networks in the absence of parental ties. The study assessed how the unaccompanied minors and youths built and made use of the social ties. This study acknowledges the agency possessed by unaccompanied minors and youths and provided them with the platform to share their experiences. Wernesjö (2014) stated that unaccompanied minors and youths constituted groups that were frequently talked about, but at the same time, who were rarely allowed to speak for themselves. Kohli (2011) suggests the need for conducting research aimed at understanding perspectives of the unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and youths with regard to assessing how they define and reflect upon their experiences in the host countries.

Theoretical Framework

According to Raghuram, Henry and Bornat (2010), the role of social networks in improving the well-being of migrants has been widely investigated and theorized

mainly based on the social capital theoretical framework. The analysis of social networks is thus critical to immigration research because it assists in comprehending how new immigrants utilise social ties to form communities and accumulate social capital (Bashi, 2007; Reynolds 2010). In this study, social capital is adopted as a relevant theoretical framework; it facilitates the researcher to understand how unaccompanied minors and youths built social ties and the role played by social networks in generating various forms of social capital for the unaccompanied youths. Social capital suggests various concepts such as bonding and bridging capital that facilitated analysis of the various patterns of social networks. Similarly, concepts such as transnationalism and diaspora were applied in the current study.

Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative approach to data collection and analysis. Therefore, qualitative interviews were conducted to assess how unaccompanied immigrant youths mobilised and built new social networks after their arrival in Sweden. The study sought to understand the social world of the participants in relation to building and forming social networks from their own perspectives. Factors that facilitated and those that impeded the formation of social networks among the unaccompanied immigrant youths in Sweden were also examined. Selection of the unaccompanied immigrant youths was conducted based on purposive and snowball sampling techniques. Participants were selected from a residential facility for unaccompanied minors and youths after obtaining permission by the facility manager.

In-depth interviews were conducted with nine participants in the course of this study. Among these participants, six were from Afghanistan and the rest were from Pakistan, Somalia and Yemen. All the participants were male, their respective ages ranged from 17 to 21. All of them had also been granted residence permits to live in Sweden. The collected qualitative data was analysed based on the thematic analysis method.

Findings and Discussion

Findings are presented and discussed according to the three themes that emerged from the data. These themes are social network composition, vital grounds for relation building and factors that impeded relation building.

Social network composition

Participants reported that unaccompanied minors and youths had built social networks in Sweden which consisted of mainly friends who were also fellow unaccompanied minors and youths. Some unaccompanied minors and youths also reported

that they shared meaningful relations with care workers, guardians and foster parents. Friendships, which the unaccompanied minors and youths had developed with fellow unaccompanied minors and youths, were vital in providing them with different forms of social support. The following quotations illustrate this view:

I have my friends that I met at the camp and they come from the same country as me and have been through the same experience. These are the boys I can count on. I feel like I can always call them and talk about anything (Jahid 20, Afghanistan)

I feel very close to my friends who I met at school. I can even share my secrets with them. Because I know, they had the same pain and struggles like me to come to Sweden (Hammed 21, Yemen)

The participants talked about meeting fellow unaccompanied immigrant minors and youths who eventually became their friends during the immigration process including in care homes and schools. According to Kohli (2007), schools are important spaces where unaccompanied minors and youths build relationships that foster stability in their lives.

Almost all participants reported that friends were a vital element of their personal networks. Moreover, some unaccompanied minors and youths had developed meaningful relationships with adults who included care professionals, legal guardians and foster parents. One participant, conveniently referred to as Hammed, 21 years old, stated that he felt attached to the care workers in the residential unit where he resided. He stated:

They are like my family. Since I don't have my real family in Sweden. They always encourage me and they give me energy to go on. They are so close to me.

Another participant, Sameer, 18 years old, stated that his contact person was readily accessible to him any time and that he felt they related well. According to this participant, having a close relationship was of great importance.

My contact person always asks me if there is any problem or if there is anything I need help with. He assures me that I can contact him anytime. This makes me feel secure.

These participants experiences of finding supportive relationships with foster parents and care workers is supported by previous literature on unaccompanied minors and youths elsewhere.

Grounds for relation building in social networks

Participants reported that having a common background enabled unaccompanied minors and youths to construct meaningful relationships in their social networks.

Common Grounds: similar experiences, same country and language

Building relationships was relatively easy among the unaccompanied minors and youths when they acknowledged that they shared similar experiences with regard

to immigrating to and seeking asylum in Sweden. Sharing a country of origin and speaking a similar language also facilitated forming helpful relationships among unaccompanied minors and youths.

They are from Syria and I met them at school. I feel very close to them. I can even share my secrets with them. The most important thing is that we started together; I was new in class and they started together too. (Hammed 21, Yemen)

I have friends who are in the same situation; they come to Sweden alone and so it is very simple to talk to them. (Jahid)

These accounts show that those who shared common ties such as country of origin and language easily became friends when they met each other in Sweden. Contexts such as schools framed their encounters and subsequent friendships that evolved.

Speaking the same language with fellow immigrant unaccompanied minors and youths enabled effective communication which is essential to forming relationships.

When I was in the camp, I had no idea. I mean there were not many of our people from Afghanistan. There was just one boy. It was difficult for me. However, when I shifted to Alingsås, I met many Afghani people. Almost all of them were from Afghanistan. Therefore, I met them, talked to them, and felt very happy.

Whenever I meet someone who speaks Arabic, I ask them if they have met any Yemenite, if I am the first one they have met or if they know where they are, etc. It is quite interesting for me to meet people who speak Arabic. I can communicate more openly with them (Hammed 21, Yemen)

A shared language was not only necessary for effective communication among unaccompanied minors and youths but it also promoted their self-agency in problem solving. Participants who shared the same language were often from the same countries of origin. Putnam (2007) similarly reported that people often build social networks with others from similar sociological niches. Such networks exhibit exclusive identities and homogenous groups; in addition, they provide bonding social capital for members in the social network.

Factors that impeded relationship building in social networks

Experiences of frequent relocation, mistrust, difficulties in building friendship with Swedish minors and youths as well as professional boundaries emerged as the factors which impeded relationship building by the unaccompanied minors and youths.

Frequent relocation

Participants reported the unaccompanied minors and youths received various aspects of social support from various network avenues such as friends, social workers, care professionals and foster families. However, there was a recurrent change of support systems and networks because the unaccompanied minors and youths were moved from one transitional care house to another. Such relocation was associated with shifting schools and thus leaving behind their newly built social networks of friends and care workers. For instance, Karim (18 years old, Afghanistan) commented on the issue of frequent resettlement as follows:

I am changing friends all the time. When I first arrived in Sweden, I made quite some nice friends in the first reception centre. In two weeks, they told me I was shifting and I had to leave them. I was quite sad. However, I made new friends in the new centre. However, that didn't last too long too; they then shifted me to Gothenburg. Now, I have to make new friends. It makes me feel very sad because I can't *maintain my friendship with the same people and it's hard to make new friends again.*

This account shows that frequent movement from one care house was associated with opportunities for making friends and challenges as they were frequently lost. The Swedish system of reception considers municipalities as the primarily actors responsible for the reception and care of unaccompanied minors during the asylum-seeking process.

Mistrust

Many participants reported mistrust when they were asked about what they considered as hindrances to building social networks and receiving support among the unaccompanied minors and youths. Mistrust was experienced at different phases of their immigration process including while seeking asylum.

For example, Zafar (18 years old, Afghanistan) stated:

I was in Miera for about five months, then, I got my first rejection answer from the immigration office. They said I was talking like a man, behaving like a man, like a real man and not like a child. Then I said to them, I am not lying that I am a minor. It is just that because of all that I have been through. Do you think I am more mature than Swedish minors? I am not lying about my age. All the care workers used to think I am lying about my age.

Stretmo (2014) stated that unaccompanied minors were often met with scepticism about their actual age. Moreover, to qualify for asylum as unaccompanied minors, they had to be under 18 years of age, a criterion that was extremely important in official practice. In this regard, analysis of behaviour and appearance markers was conducted to distinguish adults from children, which frequently resulted in unfavourable results for asylum seekers in Sweden. Engebrigsten (2012) in Stretmo

(2014) reported that unaccompanied minors usually were perceived as subjects situated outside of childhood because of some of their experiences, including being separated from family and social ties, working instead of going to school and surviving distressing situations. These were considered as contradicting features of children and childhood as understood in Sweden. Indeed, the experiences of the unaccompanied minors and youths showed how these participants differed from generalised understandings of children and youths in Sweden.

Difficulties in building friendship with Swedish youths

Unaccompanied minors and youths regarded having Swedish friends as important because among other benefits it facilitated them to learn the Swedish language. Yet, they were often discriminated against by Swedish youths, which made it difficult to develop friendships with them. For example, Hassan (18 years old, Afghanistan) stated:

I started attending school almost a month after I came to Sweden. There were problems at school. There were many Swedish boys and girls who did not want to come close to us. It was very hard for us. When they were sitting in one place and if we wanted to join them, they would leave. Then, we asked the director why this was happening. They told us that maybe it is because we come from countries where there are more criminals; they fear us. Things like this make us very angry. If we were criminals what would we be doing here? All those criminals who are in Pakistan or Afghanistan, they do not need to come here!

It is apparent in Hassan's account that unaccompanied minors and youths found it difficult to interact and socialise with Swedish children and youths. The unaccompanied minors and youths were often stigmatised and stereotyped, which caused them much distress at school. Chase (2010) conducted a study involving fifty-four unaccompanied asylum-seeking minors and young people in England to assess the factors which positively or negatively impacted their emotional wellbeing. In Chase's findings, being stigmatised and labelled as an asylum seeker was a key factor that undermined participants' wellbeing in England. Stigmatisation was perpetuated by both the people and mass media (Chase, 2010).

Cultural Gaps

Unaccompanied minors and youths in Sweden regarded the lack of various aspects of culture such as food as a barrier to forming friendship and cultural integration in Sweden. Hassan (18 years old, Afghanistan) accordingly stated:

At the place where I was before, life was not so good. Workers did not think about the culture and traditions of the countries we came from. They also did not acknowledge what we have been through in this journey. They were insensitive about these things.

They only thought in a way that since we are in Sweden now, we must like Swedish food and adapt to the Swedish lifestyle. That is very hard for us.

Hassan (18 years old, Afghanistan) further stated:

Those of us from Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan have all the food together with bread, naan. If bread is not there, we feel like there is nothing to eat. Moreover, when we told them that we need this bread, they would say, 'this is Swedish food'. We do not need to eat this with bread. After that, I wanted to stop talking to them.

These quotations show how the participants felt they were misunderstood by care workers and professionals in the care centres. The misunderstanding was attributed the care workers' lack of cultural sensitivity and commitment to providing unaccompanied minors and youths with cultural-relevant food. As a consequence, unaccompanied minors and youths felt they could not be friendly with their culturally insensitive care workers. In a study that examined 18 young adults' experiences with foster families, seven years after resettlement, Luster et al. (2010) found that nearly half of them changed placements because of relationship difficulties with their foster parents. The changes in placements were due to misunderstandings based on cultural differences which often exacerbated conflicts. As is case with the current study's finding, Kohli (2007) stated that food was one of the recurring concerns of unaccompanied minors and a topic that had not been much studied.

Rules and professional boundaries

The unaccompanied minors and youths in Sweden reported that they did not like being subjected to numerous rules of conduct. Abdul (17 years old, Pakistani) stated that being subjected to too many rules had caused him to leave his foster home and return to his previous residential care unit. He stated:

In my old house, they told me that I had to return home before 9 p.m. every evening. They said it was a strict rule. It was not possible for me to adhere to it. Sometimes, I like going out with friends at night. However, in my new place I have more freedom and I can go anywhere at any time. This makes me feel like I am not in a school hostel but with people who understand that I am young and want to go out with friends.

This account shows Abdul's decision to leave his previous foster home was based on the view that the family had set up very strict rules of conduct which limited him from interacting with peers. However, he was comfortable with his later placement, which he described as offering the opportunity to interact and relate with peers in Sweden. Stretmo and Melander (2013 in Wernesjö 2014) identified various approaches used by social workers and caretakers to explain how the children were seen and treated. They stated that unaccompanied children and young people were often seen as deviant and thus care workers and caretakers usually focused on creating and maintaining strict rules and boundaries for them.

With regard to professional boundaries, Hammed (21 years old, Yemen) stated:

When I arrived at my first residence, there were many employees. I told the social workers that there are many things about myself and I wanted to stay in touch even after I moved to a new care home. However, later I found that the professionals from the previous place could not stay in touch with people who have moved out because of their organisation's procedures. I was very sad because I had previously thought that I could rely on them for a long time. I would like to have contact with those social workers even after I have moved out of here.

This account suggests that unaccompanied minors and youths were cared for in organisations with strict operational procedures. Such procedures were a hindrance to formation and continuation of friendly contacts by the unaccompanied minors and youths in Sweden. Rose (1999, p. 150) stated that formal organisations were rule-bound and could not be as flexible and sensitive as informal networks. In addition, Backlund et al. (2012 in Stretmo, 2014) analysed how despite the presence of many officials and social support staff provided by the social services in Sweden, at times, children did not receive quality care and support they urgently needed. It is plausible that professionals cannot effectively substitute for biological parents because of the constraints to their work.

Conclusion

The findings of this study show that unaccompanied minors and youths usually developed friendship ties with fellow minors and youths mainly from similar countries of origin. Besides, relationships and friendships developed by the unaccompanied minors and youths were dynamic because of their frequent relocation in foster homes, which exposed them to different peers and care workers. Consequently, the unaccompanied minors and youths utilised both bonding and linking social capital. However, frequent relocation was also a hinderance to the development of social networks for the unaccompanied children and youths. Unaccompanied minors and youths frequently relocated from transitional care houses, foster families and care units, which implies leaving behind established social networks involving peers and care workers. The unaccompanied minors and youths exhibited agency by trying to keep in touch with their previously developed social networks albeit without much success. The difficulty in this regard was more pronounced in the relationships they had developed with their previous care workers and social workers. The findings of this study demonstrate that the unaccompanied minors and youths were resilient and survived by adopting strategies which ranged from psychological to pragmatic approaches such as mobilising social capital. They also challenge the often-held view that unaccompanied minors and youths are by and large a vulnerable population. Future researchers and practitioners should concern themselves with finding effective ways of addressing the

various bottlenecks to the development of social networks for unaccompanied minors and youths with the view to further develop their agency and promote their social wellbeing in Sweden. Provision of culturally sensitive care and support by the care workers and social workers will contribute greatly to satisfaction with the care and enhance cultural integration by the unaccompanied minors and youths in Sweden.

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Chapter 9

Changing perceptions and practices of gender among Nepalese in Portugal

*Sanjeev Dahal*¹

Abstract This chapter examines changing perceptions and practices of gender among Nepalese immigrant men in Portugal. The study aimed at answering the following research questions: i) how do Nepalese immigrant men in Portugal perceive gender? ii) how do Nepalese immigrant men in Portugal do gender? and iii) how does immigration affect perceptions and practices of gender among Nepalese men in Portugal. I adopted a micro-ethnography study design and used qualitative interviews and participant observation as data collection methods. Participants reported that immigration to Portugal significantly influenced their perceptions and practices of gender; they also reported that changes towards egalitarian gender relations occurred. According to the participants, the changes in perceptions of gender relations were noticeable; they were largely spatial and not yet adequately reflected in practices of Nepalese immigrant men in Lisbon.

Key words: Immigration, gender, perceptions, practices, Nepalese, Portugal

Introduction

Portugal has increasingly become one of the main destination countries in Europe for Nepalese immigrants, particularly after 2008 (Bajracharya, 2015). From 560 Nepalese in Portugal with residence permit in the 2008, the number rose to 2,588 in 2013. The Nepalese Consulate in Lisbon estimated around 10,000 Nepalese to be in Portugal in 2015 (Bajracharya, 2015). When families move from one country to another, changes in their physical environment influences the changes in their values, perspectives and practices. One such prominent change within families could be changes in gender relations. Marked by patriarchy, patrilocality and patrilineality, Nepal is a highly gender stratified society. Such stratification results in different life experiences for men and women because many socially constructed roles are based on gender. Thus, immigration of Nepalese to Portugal provides an important avenue to assess how it affect gender relations within the affected families.

1 Erasmus Mundus MFamily Master Programme, 2nd edition, E-mail: dahalsanjeev@gmail.com

Gender is a socio-cultural construct of female and male identity that shapes how individuals live and interpret the world around them. Gender is not natural; it is learned in society through direct and indirect means (Knapp et al., 2009). Literature on immigration and gender relations seems to be lopsided by overly focussing on women. As Charsley and Wray (2015) put it:

Migration scholarship has often lagged behind developments in gender studies. The importance of gender has gained increasing recognition, but this has predominantly meant a focus on women migrants. Only recently has a gendered lens been turned to the study of migrant men. Discourses surrounding migration in law and government, and in legal scholarship, remain characterized by neglect or dismissal of the gendered experiences of male migrants (pp. 403).

With the aim of bridging the above gender gap in studies on immigrants, this study examines the immigrant Nepalese men's perceptions of gender and gender relations and gendered practices within their households in Portugal. The dearth of studies on Nepalese in Portugal, in general, and on Nepalese men's perceptions of gender gender particular, in the context of immigration necessitated the conduct of this study. Therefore, this study assesses the perceptions and practices of gender among immigrant Nepalese men in Portugal from a male perspective. It also identifies the factors that facilitate or hinder changes in the practice of gender among Nepales men in Portugal. In particular, this study examines the gender display among immigrant Nepalese men in Portugal (West & Zimmerman, 1987). Doing gender is an extension of the gendered perceptions constructed through discourses. In retrospection, the practice of gender by men within their households, speaks significantly about their understanding and perceptions of gender. Through the performance of everyday tasks, not only are ideas of gender, caste and social differences brought into view, but the embodied nature of differences that extends beyond the body and into the spaces of everyday life is evident (Nightingale, 2011).

Theoretical framework

This study was informed by the theoretical concepts of 'doing gender' and 'undoing gender'. Other concepts used were perception and praxis.

Doing gender

West and Zimmerman (1987) in their seminal work on "doing gender," noted that when gender is viewed as an accomplishment, the attention shifts from the individual to the interactional and, ultimately to institutional arenas. These authors argued that gender is not a set of traits, variable or a role but the product of social doings of some sort. They further argued that gender itself is constituted through social interactions. West and Zimmerman (1987) also reported that doing gender

was unavoidable. Doing gender renders social arrangements based on sex category to be counted as normal and natural, that is, as legitimate ways of organizing social life (West & Zimmerman, 1987).

Undoing gender

Deutsch's (2007) view on undoing gender was advanced in a critique to West and Zimmermann's (1987) conceptualization of doing gender. Deutsch (2007) stated that 'doing gender' had become a theory of conformity and gender conventionality. Deutsch highlighted that the language inherent in the phrase "doing gender" undermined the goal of dismantling gender inequity by, perhaps inadvertently, perpetuating the idea that the gender system of oppression was hopelessly impervious to real change, and ignored the links between social interaction and structural change. This author stressed the need to shift the talk from doing gender to illuminating how gender can be undone and proposed the adoption of a new convention, namely reserving the phrase 'doing gender' to refer to social interactions that reproduce gender differences and the phrase 'undoing gender' to refer to social interactions that reduce gender differences.

'Doing gender' in the context of this study involved examining discourses which Nepalese men brought in their interactions, and the practices they exhibited inside their households and beyond in terms of reproducing the socially constructed gender differences. Doing gender meant a couple of things which included continuing to play the roles prescribed to a particular sex by the Nepalese society and adhering to the popular roles prescribed to a particular sex by the Portuguese society. 'Undoing gender' in contrast to doing gender suggests doing something different to this socially constructed prescription of gender roles in both the Nepali and Portuguese social and cultural contexts.

Perception, practice and praxis

Perceptions of gender in the context of this study referred to the understanding of immigrant Nepalese men about the roles and responsibilities of a man and woman in the family; also included are emotions associated with being a man or woman, and the tasks assigned to a particular sex. Similarly, the practice of gender in this study context referred to the exhibitions of actions of Nepalese men within and beyond the household observed through a gendered lens. Their actions or practices were analyzed to see if they were 'doing gender' in alignment to the socially constructed gender roles within the context that they lived or were 'doing difference'. It can also happen that some men do things popular in a particular context, which might be different from what is common and accepted in their previous contexts, without reflecting upon it or realizing it. This was referred to as 'doing difference' or 'undoing gender'. When 'doing difference' or 'undoing gender', it was accompanied by the realization of its importance, built upon the understanding that

gender relations are unequal and gender arrangement is unjust; it was referred to as praxis.

Methodology

For this study, I adopted a qualitative approach and “micro-ethnography” (Wolcott, 1990) research design. This research design also involved the researcher playing both covert and overt roles in the research process. For instance, while the researcher had informed the interviewees in advance about the study and obtained verbal consent to conduct the interviews, sometime, he was spontaneously invited to families and other social settings where he carried out participant observation covertly. The sample of this study comprised five Nepalese male immigrants who were all married and living in Portugal.

Qualitative interviews with the study participants were based on an interview guide that contained sensitive, non-threatening, non-suggestive and non-probing questions. The interviews were aimed at bringing out the discourses on gender. The practice of gender in contrast was studied by means of participant observation at public and private spaces. The network for data collection was established through spontaneous encounters and using snow ball sampling techniques but the participants were selected through purposive sampling techniques to ensure their diversity. Participants were in the age range of 30 to 40. Thematic analysis was used to identify prominent themes that are discussed in the subsequent section of this chapter.

Findings and Discussion

This section presents the perceptions of gender relations and everyday practices of immigrant Nepalese men in Portugal assessed through a gendered lens and the impact of immigration.

Nepalese men’s perceptions of gender

All participants in this study reported that coming to Portugal and being away from Nepal gave them an opportunity to reflect on many things in life, including expectations of the wider society and family from an individual and the relationship between family members. It also influenced their perceptions of various matters including gender relations. Their perceptions of gender are discussed below.

Division of household work on the basis of sex

All participants stated that there should be no division of work based on sex. Some emphasized that competences of the individual instead of sex should be the basis for division of household work.

I do not think that work should be divided on the basis of sex. But what should be seen is how qualified the person is and how she or he works; competence of the person is what matters (Uday, 35 years).

It was unequivocally stated that maintenance of the family was paramount and work division was largely a matter of understanding between family members.

Nepalese men's perceptions of gender relations in Nepal

Participants stated that men dominated women in Nepal. Uday, 35 years stated, “*in terms of relationships between men and women in Nepal, men are dominant*”. Involvement of men in household chores according to participants in this study did not change much. Despite women's economic contributions to supporting their families, almost exclusively, they still carried the burden of undertaking most household chores. The general perception of the participants was that housework in Nepal was considered a woman's responsibility.

Furthermore, participants noted that the differential treatment of men and women was because of their parents had internalized traditional notions of gender roles. Participants also observed that there was a need for individuals to conform to this social construct to prevent upsetting their parents. One participant in this study (Arun, 33 years) reported that perpetuation and reinforcement of gender inequality was aided by the uncritical adherence to Nepalese tradition. He noted that his wife was reluctant to change and that she was unwilling to allow him to get involved in undertaking household chores when this couple lived in Nepal. According to this participant, his wife thought that a good wife was the one who did all the household chores and ensured that her husband was comfortable. Ridgeway and Katz (2013) have argued that the power of gender, race, and class beliefs to coordinate behavior in social relations is derived not so much from individuals' personal endorsement but from their sense that these beliefs are what most people believe and thus are the public rules by which they will be judged and expected to act.

Nepali men's perceptions of gender relations in Portugal and their reflections

There was consensus among participants that they perceived both men and women in Portugal to be more independent than men and women in Nepal. Participants also stated that they appreciated the collaborative type of relationships which they observed among couples in Portugal. Although the participants' perceptions of gender relations might be based on generalizations they drew from having a limited exposure to the Portuguese culture, these perceptions were significant because they facilitated participants to reflect on their own gender relations. Relationships between spouses in Portugal were seen by the participants as more intimate than relationships between spouses in Nepal. According to the participants, when a couple in Nepal was unhappy in a relationship and even if

fighting occurred frequently, separation and divorce were not considered as an acceptable solution. Whereas in Portugal, they saw relationships breaking up in the event of such misunderstanding.

In Portugal, they feel relationships should be intimate. We [Nepalese] do not have that; for example, mum and dad have arguments very often, I suppose. But they are together. Well, how do you take it? Do you say that is right or this is right! Here they feel if we do not have an understanding, then we should not be together in a relationship, that is their way of life (Arun, 33 years).

All participants reported that relationships between men and women in Portugal some time back were similar to relationships between men and women in Nepal today. They indicated that gender relations in Portugal had shifted more towards an egalitarian state. However, female subordination, male dominance and gendered division of labor still existed in the Portuguese society. Accordingly, men were responsible for providing for women which implied that women needed men's support. For example, Portuguese often say that *"if there is one man among several women, none of the women will face hardships"* (Arun, 33 years). Bikram (32 years) thought that involvement of both men and women in paid work might have contributed to the development of egalitarian relations among men and women in Portugal. Women were economically independent; owned separate bank accounts. Whereas in Nepal, a family often owned a joint account for all household expenditures. This type of arrangement treated women's income as supportive and limited their participation in decision making.

The engendering of work in Portugal was described as exemplifying exclusivity of some work to women.

The situation of women [with regard to gender relations] here is better than in Nepal but not exactly equal to men. For a long time, they [Portuguese society], had some things that were exclusive to women, e.g., childcare. Well, in the later times, [the responsibility] of childcare is shared between men and women; however, women still have to do more household chores even if they worked outside... I have seen this in the families in Portugal; it's there! (Uday, 35 years).

Well, even here [in Portugal] they say cooking is for women, we hear. I have a Portuguese friend, he's almost 40 years but still his mother does his laundry... Even for putting clothes in the washing machine, he needs his mother's help. He is so dependent on his mother (Arun, 33 years).

The above accounts indicate that the participants perceived gender relations in Portugal to have changed towards equality of both sexes from an unequal gender perspective; however, there were still some roles assigned predominantly to a particular gender.

Nepalese men's perceptions of roles and responsibilities of a man and woman

Participants stated that work should not be gendered. When they were specifically asked about the responsibilities of a men and women in their household, there were differences in their opinions.

For me everything from what my parents, brother, wife and daughter eat and wear is my responsibility at this time. When you talk of responsibility, the first thing is about keeping members of your family happy. Isn't that what we all do? (Arun, 33 years).

This account shows that Arun felt he was responsible for keeping the family happy explaining Nepali men's positioning of the self in the family and self-assigning primary responsibilities of income generation. Some participants reported that there was nothing that a particular sex could not do; this explains the need to assign any particular responsibility to any particular sex. "*Women's responsibilities are the same as men's*" (Bikram, 32 years). Arun (33 years) spoke about the important roles played by women and therefore needing to move to more equal relations. However, his expressions were gendered in subtle ways assigning women the role of supporter and men the role of leader.

I feel that now, from my own experience, although the responsibilities of men seem to be more, women have a huge supportive role.... In many instances, women guide the men. When sometimes you are tired, really tired, you mostly go to a woman. For example, when a husband gets tired, he shares his tiredness with his wife. A son goes to the mother and says, "mummy I can't do it!" in this case, the one who receives compliments is the woman... We say behind every successful man there is a woman's hand. I think that is why they say it. Men get the driving force to succeed from women. In the family, the role of women is very importante, for exemple, to bind the family together (Arun, 33).

Arun's account is consistent with Lindsey's (2005) finding that describes the role as the expected behavior associated with a status. Lindsey stated that the status of the mother calls for expected roles involving love, nurturing, self-sacrifice, home-making, and availability. Moreover, Uday, 35 years, reported being the sole breadwinner for his family while his wife took the responsibility of childcare. He stated:

I am the only earning member of my family. Our daughter is small and my wife looks after her.... There is no need to share everything. Normally, those things that she thinks are okay, I decide without discussing with her and based on my assumptions. Rather than asking for her decisions, I share some things to bring to her knowledge, to see her reaction. And some things need to be discussed (Uday, 35 years).

Uday's portrayal of the self as the sole breadwinner for his family and later statements were consistent with Lindsey's (2005) definition of the role of fathers. According Lindsay, men to whom the status of a father is assigned were expected to play roles such as breadwinner and ultimate decision maker in their households. One participant suggested that I interview his wife about gender relations because

it would make more sense, reflecting his understanding of gender as associated with women who also attributed the role of provider to men.

I think it is better if you talk about this with women because they are the ones who are much closer to this issue. We, men, work hard wherever we are; in Nepal or anywhere else (Narendra, 38 years).

Normalization of gendered roles due to their practices in everyday life was also reported by participants.

They [the women] have the idea [they should cook] because they have been doing it since they were children. If they did otherwise, they probably would have done it differently (Bikram, 32 years).

And Bikram's follow-up response to the question on prepared food at home further substantiates this normalization process that took place in the Nepalese families.

If she works at night, I have to do it [cook]. But if both of us are at home, she [the wife] will obviously cook (Bikram, 32 years).

Bikram saw cooking to be the responsibility of women and stated that he cooked only when his wife was unable to do it. Seeing household work as an extension of female identity and thus non-recognition was also stated by other participants.

In Nepal, they just stayed at home and did not have to do anything (Narendra, 38 years).

This view of household work as a part of female identity further adds to the challenges of 'undoing' gender. West and Zimmerman (1987) stated that household labor is not simply designated as women's work, but that for a woman to engage in it and a man not to engage in it is to draw on and exhibit the "essential nature" of each sex. Bikram expressing his involvement in cooking only when his wife could not perform these identities suggests that his involvement was temporary and he was only being supportive but not 'undoing' gender as constructed by Nepalese. His reflection on engendering of work in Nepal, being in the Portuguese context, was not followed by ungendering.

Nepalese men's reflections on changes in gendered practices

Participants reported that many everyday practices in Nepal were not fair to women and that these should change. However, they also admitted not doing much to contribute to the change because they benefitted from the status quo. However, all the participants expressed that change was happening, albeit slowly.

When in Nepal, I realized it was not fair to women; it was not fair to my sisters. Women were being given too many responsibilities in the households. I thought that I should change it, but I did not because it was easy for me that way. Now, I have brought some of my thoughts into practice (Bikram, 32 years).

In some places, I have also seen husbands playing supportive roles. We cannot blame everyone but when you compare [dominance of men over women], it is highly prevalent in Nepal (Arun, 33 years).

Nepalese men's practices of gender

Participants stated that they were involved minimally in undertaking household chores before they left Nepal for Portugal.

I never cooked at home; I never did the dishes. When I came here, I had to learn doing some of this work (Bikram, 32 years).

I used to cook 2 to 3 times in a year, but now cooking is my full time job. You have to do what you have to do (Ankit, 39 years).

Participants stated that their involvement in household chores changed when they came to Portugal. It was evident from the conversations that Nepalese men began doing the household chores because they found themselves in an economic situation where they had to be involved in work that was considered to be female's duties. They also stated they continued to be involved in undertaking household chores even if they lived with female members in their households in Portugal. However, there were still significant differences in men's involvement in household chores compared to women's involvement in the same chores.

Although many Nepalese men were reported to undertake household chores, during the interviews and interaction with them throughout the researcher's stay, it was noted that the changes were largely spatial and not transferred to their families in Nepal. Although the desire to contribute to the household when in Nepal was expressed by the Nepalese men in Portugal, they expressed feeling limited most often by the prevalent practices and resistance from family members.

There it is like this; when I visit Nepal, they already have a routine; for example, my wife wakes up in the morning, cleans the house, showers, worships. In instances where I could wake up and clean, I am still sleeping... My wife doesn't let me help. If I cook, buwa mummy [Dad, mum] will ask me why I cooked. You have come from outside [abroad] and things are like that. So, mostly in Nepal I don't work. But I try and help; for example, I mostly do the dishes. Many people tell me [to stop], my parents also tell me to stop but I let them down. I will keep doing it. I feel this is the least I can do (Arun, 33 years).

This finding that women often resisted men's involvement in the duties they perceived as feminine resonates with the finding by Mahler (2003) who reported that some stay-behind women re-imposed traditional gendered work norms on their returnee husbands, even when the husbands desired to show their wives that they were willing to share domestic work. Moreover, some participants indicated that they did household chores when they returned to Nepal as the following account illustrates.

This time when I went home, I helped my parents with work at home.... We also engaged in agriculture; work related to home, such as bringing rice [home from the fields], getting the rice grains from the plant, etc. I also stayed a little while in Kathmandu; so, I did what was necessary for me to do for all the concerned people. Rather than behaving like I had come from abroad and I should do or not do something. (Uday, 35 years).

However, one participant stated that he did not engage in household chores during his return to Nepal.

I did not even touch anything! Once I was making tea and my 5 year old son said Daddy is a girl. They got such an impression of me (Laxman, 39 years).

Surprisingly, Laxman worked in a restaurant and undertook work in Portugal that is feminized in Nepal. Yet, by Laxman not undertaking the same work in Nepal can be seen as continuation of 'doing gender' in the Nepali context. His 5-year old son declaring that *'Daddy is a girl'* because of his involvement in the kitchen, brought out the deeply rooted gendered social construction of work. Macrae and Quadflieg in Fiske, Gilbert, and Lindzey (2010) argued that in social relational contexts, the prime categories perceived by individuals make their cultural beliefs cognitively available to implicitly shape the perceiver's judgment and behaviors in response to others. These cultural beliefs associated with categorization; for example, gender often extended as stereotypes. Ridiculing reinforces stereotypes; for example, the 5-year old son's ridiculing his father contributed to reinforcing simultaneously 'doing' and resisting 'undoing' gender in the Nepali context.

The resistance to continuation of 'doing gender' in Nepal as they did in Portugal also came from female members of the households as shared by the participants. For example, Arun (33 years) stated:

I am aware; I and my wife sometimes have arguments about this. I try and give her freedom but she doesn't try and take it.

Arun's expression of his awareness on gender gap resonates with Khalid's (2011) proposition that immigrants often became particularly aware of the relational and contextual nature of gender as they attempted to fulfill expectations of identity and behavior that could differ sharply in several places. The researcher also came across a family that had no division of labor at all, which would be 'undoing gender' in some avenues in both the Portuguese and the Nepali contexts.

Whatever is needed, whoever is in there does that. There is no work division. Everyone knows how to cook so that the work is uninterrupted (Narendra, 38 years).

This might be a special case in that the family ran a restaurant and all family members (Narendra, his wife Sangita and his in-laws) were involved on a full time basis. They took turns to take the son to school and pick him from school, to clean the house and to do anything that was required. But Narendra said that he did all the shopping himself and that he needed to be at the restaurant later in the evening because there needed to be 'someone in charge' because many people came in at that time.

Narendra's exclusive involvement in matters away from home could either be an exercise of his masculinity or his ability to negotiate but the household chores were reportedly 'ungendered'. However, when Narendra was asked about his involvement in child care, he mentioned taking him to and picking him from school and taking him for a walk, but he never fed him or changed his diapers. Narendra's initial view that there was no division of labor, was not portrayed in his later discourses. It can be inferred that all members of the household were involved in the economic activity, namely working in the restaurant and the ungendering of household chores only took place in these special circumstances where both men and women were in the same workplace and the work was generally similar.

It is evident from the participants' views that changes in perceptions had occurred but Nepalese men were still unable to 'do gender' the Portuguese way when they returned to Nepal. Many Nepalese men found themselves in difficulty; they had seen different contexts and they agreed that change should be brought in Nepal too in terms of undoing gender but they could not completely 'undo' what has been ongoing there. The experience of the Nepalese man (Arun, 33 years) in doing dishes albeit resisted by family members and that of another one who was comfortably involved in running a restaurant highlights the change in perceptions and practices because of the changed contexts.

Effects of immigration on perceptions and practices of gender

All participants stated that they found huge differences in the cultures of people in Nepal and Portugal; being in Portugal helped them to reflect on their lives in Nepal, their culture and everyday practices. Nepalese men also stated that their perceptions, in particular, regarding gender had also changed.

Men are almost equal to women in Portugal. Regarding the relation of husband and wife in maintaining a relationship, both have equal roles to breathe life in it. Should I say that we learn this here or that I learnt it? (Arun, 33 years).

The changes in perceptions of life accompanied by introspection also caused changes in the conceptualization and practice of 'doing gender' among the participants. Such changes are evident in Arun's (33 years) views on gender relations.

Yes there has been change.... we have become more liberal. For example, previously, I would tell my girlfriend or wife that women should not do this and that. You have to think about these things and I would apply restrictions at times.... I remember putting restrictions. Now, I have learnt that we have to accept them (women) as they are.

Another participant stated that not many things changed for him because he used to be involved in the household chores earlier too and that he included his wife in decision making.

Actually, there is not much difference between now and the past. Because I used to do it [household chores and include my wife in decision making], but now I realize I have to do it too. The mentality has changed in that sense. I probably did not do as much as I could. But there was not much difference (Uday, 35 years).

As seen in the above accounts, some men were already doing different things without being aware; however, the change in the context helped in realizing it at the conceptual level. Hence, the participant's accounts suggest that the change in context helped the praxis of gender. The transformations in perceptions and practices of gender have been similarly associated with the change in context by other participants.

When I was in Nepal, I would not feel anything [compelled] to do simple work ... I didn't feel the difference; I don't [feel the difference even now]. I [still] do [any kind of work] as I did before. But there [in Nepal], even if I wanted to do it, I could not do everything alone. I have my family, my society and my relations. But here [in Portugal], even if people don't do things in the beginning, slowly they understand and do.... Previously, I had the mentality that I should do it but I did not put it into daily practice. However, it has become easy after coming here [Portugal] (Uday, 35 years).

When in Nepal, I realized it was not fair to women, it was not fair to my sisters. Women were being given too much of responsibilities within households. I thought I should change it, but I did not because it was easy for me that way. Now [after coming to Portugal], I have brought some of my thoughts into practice (Bikram, 32 years).

Some people have learnt this beforehand, even in Nepal. But for me this environment [in Portugal] helped me to learn these things (Arun, 33 years).

It was evident in the participants' discourses that being in Portugal, i.e. in a different socio-economic-cultural context, gave them the space to reflect on their own understanding and practices related to gender. Portugal provided them an opportunity to develop their understanding of unequal gender relations in Nepalese society and embrace more egalitarian practices.

Table 9.1 Typologies of Nepalese men based on changes in perception and practice of gender

The Nepali Context		Migration to Portugal	The Portuguese Context		Resultant changes in Nepal	Exemplifying Cases
Perception	Practice		Perception	Practice		
gendered	doing Gender		no change	seemingly undoing gender in the Nepali context because of no division of labor in Portugal	no praxis; doing gender	Narendra
			some realization of the unfair gender relations in Nepali context	doing gender	minimal practice of undoing gender	Bikram
			ungendering of perceptions (including ungendering of emotions)	doing gender	extension of praxis by some undoing of gender in Nepal	Arun
	undoing gender		realization of the need to undo gendered practices	doing gender	some undoing of gender in practice with praxis	Uday
un-gendered	undoing gender		praxis	undoing gender	praxis and commitment to undoing gender in practice	Dorje

Typologies identified from the findings

The overall data on the perceptions and practices of gender reported by the immigrant Nepalese men were analyzed to identify the typologies presented in Table 1. Although these typologies largely reflect the discourses of Nepalese men, they give a fair idea of the changes (due to immigration) in perceptions and practices of gender among Nepalese men in Portugal.

Conclusion

The Portuguese context in which immigrant Nepalese men lived played a major role in the transformation of their perceptions and practices of gender. Although all participants reported that they were unable to transfer doing gender in Portugal to

Nepal in the same manner, their exhibitions of 'doing gender' in the Portuguese context can be seen as 'undoing gender' by the Nepalese in the Nepali socio-cultural context. What remained to be done in the move towards gender equality was to uphold their awareness of the benefits of 'undoing gender' in both the Portuguese and the Nepali socio-economic-cultural contexts. It would be useful to illuminate their practice of 'doing gender' out of the context in order to eliminate 'doing gender' limited to a particular context.

Diversity regarding perceptions and practices of gender among the participants could also be seen in the light of educational qualifications and the level of interaction with the Portuguese. It is evidente from this study that participants with a higher level of formal education showed more liberal perceptions of gender relations and more involvement in household chores. At the same time, they also interacted more with the Portuguese; in other words, they were better integrated in their host society. Hence, it can be inferred that educational attainment was a significant factor in the transformation of perceptions and practices of gender among Nepalese men in Portugal.

Immigration per se might not cause changes in the way people perceive and practice gender because they might be merely complying with the spatial norms and values, either in Nepal or Portugal and might largely be doing gender. But Nepalese men shared that these changes they experienced were significant because of the changed context, namely being in Portugal. Thus, immigration has significantly impacted the perceptions and practices of gender among Nepalese by providing different contexts for doing gender. Although awareness of this change might not have expanded much among Nepalese immigrants in the absence of critical discourses, reflection on the changed perceptions and practices of gender can help them see the changes in a newer light. This would lead to understanding how they were already 'undoing gender' in the Nepali context. In other words the intentional intervention of social workers can help Nepalese men expand their transformations on gender discourses and practice within the context of immigration to praxis, and move towards egalitarian gender relations that will benefit all sexes.

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**Part III | Contexts and responses of family and child welfare
professionals**

Chapter 10

A social policy analysis of maternal health care for immigrant women in Norway

*Lydia Mehrara*¹

Abstract: As immigrant populations increase in Europe, host nations experience the challenge of reassessing their social policy provisions to meet effectively diverse needs of the affected people. In Norway, health care policy is firmly rooted in its social democratic principles, which include universal and equal access to health services for immigrants and citizens. However, with the rapidly changing demographics in Norway, the universal approach to the provision of health care is ineffective in enabling equitable access to health services. A case study was conducted to assess the provision of maternal health services to immigrant women in Norway. A policy analysis framework was adopted to assess how national and local health policy in Norway address maternal health needs of immigrant women, and discuss challenges associated with the approach to health service provision. The findings show that while the Norwegian health policy recognizes the fundamental macro-level, social determinants of health that enable legal, physical and economic accessibility to general primary health services, there are significant barriers that are specific to immigration that undermine access and utilization of the health services provided based on universalism. These findings have important implications for health policy development in Norway.

Keywords: Policy, maternal health, inequality, immigrant women, health care, and Norway

Introduction

There is an increase in the number of people immigrating to European countries such as Norway. Immigrants bring with them diverse experiences, values, norms and expectations about life. The increase in ethno-cultural diversity of host countries poses serious challenges to health care and welfare systems; host countries are struggling to find effective ways of meeting diverse health and welfare needs of immigrants (Munthe-Kaas et al., 2018).

Many host countries in Europe have responded to the challenges by developing immigrant health policies as a part of broader integration policies (Mladovsky, 2011). Despite the growing Europeanization of immigrant policies, there are

1 Erasmus Mundus MFamily Master Programme, 3rd edition, E-mail: lydia.mehrara@nord.no

inherent differences among immigrant groups (such as asylum-seekers, undocumented immigrants, and workers) and their needs within and across countries. Differences are also evident with regard to approaches to recognition of health problems, accessibility to health services, and quality of health services provided (Rosenow, 2009 as cited in Messina, 2011, p. 37). Many barriers to attaining good health outcomes even in societies where services are universally provided affect immigrants. Socioeconomic inequalities are the most prominent issues discussed in policy for addressing barriers regarding access to health services; these overshadow more nuanced factors such as linguistic and /or ethno-cultural barriers.

Pregnant women and their newborns exemplify the differences that persist among immigrant populations. These two groups are the most vulnerable in most societies (Reeske & Razum, 2011). Yet, immigration further increases the vulnerability of women and children. Reeske and Razum (2011, p. 139) state, "health differentials during pregnancy, birth, the neonatal period and the first year of life are sensitive indicators of social inequalities".

Even though maternal mortality rates in continental Europe are among the lowest in the world (World Bank, 2015), there are other, comparatively more nuanced indicators of maternal and child health outcomes. These indicators are sufficient to portray inequalities between the maternal and child health of immigrants and nationals in Europe. Some of these include an increased prevalence of unfavourable birth outcomes (within immigrant populations in Europe) such as stillbirths, low birth weight, preterm birth, congenital defects or malformations, and an increased risk of maternal and infant mortality (Reeske & Razum, 2011).

Furthermore, many studies show disparities in utilization of prenatal and antenatal care by immigrant women in comparison to nationals (Hemingway et al., 1997; Choté et al., 2009 cited in Nørredam & Krasnik, 2011). Several studies show that immigrant women begin antenatal visits later in their pregnancy and make fewer appointments compared to women who are nationals (Rowe & Garcia, 2003; Petrou et al., 2001; David et al., 2016 cited in Reeske & Razum, 2011). Other studies show higher rates of induced abortion among non-western immigrants, which indicates either poor access to or poor knowledge of preventative measures in relation to reproductive health (Rasch et al., 2008 cited in Nørredam & Krasnik, 2011). These differential patterns of service use by immigrant women suggest that health care systems of host nations, although effective and experienced in addressing and treating their native population's needs, "may not necessarily be prepared to meet specific needs of particular immigrant groups" (Munthe-Kaas et al., 2018, p. 6).

While the examples above show health concerns and outcomes for immigrant women, little research has explored the effects of more implicit and informal social determinants such as ethnicity and culture linked to the health of immigrant women. Although some studies acknowledge them as determining factors for health, none has assessed how they are addressed in health policy. This was particularly the case in Norway where there were no studies conducted on the effects of health policy on immigrant women's health. Therefore, this study was conducted to close this knowledge and research gap.

Literature Review

Immigration in the Norwegian context

The history of non-western immigration for Norway is not as extensive as it is for its neighbouring countries. Although there had been inter-Nordic immigration during periods of the Danish and Swedish rule until 1905, Norway was a rather ethnically homogenous society until the post-World War II immigration boom in Europe (Vassenden, 2010). In the 1970s, immigrants constituted less than two percent of the Norwegian population (Blom, 1999, p. 617 cited in Vassenden, 2010). However, over the past few decades, Norway has transformed into a pluralistic society with immigrants making up an increasingly significant percentage of the residents. At a combined population of 883,751 (724,987 immigrants and 158,764 Norwegian-born to immigrants) as of January 1st 2017, persons with an immigrant background² constituted 16.8% of Norway's total population of 5,258,317 (Statistisk sentralbyrå, 2017a). The immigrant population is also generally younger than the average population, with approximately 50% of the immigrant population aged between 20 and 40 (Statistisk sentralbyrå, 2017b). This young population poses challenges, particularly for the welfare state; one of these challenges is the need to address reproductive health needs of women of childbearing age and the general health of their children.

Norway's Health Policy System

Norway's social democratic state is based on the ethos of equality; consequently, progressive taxation is used to reduce economic inequality and to finance generous public services (Pierson & Leimgruber, 2010). Driven by its principle of universalism and commitment to redistributive policies, the welfare state ensures that offering residents equal access to services available remains a national priority (Kangas & Kvist, 2013). According to Navarro and Shi (2001, p. 481), "political traditions more committed to redistributive policies (both economic and social) and full-employment policies are generally more successful in improving the health of populations". Thus, Norway's low levels of inequality, higher satisfaction with life and the population's overall high quality of health is attributed to the country's comprehensive and accessible health and welfare programs (Kangas & Kvist, 2013).

Norway mobilizes provisions through its intricate organizational and governance system, which divides responsibilities across different levels of administration and localizes fundamental decisions and programs. In the case of health care, the central government is responsible for hospitals while the local government oversees health care services in the lower level structures of health

2 These are "persons born abroad with two foreign-born parents and four foreign-born grandparents, in addition to persons born in Norway with two foreign-born parents and four foreign-born grandparents" (Statistisk sentralbyrå, 2017a).

services delivery. Nonetheless, this division of responsibility is both regulated and supervised by the Ministry of Health (Ringard et al., 2013, p. 15).

Although Norway has a generous welfare system, it is only relatively recent that the population composition has necessitated that service provision be appropriate and accessible to those who are not ethnic Norwegians and come from various cultural and linguistic groups. However, given Norway's decentralized system of governance together with settlement patterns across the country, addressing these issues universally has become challenging.

Population density varies greatly between regions due to the country's geographical location and vastness relative to its small population (Norwegian Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation, 2014). This geographical characteristic of Norway has resulted in different patterns of immigrant resettlement, with the highest concentration of immigrants found in Oslo, the capital city and its neighbouring regions, followed by Rogaland County on Norway's south-west coast (Statistisk sentralbyrå, 2017b). With Norway's system of governance and approach to addressing immigrant needs, health care initiatives taken to address specific population needs, such as immigrant women's reproductive health needs, can vary greatly across municipalities in Norway in terms of availability, scope and quality. Although exploring these differences was not the objective of this study, maternal health services targeted at immigrant women in one municipality were selected to represent a case regarding the application of health policy as shown in the methodology.

Maternal health care in Stavanger

Stavanger is known as the oil capital of Norway and has "percentage-wise, the largest foreign population" in the country (Gjerstad, 2016, p. 172). The immigrant population is largely an even distribution between work immigrants and their families, and refugees and asylum seekers (Gjerstad, 2016). As of January 1 2017, there were 19,791 women with immigrant backgrounds, who were of childbearing age (20-44 years) living in Rogaland county (Statistisk sentralbyrå, 2017c). This number represents more than half the entire (31,684) female immigrant population in the region (Statistisk sentralbyrå, 2017c). These statistics make Stavanger a relevant study context about a policy analysis of immigrant maternal health services.

Three main bodies offer maternal health services in Stavanger: (i) physicians including General Practitioners and Gynaecologists (only in high risk or special cases), (ii) primary care centres, and (iii) the Stavanger Universitetssjukehus [hospital]. The municipality of Stavanger has six public health clinics, Helsestasjon, that offer free primary health services to families and children living across the city's seven boroughs. All services are provided with minimal specific cultural or ethnic considerations; for example, the high level of immigrants is acknowledged through the availability of language interpreters (The Norwegian Directorate of Health, 2015).

The municipality runs a health program called TEGRA, which stands for 'in-TEGRATION'. This program offers a range of maternal health services and resources to immigrant women in Stavanger and was used in this study to develop a case to illustrate and investigate the enactment of national and municipal health policies

in Norway. TEGRA, for which a detailed description is provided in the findings section, was selected as the case study because of its customization for immigrant women, and the extent and scope of services.

Methodology

This study sought to investigate how national and local health policy in Norway addresses maternal health needs of immigrant women and discuss challenges associated with the approach. A case study design was adopted to ensure a detailed account of one example of health provision to immigrant mothers to facilitate answering the following research questions:

1. How has the health policy in Norway recognized and addressed barriers that affect immigrant and refugee women's access to maternal health services?
2. How has the health policy enabled accessibility and acceptability of maternal health services to immigrant and refugee women? ?

Specifically, an instrumental case study was selected to explore a complex phenomenon within its context by way of gathering and interpreting data from various sources to answer the "how" and "why" questions (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 545) allowing for the "multiple facets of the phenomenon to be revealed" (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 543). Thus, TEGRA was selected as an instrument to gain wider understanding of the topic.

Most data for the case study were collected from workshops and activities operated by TEGRA. The data were supplemented with a review of policy documents and comments from policy makers from the Board of Health and Social Welfare. Observations of TEGRA workshops and activities were conducted during a four-month period. While not an active participant, there was interaction with the program leaders and participants who were informed about the study. While no structured interviews or discussions were conducted with the workshop participants and organizers, informal discussions were held with policy makers, program managers and other health professionals in Stavanger for the purposes of clarifying or confirming information about implementation of the health policy, the history of TEGRA and organization of the program. Notes were taken concerning activities and information provided; however, no participants or organizers are cited in this study. Finally, national and local policy documents were reviewed to obtain further secondary data. The triangulation of multiple sources enhanced trustworthiness of the data and quality of the findings.

The descriptions and findings are contextualized in the larger Norwegian health policy context applying a critical policy analysis framework (Bacchi, 2009). Bacchi's (2009) "What's the Problem represented to be" (WPR) framework, consisting of six critical questions was applied. Bacchi's model aims to 'work backwards' and deconstruct any public policy to deduce implicit discourses underlining the construction and representation of 'problems' (Bacchi, 2012b). Therefore, the

objective in applying this analytical framework to the data was to review critically the connections between the policy and TEGRA's services, as an example of a program for maternal health for immigrants. Results of this analysis are used to articulate suggestions for future policy research and policy development.

The Norwegian centre for research data (NSD) did not require that ethical approval for this research be sought. Nevertheless, ethical conduct was upheld by informing all contacts (advisors and health care personnel) about the study's purpose and implications, ensuring all data were treated with sensitivity and integrity, and approaching all individuals associated with TEGRA with respect and dignity.

Findings and Discussion

Findings of this study are presented and discussed under six themes that are consistent with Bacchi's (2009) WPR model for policy analysis. Answering the questions posed in this analytical framework offered both a description of maternal health service provision for immigrant women in Stavanger and a critical investigation of data collected for the construction of this instrumental case study. This analysis created the platform for understanding the underlying factors of how policy recognizes and enables immigrant women in Norway to access maternal health services.

This section is structured as follows: the presentation of immigrant maternal health in policy; underpinnings of its presentation; processes involved in its emergence; its weaknesses and oversights; a reflection of its effects through different paradigms; and a review of contestations resulting from its representation in policy.

"What's the problem represented to be?"

First, Bacchi's (2009) WPR model for policy analysis aims to identify problem representations in a specific policy. In short, the answer to the first question is that 'immigrant maternal health issues' have not been problematized in Norwegian health policy largely because of the assumption of equal access to universal services. However, this construction of the policy analysis framework is problematic because the underlying premise of the Norwegian welfare state is: universal provision addresses any problems because provision does not discriminate in any way. Therefore, there is no problem to address, which is an assumption itself that becomes the problem. 'Problematizations' are a driving force behind policy interventions. However, because health provisions in Norwegian policy are not considered as such, there is no formal representation of problems affecting immigrant maternal health in policy.

Unlike the immigration history of its neighbouring countries, the ethnic and cultural background of Norway's population has only become highly diverse in the

recent decades. Yet there is a persistent lack of initiative in the national health policy to improve the health of immigrants beyond emphasizing their statutory entitlement to services. There is a difference between equality and equity, and thus far, the Norwegian health policy direction in favour of equality fails to attend to equity, resulting in the disproportionate attention to ethnic Norwegians. Consequently, with this foundation in national policies surrounding the health of immigrants, policies specifically targeting “immigrant maternal health” are not present.

In addition, there is “no formulation of specific targets to reduce social inequalities in health” (Dahl, 2009, p. 71), although there appears to be a greater awareness about the needs of immigrants in comparison to older literature (Dahl, 2009). The only relevant national health initiative found in relation to the general topic of immigrant health policies was the entitlement of all immigrants to qualified interpreters for overcoming language barriers in health care settings (The Norwegian Directorate of Health, 2015).

Further reviews confirmed that beyond some guidelines referring to the legal rights of immigrants to health services, the national government has minimal responsibility in devising policies targeting specific needs of immigrants. It is the municipalities’ responsibility, as guided by the Act of Municipal Health and Care Services (Gjerstad, 2016), to ensure that all their residents have necessary access to services to which they are entitled (Dahl, 2009). Therefore, the municipalities are principally responsible for recognizing needs of their inhabitants (Gjerstad, 2016). There are also some local initiatives devised at ‘grass-root’ levels to improve maternal health among immigrants. The existence, structure, aim and expansiveness of these programs vary greatly across Norway. However, the purpose of this research was not to analyse this variance; but rather to examine how the municipality of Stavanger has approached the problem or ‘problematized’ this issue, which leads this analysis to the next question in the WPR model.

Inequality in an Egalitarian Welfare State

The assumption of equality has required some attention in policy because there are groups in society who are not equally able to access provisions. To identify the presumptions underpinning this problem, as required by the second question of the WPR model, an understanding of the health policy setting and the scope of service provision was fundamental to interpreting discourses underlying the realization and response to society’s changing needs, especially in relation to health concerns and issues of immigrants.

The overall democratic purpose in Norway suggests that everyone, regardless of his or her social or economic status and geographical location, should have equal access to the support that make for a healthy and productive population (Ringard et al., 2013). The presumption in universal service provision is that by enabling equal access, equality will result. However, these universal and inclusive policies have not been sufficient in ensuring equity among the whole population, thus Norway has experienced problems of health inequality.

Because health care is a shared responsibility between the national authorities and local governments, they both play equally important roles in overcoming health-related inequalities. Inequalities in health are primarily addressed at the national level by the Ministry of Health, the Directorate of Health and the Norwegian Institute of Public Health (NIPH), who ensure universal access to high quality services across all municipalities through funding arrangements and legislation (Ministry of Health and Care Services, 2011; Ringard et al., 2013). Thereafter, the municipalities are “responsible for making their services accessible and understandable for the population, including the immigrant population” (Gjerstad, 2016, p. 168), by designing their service provisions to best suit needs of their municipal populations.

Despite equality being a prominent aim in health policy, and the access of all citizens and legal residents to the National Insurance Scheme (Folketrygden, NIS) (Ringard et al., 2013; Staten legemiddelverk, 2016), there are significant gaps in its delivery, which result in inequity (Culyer & Wagstaff, 1993). The task which policy makers are now faced with is to re-evaluate and adapt policies in a system once suited to address needs of a largely homogenous and mono-cultural society, to equitably attend to needs of a more culturally and ethnically diverse population. The way in which this affects immigrant women, specifically in their access to maternal health services is the subject of this study.

Realizing the Needs of Immigrant Women

Bacchi’s third question concerns the “contingent practices and processes through which this understanding of the ‘problem’ has emerged” (Bacchi, 2012a, p. 21). Processes of socio-political change have shaped the welfare state and policies contained within it. From its early beginnings in the past century, the Norwegian welfare state has evolved from providing a basic safety net to its present-day form, where it is responsible for meeting a wide array of societal needs. Today, the welfare state has become an important agent in ensuring health equality, and consequently has had to continuously adapt to sustain the ever-shifting needs of society.

It was not until 2007 that Norway released its policy on reducing social inequalities in health (Norwegian Ministry of Health and Care Services, 2007) — having accepted in 2003 that there was a need to do so (Strand et al., 2009). Largely, defining social inequalities are related to economics, the policy targets ‘income, childhood conditions, employment and working environment, health behaviour, health services and social inclusion’ (Norwegian Ministry of Health and Care Services, 2007 p. 6).

Moreover, the large influx of immigrants and transformation of Norway’s demography to a more heterogeneous society over the recent decades has imposed many challenges on the health care and welfare systems. These changes, along with the recognition of health inequalities, have resulted in the formation of a much more complex system. This complexity is evident from the multiple authorities and agencies involved in the development and delivery of health services, to

the distribution of duties and the two-tier system of governance that offers local governments more flexibility in distributing universal provisions more effectively with respect to their populations' needs.

TEGRA: Addressing Immigrant Maternal Health in Stavanger

TEGRA is a municipally funded health program in the Stavanger Kommune. Its initial focus was to contribute to the national action plans against Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) in the early 2000s, coinciding with a period highlighting the recognition of health inequalities in Norway, as part of the O.K. initiative (translated as Care and Knowledge against Female Circumcision) (Norwegian Ministries, 2008). In line with O.K.'s initiative, TEGRA aimed to increase the cultural competency of health care professionals and other service providers working with immigrant women and families on dealing with sensitive topics such as FGM.

The program, which stands for 'inTEGRation' focuses on working with immigrant families, especially with women and children to prevent their social isolation; it commenced in December 2002 at the central health clinic in Stavanger (Stavanger Kommune, 2016; Sykepleierforbund, 2014). Until 2004, TEGRA did not have any formal standing in the municipality; as a result, project team members carried out much of the work voluntarily (Helsesøstre, 2007). In 2004, the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI) recognized the project; it was provided with funding for two years, until 2006, after which work was halted (Helsesøstre, 2007). Finally, in 2007 the project received formal recognition from the municipality and was subsequently integrated into the public health care system (Sykepleierforbund, 2014).

TEGRA's provision of its current services emerged from a national culturally specific policy to act against the practice of FGM. Whereas FGM was certainly constructed nationally as a problem, being able to access maternal health services was not. TEGRA organizers themselves constructed immigrant maternal health as the 'problem' needing to be addressed in the absence of a suitable national framework at the time. Today, in addition to working on the national action plans against FGM in Norway, TEGRA also organizes free childbirth preparation [Fødselsforberedende kurs] and postnatal group workshops [Barselgrupper] for immigrant families living in Stavanger (Stavanger Kommune, 2016). Workshops are held several times throughout the year and families can request to have interpreters free of charge (Stavanger Kommune, 2016). In 2016, there were 12 pre-natal groups, with 172 pregnant women from 56 different nationalities; and 8 post-natal groups, with 104 families from 46 different nationalities who had participated in workshops organized by TEGRA the previous year.

Ensuring Equality

To answer Bacchi's fourth question of what remains unstated in policies, an overview of how this policy has thus far enabled accessibility, followed by a discussion

of its limitations in the case of TEGRA has been provided. TEGRA is not the only provider of maternal health services in Stavanger, but is the only one that specializes in immigrant women's health. Midwives are often the primary providers of maternal health services; however, women may choose to seek care from their General Practitioner (GP) as well as during and after pregnancy. These health providers are separate entities and their practices therefore are not affiliated with one another. Gynaecologists are only involved when a pregnancy is high risk or there are predisposed complications during pregnancy or at birth. All pregnant women, including refugees and those in the asylum process, are entitled to free prenatal and postnatal health services at the public health clinics (Helsedirektoratet, 2017). In addition to medical check-ups and pregnancy advice, midwives and GPs provide information to the women about their social wellbeing; their rights; and the birth process. In addition to protocol demands, they address sensitive topics such as mental health, intimate partner violence, abuse, and other concerns that might affect mothers during and after pregnancy. All these services aim at ensuring that all mothers have equal access to maternal services and information to obtain optimal pregnancy outcomes.

The Helsedirektoratet (n.d) strongly recommends that all municipal health centres offer parents the opportunity to take part in-group consultations. The purpose of a group-based initiative is to enable parents in the same situation to share their knowledge and experiences about childcare and parenting with each other, and to have the chance to create a social network with other parents in their community. The post-natal group courses offered at all six of the city's clinics, aimed at enhancing maternal and child health, have existed long before development of TEGRA. However, their accessibility to immigrant women who did not speak Norwegian was limited which resulted in very low attendance of immigrant women. Women, who wished to participate but did not speak Norwegian, had the option of paying for private courses in their language; however, to many, this was not a financially feasible option. Consequently, many immigrant women missed the benefits of this service.

According to Helsesøstre (2007) and Sykepleierforbund (2014), women with immigrant backgrounds tend to seek consultation from their doctors and midwives later and less frequently than the Norwegian women. TEGRA's operations try to address this disparity by offering not only post-natal courses but also pre-natal preparatory courses especially targeted at women with an immigrant background living in Stavanger. The program is free of charge and offers participants access to qualified interpreters.

While genuine efforts of the organizers to help immigrant women through this program were clearly apparent, the presenters would sometimes lapse into generalities. For example, in one case, TEGRA was described as akin to the 'watering wells' used in some countries for women to gather and exchange information and provide support, or in another scenario the use of pork liver pâté [*leverpostei*] as infant food was recommended to an audience inclusive of Muslim women. Generalizing as such can become stereotyping, resulting in disregard for cultural or religious sensitivities.

Despite the clinic's best efforts, the program had some notable limitations. The timing and location of this program is a limiting factor. Morning and afternoon classes once a week do not allow those employed in shift work — a common condition for immigrant workers, to attend. Moreover, although the central city location is convenient for public transport, lengthy journeys from other city boroughs, and sometimes with children creates additional barrier to attending.

Language is another consideration that can present barriers to participation. A common practice of employing male interpreters to work in the culturally sensitive areas of childbirth, breastfeeding and other gynaecological matters for some groups are a barrier to attending the courses offered.

Another potential barrier is the lack of connection between hospitals, clinics health visitors and midwives. TEGRA is only run at the central clinic in Stavanger. If women cannot attend the course due to timing and/ or location, there is no other programme, which assists them as extensively during pregnancy and after childbirth.

Finally, the content presented in TEGRA has been selected and organized by Norwegian practitioners according to their notions of good practice. In other words, the program is grounded in a mono-cultural and 'white' understanding of maternal health needs. The focus is not on addressing any specific issues affecting immigrant women or on making the Norwegian course content more culturally sensitive to the needs of women from diverse backgrounds. Rather, the main effort in the current program lies in making this information more accessible to immigrant women by addressing the language barrier and not much more.

Reflecting on Implications of the Problem Representation

The fifth question in Bacchi's (2009) WPR model asks, "What effects are produced by this representation of the 'problem'?" (p. 48). Through reflection on the discursive effects, subjectification effects and lived effects due to dividing practices (Bacchi, 2009; Cort, 2011; Pereira, 2014), this question prompted an analysis of implications of the problem representation in policy.

Discursive Effects — the emphasis on equality in health policy has been shown to overlook ethos of equity. The presumption that all maternal health needs of women are the same, and that they can be addressed by the same standard provision, supports a universal discourse on policy representation. Although policy makers have acknowledged inequality in Norway's universal health care, in national policy, they have mainly addressed general challenges such as socio-economic barriers to accessibility within the population as a whole. This study shows that policy has abandoned the responsibility of addressing health needs of immigrant women to local provision.

Stavanger's approach to making maternal health services more accessible to immigrant women through TEGRA was found to be framed within a mono-cultural Norwegian perspective. The general discursive principles are therefore that universal access will enable equal access, which will ultimately lead

to a just, equal and inclusive society. However, the effects of these discursive principles are that they ignore diversity by treating everyone the same. Immigrant women are constructed as 'women' and 'mothers' with similar maternal health needs, but the problem with this perspective is that 'immigration' is not accounted for in the co-construction of their needs and hence their representation in health policy. The consequences of this discursive effect further manifest themselves as subjective and lived effects.

Subjectification Effects — The subjective effects of these discourses are that, despite intentions to be inclusive, policies can inadvertently lead to exclusion of these women by disregarding their immigrant milieu. The current policy realizations and representations of barriers to health care faced by immigrant women are not an accurate depiction of nearly all the challenges they face. There are weaknesses in the current program that subjectifies all the women who attend, to a mono-cultural Norwegian ideal of pre-natal and post-natal care. In doing so, the program overlooks the plurality that exists in the group labelled as 'immigrants' and fails to acknowledge their diverse individual needs. Of course, it is not feasible to recognize every woman's specific needs or to understand and orient care services in a way that respects every individual's culture. Rather by showing awareness of these cultures' norms, and acknowledging their differences, services can be made more suitable and culturally relevant to a diverse population.

After all, health initiatives like TEGRA are a part of a larger integration initiative. Acknowledging the needs of immigrant women through policy and enhancing their relationship with a health system, can promote their integration in Norwegian society by increasing their trust and participation in the system. However, by disregarding their immigrant milieus, this systemic exclusion can lead to their isolation from Norwegian society and the health care system, as described in the following paradigm.

Lived Effects — Some situations can put immigrant women at crossroads of whether they should assimilate and leave their cultural beliefs and practices surrounding pregnancy and childbirth behind, or rely on their own remedies and community practices. In situations that cause participants to withdraw from TEGRA, it would not only have negative implications for the health of the mother and her baby, it would also reinforce the discourse of individual responsibility and blame the service user for failing to utilize services available to them. This can cause them to retreat and rely on their social networks or community for help, which could result in decreased utilization of health services and ultimately lead to inequality and marginalization.

The Truth about Universalism

Finally, the last question in the WPR framework demands for an overview of "contestation surrounding representation of the 'problem'" (Bacchi, 2012a), which in this case are the consequences that result from adopting the principle of universalism in the Norwegian Health policy.

What was realized through this study is that the overly dominant notion of universalism overshadows weaknesses of the system. This has inadvertently resulted in a degree of ambiguity in the ethos of equity and equality. Norway's generalist approaches to addressing population needs have overlooked intricate determinants of health at the micro level of society that are essential for ensuring health equity especially among marginalized immigrant groups. This contradicts the assumption that everybody is equal and therefore everybody should be treated the same. What has been learnt as a by-product of this study is that people do not experience universalism and equality the same way because of their different cultural backgrounds, interpretations, aspirations, and expectations of the system. Policies that fail to recognize or target differences breed inequality, and result in people falling through the cracks — imposing a weakness on the principle of universalism.

The current representation of health policy in Norway is a portrayal of its social democratic ethos. However, its current universal approach to service delivery has proven inefficient in targeting minority groups in society. Therefore, its principles must be challenged and efforts need to be made to redefine service delivery to reach targeted groups of people who do not benefit from conventional strategies of provision within a universal context. Furthermore, "there is also the need to implement many of the initiatives on a more sustainable and coordinated basis; without public and government involvement, structural improvements are impossible to achieve (Ingleby, 2006 cited in Rechel, Mladovsky, Deville', et al., 2011, p. 248).

Concluding remarks

Bacchi's (2009) WPR policy analysis framework served not only as an organization tool for the raw data, but also elicited a progressive and in-depth reflection on the Norwegian approach to addressing social determinants of health in policy, through an example of its enactment in the municipality of Stavanger.

A conceptual framework was developed to interpret the findings of this study and their wider implication on health policy from multiple perspectives by selecting different yet overlapping theoretical concepts. The two primary theories that guided both the development of this study and the analysis of its findings were the AAAQ framework (WHO, 2007) and the Social Determinants of Health (SDH) model (Dahlgren & Whitehead, 1991).

Interpreting the study findings was through the lens of the AAAQ framework which recognizes the four interrelated elements, namely availability, accessibility, acceptability and quality that are necessary for the implementation of the right to health (Schierenbeck et al., 2013; WHO, 2007). This also supports a belief that Norwegian health policy recognizes the fundamental macro-level, social determinants of health that enable legal, physical and economic accessibility to general primary health services.

However, addressing the formal barriers to health care services such as those mentioned above is not sufficient to ensure equity. Immigration itself is not a risk

factor to health, but it has implications for social determinants of health and vice versa. Access to health services by immigrants can be affected by a complex interplay of informal barriers such as language, religion, ethnicity, culture and “newness” (Nørredam & Krasnik, 2011, p. 71) both on their own, and because of their consequences for formal determinants such as socioeconomic factors. Although there is significant evidence for the influence of these factors in inhibiting immigrants from utilizing and benefiting from health services available to them (Nørredam & Krasnik, 2011), there seems to be a prominent absence of their recognition in the health policy.

The Norwegian health policy and its limited concern for acceptability supports a one-dimensional and mono-cultural Norwegian understanding of health, good practice and approach to addressing health inequalities, which overlooks the needs of minority groups such as immigrant women. This poses a challenge for the four intertwined components of the rights-based model of health. “Reducing health inequities is important because health is a fundamental human right and its progressive realization will eliminate inequalities that result from differences” (WHO, n.d). All elements of this framework must therefore work in unison to ensure immigrant women’s equitable right to maternal health care. However, without the recognition of critical components, the system becomes faulty.

This study provides evidence that the blanketed approach to universalism overshadows gaps that may exist in the system. This hypothesis implicitly infers that the needs of everybody can be addressed using the same general principles; however, this thinking imposes a weakness on the principle of universalism and further deepens inequality in immigrant maternal health, which can lead to women’s further marginalization.

“Policies that are designed to be universal too often fail to acknowledge that different people are situated differently” (Perry, 2011, p. 571-572). Powell (2008) argues that universalism will disproportionately benefit the privileged. This is due to the advantaged groups in society often having dominance over defining privilege and inequality in policy. Although these policies might offer some benefits to the majority of the population, they are not effective in meeting the needs of the less advantaged (Perry, 2011). Therefore, for universal provisions to benefit the whole population equally, services must be targeted at those who are typically overlooked by common policy. Powell (2008, p. 802) proposes that, “a targeted universal strategy is one that is inclusive of the needs of both the dominant and the marginalized groups, but pays particular attention to the situation of the marginal group”. His rhetorical strategy on targeted universalism requires that policies be “evaluated by their outcome, not just the intent” (Powell, 2008, p. 803), wherein output is determined by how well the universal policies benefit the entire population, especially the targeted groups. In this case, targeted universalism would involve interventions that would increase participation, satisfaction and birth outcomes of immigrant women, particularly refugees, who are a vulnerable and often marginalized group, by making maternal health services more accessible and acceptable to them.

Examining in some depth a program whose aim is to provide maternal health services to immigrant women has revealed the gaps between policy aims and their implementation. TEGRA is an example of a municipality-located program, which has shown that equity of access to information, and service provision as a desired mechanism to achieving social equity through the provision of standard Norwegian health services cannot be guaranteed. Although TEGRA is a representation of progress in addressing inequality, the underpinnings and processes involved in the problem representation at policy level pose many limitations to its effectiveness. Nonetheless, designed to fill an identified gap at a local level, the experience of this program has the potential to inform policy development and practice at the national level and trigger further discussion and research on this topic.

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Chapter 11

Being new in a child welfare agency Social worker's perspectives on challenges, coping strategies and support systems

*Isabel Amelia Álvarez Moncada*¹

Abstract: Social work education is essential to effective performance of child welfare agencies in Sweden. Newly qualified social workers with a bachelor's degree and those without any previous experience in the field of child protection often find jobs in child welfare agencies because of the high demand for social workers. In recent years, child welfare agencies in Sweden have been criticised for being poor at developing a conducive organizational climate for social work practitioners. Being affected by organizational changes associated with increased bureaucracy, social workers are juggling administrative work with caring for families and children. Therefore, negative consequences in the child welfare agencies have occurred. These include dissatisfaction with services among the clients, stress and related disorders, and increased turnover among social workers. This study explored the challenges that newly qualified social workers and who were recently employed in child welfare agencies face; the coping strategies they adopt, and the formal and informal support they receive from child welfare agencies. Five semi-structured interviews and one group interview were conducted to collect data. Findings show that social workers faced challenges associated with transitioning from universities, inadequate practice experience, and the lack of relevant practice guidelines. Excessive administrative work also meant that social workers had little time to attend to children and families, the latter which they considered their primary duty. Social workers adopted emotion-focussed, behavioural-focussed and problem-focussed coping strategies to enable them continue serving their clients. Child welfare agencies provided both informal and formal support to reinforce social workers' resilience. However, limited by their municipality regulations, these types of support differed from agency to agency, which created imbalance in the support systems available for social workers in Sweden.

Introduction

Social work practice in Sweden has recently undergone significant changes. Formerly, characterized as generalist and integrated practice, social work is increasingly dominated by specialist practice (Blom, Moren, & Perlinski, 2013). Qualification for social work practice is obtained on successful graduation after three and a half years of instruction for a BSW. This instruction involves writing a

1 Erasmus Mundus MFamily Master Programme, 2nd edition, E-mail: isamelia23@gmail.com

thesis worth 15 credits (Sandstrom, 2007) and one field placement in a social welfare agency (Campanini, Frost & Höjer, 2013). However, newly qualified social workers report that they lack adequate training because social work instruction is general to the extent that it introduces students to many different fields of social work practice (Khoo, Hyvönen & Nygren, 2002). Upon finding employment in the public sector, for example, in child welfare agencies, newly recruited social workers often face many challenges (Kullberg, 2013).

In Sweden, child welfare agencies are public institutions under the supervision of local governments (Cocozza & Hort, 2011). They are particularly administered by municipalities (Bergmark & Lundström, 2007; Wiklund, 2006). Using the family oriented model that works in partnership with the affected families, child welfare agencies and municipalities have the responsibility for ensuring that children grow in a safe environment (Cameron & Freymond, 2006). Yet, each municipality organizes and administers child welfare work differently (Wiklund, 2006), following guidance of the social welfare board (Höjer & Svensson, 2014).

Using a formal organizational structure (Wiklund, 2006), social workers can work in different units which concern families, children and adolescents; social workers are responsible for working with at least one of these units (Bergmark & Lundström, 2007). Each child welfare agency has the obligation to provide different types of support for their social workers; nevertheless, in recent years, the amount of turnover among social workers has steadily increased (Tham, 2007).

Some of the causes of increased turnover among social workers employed by child welfare agencies include work stress, violence at work, inadequate experience and supervision, and poor relationships among co-workers (Cocozza & Hort, 2011; Khoo et al., 2002; Perlinski, 2010; Tham, 2007; Meagher & Tham, 2009; Al-Ma'seb, Alkhurinej & Alduwaihi, 2013).

Furthermore, implementation of the new public management system, characterized by competition, freedom of choices and evaluation that provides efficient involvement (Bradley, Engelbrecht, & Höjer, 2010) creates fragmentation and hierarchies among the professionals (Berg et al., 2008; Healy & Meagher, 2004). Consequently, there is a high demand for social workers in child welfare agencies and many social workers without relevant experience are being hired. The basic requirement for obtaining a job in this field of practice is having a bachelor's degree in social work (Campanini, Frost, & Höjer, 2012; Khoo et al., 2002; Wiklund, 2006).

Because child welfare practice is very challenging, many newly recruited social workers experience significant work-related stress that diminishes their job satisfaction and performance. However, the agencies are responsible for providing support to promote resilience among social workers (Collins, 2008), so that they can effectively serve their clients. With this support, some social workers can face the daily challenges in the child welfare agencies. Helping social workers to cope, address their problems and become important members of the agencies is essential to the development and functioning of child welfare agencies in Sweden. Moreover, child welfare agencies are administered by different municipalities with differing forms of support towards the social workers. The aim of this chapter is to explore the challenges faced by newly qualified social workers and who were

recently employed in child welfare agencies in Sweden, assess their coping strategies and the nature of support provided to enable them serve their clients effectively. It seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are the main challenges that the newly qualified and recently employed social workers in child welfare agencies in Sweden face?
2. What are the coping strategies for the newly qualified and recently employed social workers in child welfare agencies?
3. What are the sources of support for the newly qualified and recently employed social workers in child welfare agencies?

Main theoretical concepts

Human Services Organizations

Human services organizations are known as institutions such as schools, social service agencies, and hospitals whose role is to ensure the well-being of citizens (Hasenfeld, 2010).

Street Level Bureaucrats

Social workers are known as a type of street level bureaucrats. They are professionals who work directly with people and using their own discretion in doing their jobs (Lipsky, 2010). Nevertheless, they have to follow their agencies' practice guidelines. Human service organizations provide the policies, manuals and techniques to help the professionals in conducting their work. Furthermore, it is the responsibility of human service organizations to ensure that social workers realize job satisfaction (Lipsky, 2010).

Managers

According to Lipsky (2010), managers are concerned with promoting staff performance, reducing cost of running human service organizations and facilitating street level bureaucrats to adapt to the agencies' rules.

Organizational Climate

Cahalane and Sites (2008) described organisational climate as the environment where an employee works. Schneider et al. (2013) introduced the concept of organizational climate and defined it as the situation that occurs in an organization based on policies, practices and procedures. In other words, organizational climate refers to the space where employees perceive their work environment (Cahalane & Sites, 2008).

Moral Work

According to Hasenfeld (2010), an effective human services organization is founded on moral work. Considered as the “raw material” of human services organizations (Hasenfeld, 2010, p. 11), humans are categorized and fixed in order to remodel their personal attributes. The objective is to create a good relationship between clients and the worker to achieve family self-determination. This relationship is based on trust which occurs between the professionals and the agencies; agencies depend on their workers to promote moral solutions.

Human services organizations use the concept of technology in developing moral work. This involves applying rules to monitor the stuff that the professionals use in their own contexts, while for the clients, technology is used as a form of intervention (Hasenfeld, 2010). In Sweden, the term technology is used in the form of legislations that comes directly for each municipality. Therefore, child welfare agencies use the legislations to address the needs and problems of their clients, which can be either voluntary (Social Services Acts) or coercive (Care of Young People Acts) (Hessle & Vinnerljung, 1999).

Emotional Work

Professionals working in human services organizations need to use their emotions to work with their clients. Sometimes these emotions are not authentic but are necessary for the clients' needs (Hasenfeld, 2010); therefore, using emotions (smiling, showing empathy, etc.) can be tiresome for the professionals. Consequently, human services organizations have the responsibility of ensuring that employees receive supervision, training and support in order to continue developing their emotional work (Hasenfeld, 2010).

Child Welfare Agencies

Lipsky (2010) considers social workers as “the ultimate street-level bureaucrats” (p. 233) because they have many challenges; they use their talents to provide support but at the same time they use coercive action to remove children from hostile environments; which is very stressful. In this sense, child welfare agencies are a type of human services organizations that provide supervision, training and support to maintain high standards for providing social work services (Lipsky (2010).

Support Systems

Anyone within the human services organizations can provide support. This includes co-workers, managers, supervisors, and clients. Such support may come in different forms, such as rewards, supervision and compliments. Support helps the

employee to feel special and a valued member of the organization; therefore, social workers are able to cope and improve their job performance (Lipsky, 2010).

According to Bradley and Höjer (2009), in Sweden three types of supervision in social work practice are often provided: administrative (management), educational (training and development) and supportive (support) supervision. In addition, Collins (2008) notes that these types of supervision are implemented in both informal and formal contexts.

Support in Child Welfare Agencies

Berg and Kelly (2000) stated that social workers and their supervisors comprise child welfare agencies. Social workers receive support in many different ways. A social work colleague may provide support by sharing experiences, giving advice and listening to his/her peers. Lipsky (2010) explains that working together with their peers, professionals are able to find effective solutions to their problems. Furthermore, informal support (Collins, 2008), which is a type of support that is offered inside and outside the social work setting (e.g. by families and friends), plays an important role in professional development.

Supervisors also provide support to social workers. Usually, supervisors are social workers with much experience and trained to provide administration, support and education to fellow staff (Bradley & Höjer, 2009). Supervision comes in different forms. For example, the supervisors and the social workers may have a meeting to work on difficult cases, and exchange their opinions on the cases. Another type of supervision involves case consultation where the social worker is able to use his/her knowledge to resolve the problems; and having personal time with the supervisor is also a type of support (Berg & Kelly, 2000).

One feature that distinguishes Sweden from other countries is that, by using the psychotherapy model, they have developed a new type of supervision known as "external supervision" (Bradley et al., 2010). External professionals (usually psychologists) are hired by agencies to nourish the social workers with emotional and educational support. In general, social workers receive support from the child welfare agencies in the form of informal discussions, supervision, sharing information, using innovative practice, training sessions, shadowing "experience" and mentoring (Welbourne, 2012, p. 222).

Coping

Coping is defined as "constantly changing cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person" (Folkman & Lazarus, 1984, p. 141). According to these authors, people use different strategies to face situations that are influenced by the environments and personal characteristics. According to Folkman and Lazarus (1984), coping strategies refer to the cognitive mechanisms used by individuals to change

negative thoughts into positive ones. This is known as emotion-focused strategy. Furthermore, this type of strategy is accompanied by behavioural strategies (exercise, meditation etc.), which help individuals to overcome their problems. The problem-focused approach is also a form of coping strategy, which helps the person to identify the problem and think about different solutions for it.

Coping Resources

Folkman and Lazarus (1984) explained that every individual has coping resources that are characterized by their personal features and influenced by the environment in which he or she lives. These resources influence what a person can do to overcome his/her problem.

Strengths as Resources

The concept of Strengths was introduced by Saleebey (1996). Strengths can be found within the individual (feelings, talents, etc.) and environment (community, culture, etc.). As a form of resources, strengths such as talents, capacities, etc. are manifested in everyday life and help the people to have an improved quality of life (Saleebey, 1996).

Resilience as an outcome of coping strategies

Resilience is the practice of positive adaptation amidst adversity (Gilligan, 2004). It can be defined as a process or as an outcome (Adamson, Beddoe & Davys, 2014; Fraser, Galinsky, & Richman, 1999; Ungar & Liebenberg, 2009). There is also consensus among some scholars that resilience is the consequence of using individual resources to overcome problems and become successful in life (Fraser, Galinsky, & Richman, 1999; Saleebey, 1996).

Methodological Approach

Participants

There is lack of systematic evaluation of the causes of high staff turnover in child welfare agencies in Sweden (Cocozza & Hort, 2011; Tham, 2007). In addition, there is little information on working years of professionals in child welfare agencies. Because of these limitations, it was decided that the selection criteria should include a maximum of two years of work experience in a child welfare agency and having only a BSW degree.

To enroll participants for this study, purposive and snow ball sampling techniques were used (Bryman, 2012). Using snowball sampling techniques involved contacting social work professors and students at Gothenburg University to

establish if they knew former students who had recently been recruited to work in child welfare agencies. The researcher received emails and telephone contacts of potential participants in this study. Subsequently, eight social workers were contacted and agreed to participate in this study. All the eight social workers were working in different child welfare agencies in Gothenburg and surrounding municipalities. Out of the eight participants, five were interviewed individually and three were interviewed together (as a small group).

Data collection tool

A semi-structured interview guide was used with a list of four introductory questions, five main questions and eight probing questions. This tool was used for both individual and group interviews.

Interview Process

Individual and group interviews were conducted in five different child welfare agencies, particularly in the participants' offices. After introducing the study to each potential participant, informed consent was obtained before carrying out the interviews. All the interviews were audio-recorded. The interviews, were conducted in English, and lasted between 30 and 55 minutes.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis helped to categorize the main ideas of the participants (Kvale, 2007). Analysis also considered data from secondary sources. Different themes and sub-themes emerged from the data.

Ethical Considerations

This study followed the ethical guidelines of The Swedish Research Council and ensured that confidentiality of the collected data and anonymity of participants were upheld (Vetenskapsrådet, 2011). Participants shared their own feelings and concerns about their agencies with the researcher when they were assured that such information would be treated as highly confidential. In addition, informed consent was obtained after the study was clearly explained to each potential participant. To ensure anonymity and privacy of each individual participant, their names and employers were not recorded during the interviews. Only neutral labels such as informant 1 and Informant 2 were used to identify participants. The obtained data were kept safely so that unauthorised persons could not access them.

Findings and Discussion

Challenges

Transition from the University to the job

The first challenge that participants reported was inadequate practical experiences during their studies. As students, they had conducted a five month field practice (Frost et al., 2013). With many opportunities to explore, the students were constrained to choose one area to develop their practice knowledge, which for some was not in the field of child welfare.

From the university I have the thinking, I have been thinking how to do it and how to think. How to think about risks of growing up like this or how people in crisis can act on information about the human being. However, the investigation tools are so much about the methods or working in different systems. There is no time at the university to learn that; therefore, you need to get it at your workplace. In addition, if you are going to do that, you need time and for me it was a good idea because I did my practice here for 20 weeks and I had a lot of time to learn and practise (Informant 2).

Furthermore, participants mentioned that universities only provided general education. Because a BSW was awarded after instruction for only three and a half years (Sandstrom, 2007), universities focused more on social work theory concerning working with clients, the law, ethics, social politics, etc. but less on the practice (Perlinski et al., 2013; Sandstrom, 2007).

The education you get is very general because you are supposed to fit in many kinds of jobs after graduation. You are not only educated to become a social worker who will be caring for children. You can do so much, so it is very general. Because of this, the education does not prepare you for everything in this job (Informant 3 from the group interview).

Nevertheless, the theories provided by the universities helped the social workers to assist their clients.

The university has helped me with tools to think in different ways, to understand people in different situations of life. Young people, old people, dysfunctional people, eh! All kinds of people, immigrants, people with drug or alcohol problems (Informant 2).

Unfortunately, after some years, theoretical knowledge is diminished because there is always a gap between social work theory at the university and practice in the organizations (Al-Ma'seb et al., 2013).

I remember, we were visiting different working places but I don't know if it was during our second semester or not. We asked the people: "what kinds of theory are you using?" Because we thought that they were actually thinking about theories. And that is where the gap lies. But, I also think it is important to have the theory because you

have it somewhere here (she pointed to her head) and you use it even though you are not really aware sometimes (Informant 2 from group interview).

Work Environment

Participants reported that the main jobs for social workers in children welfare agencies included carrying out assessments of children's needs and serving as *Barnsekreterare* (child secretary / working in partnership with volunteers). Social workers in their latter job were expected to provide support and information (Hessle & Vinnerljung, 1999). Within these areas, the social workers experienced different challenges. Participants mentioned that there was much bureaucracy in their jobs. They were concerned that their jobs seemed to be as if they were engaged in production work rather than providing human services. The problem of much bureaucracy was a consequence of implementation of the New Public Management system that created hierarchies and fragmentation inside the institutions and its model is based on the power of the market (Bradley et al., 2010). Moreover, social workers were doing double jobs: being secretaries (because they have to document everything in a database), assessing as well as meeting the needs of children.

The problem is that we have too much administration; we have too much to write, too much stuff to be done by the social worker instead of hiring administrative workers to do it. So, we are both social workers and secretaries (Informant 1 of group interview).

Because that is what we basically do; we write, write and write. Then, we go and meet people and then we write, write and write again. So, yeah! That is what I have to do (Informant 3).

This implies that recording relevant information made the jobs of social workers harder because they were too constrained to invest in developing new ideas for improved social work practice (Healy & Meagher, 2004; Lipsky, 2010).

Starting on a new job was exciting, but also difficult, especially when social workers lacked proper training. According to Khoo et al. (2002), many social workers lacked experience necessary for them to effectively undertake their jobs. One participant stated:

The first day I got 13 cases. She was like: "Here you have" "Ok, what am I going to do with this?" "Ah! You do this, you do this and you do this." And I was: "Oh, ok!" So I consulted my colleagues on how to perform my own responsibilities.

One participant reported that in many cases there were discrepancies between peers, which undermined the provision of support to social workers. The indifference and associated lack of support by your peers resulted in undue stress among social workers (Mor Barak et al., 2006; Tham & Meagher, 2009).

To be honest, when I got here, I felt lonely. [—] The people that were here in this working place; I mean, some people who left; two of them were helping me at the beginning but then they left. So, I was basically quite lonely being here [—] I was having a hard time thinking if I had somebody to back me up. I was afraid to ask people for help because I felt like they would find it annoying (Informant 3).

This is a typical scenario of situations which many newcomers faced within child welfare agencies, and combined with dissatisfaction and health difficulty, this could be a good cause for the social workers to quit their jobs (Bradley et al., 2010; Perlinski, 2010; Tham, 2007).

Another challenge reported by participants was that child welfare agencies underwent many modifications. Social workers were hired to do specific jobs; nevertheless, by not having specific guidelines, any social worker could say that this work belongs to a colleague whereas it may be his/her job. Furthermore, the lack of communication between the different departments affected negatively the social worker's job performance.

As the saying goes in Sweden, "it is like when something is falling between the chairs". Some cases were falling between the chairs because the people on the chairs were saying: "it is not on my desk". ... this means that it is not my job to do this neither is it somebody else's job to do it. Then we say: it falls between the chairs [—]. Inside this organization we have different bureaucracy problems. For example, "I investigated how the kid is developing or feeling. Then you have parents who are separated and fighting over where this kid should go. Where should this kid live? If the kid lives here most of the time, I need money from you and bla, bla, bla..." some practical discussions, practical conflicts, which are not on our desk [—]. We have a department here working when parents are angry or arguing about who is going to take care of the kids. And the kid also has the right to a mother and a father, but sometimes for some reason, maybe, maybe just the mother is taking care of the kid and the father doesn't have the right on the paper, but he has the right as a father. So, when there is a practical issue that is not on our desk, it can cause problems that can go to other units in this organization. And they say: "No. It is not ours either!" And then it falls between the chairs. There are different reasons why? But that is a little bit frustrating when you feel that something is falling between the chairs and you can do nothing about it (Informant 2).

Therefore, there was a lack of organizational and professional commitment (Tham, 2007) because there was not a well-developed organizational climate (Cahalane & Sites, 2008) within the agencies.

Trying to help the families was also challenging. Participants mentioned that they had a large number of clients and they did not have much time to serve all of them. In addition, it was expected that each case would be handled differently from the others; social workers were responsible for making life-changing decisions for children and their families. Therefore, all these circumstances created problems for social workers when helping their clients.

So, I think most people who have a lot of clients feel the same way. They don't have the time they would like to have. ... that makes many clients ask angrily, "why haven't you called? Why haven't you done that? Why haven't you done this?" And I feel like saying "sorry, I don't have the time" (Informant 1 from group interview).

Social Workers tried their best to address their clients' needs. However, they were required to adhere to their organization's rules of conduct (Lipsky, 2010). Consequently, their services were limited, which created insecurity for them in addressing their clients' problems because professionals felt that their organizational climate was characterized as a stressful environment with much administrative work and less time to work with their clients (see Tham, 2007; Cahalane & Sites, 2008; Mor Barak et al., 2006).

Lastly, media pressure was also a great problem for the social workers. According to research, in recent years child welfare has been criticized by the media (Tham & Meagher, 2009).

There is a negative picture in the media now that working with child protection is hard; we don't have the right tools, we don't have a good salary, we have too many clients, we are too few people working with this. And that is sometimes true (Informant 2).

This situation, accompanied with the other challenges stemming from the education system and the child welfare agencies were some of the factors that participants reported caused high staff turnover.

Coping Strategies

Personals Resources

Participants reported that they needed to take care of themselves to cope with the difficult situations they faced in child welfare agencies. Others said that it was important to have a personality suitable to handling the job of a social worker and be motivated in what they were doing and to remain hopeful. A sense of humour also helped social workers to see challenges differently. Participants also reported that doing exercises was another way to cope.

I think having a sense of humour is very important. It can be rough when you are a social worker. I need that [humour]! (Informant 2 from group interview).

First of all, I try preventing being stressed by exercising. I normally spend a couple of days in week going to run and it is a good way for me to prepare for work the following day (Informant 2)

Every Sunday, I just lay in bed and rest. I just need that day to relax so as to return to wake up on Monday feeling rested [rejuvenated]. (Informant 3)

These personal characteristics (Folkman & Lazarus, 1984) or strengths (Saleebey, 2006) were personal resources that social workers used to take care of themselves. Some of these characteristics helped social workers to develop coping strategies for addressing problems at their workplace (Folkman & Lazarus, 1984).

Environmental Resources

Close relationships with other people was an important resource to develop coping strategies among social workers. Participants mentioned that it was important to have close friends (such as fellow social workers) to discuss their problems. In addition, being in a relationship (having a partner) was important source of support for social workers.

Most of the people that I hang out with in my spare time are social workers. Therefore, we discuss much about work experiences. And, we joke and have fun in the same way we do with colleagues here (Informant 3 from group interview).

I also have an amazing husband who supports me. I do not know how he takes it. But when I come home and I am "rrrrr!!! Mad at something or sad about something, he is like; "it is ok. Take a deep breath" He is very supportive (Informant 1 from group interview).

The support provided to social workers in informal contexts such as families (Collins, 2008) is consistent with the problem-focused approach of coping (Folkman & Lazarus, 1984). Moreover, resources provided by the community (Saleebey, 1996), where the social workers lived, were necessary for them to cope with stress and to become resilient persons (Hasenfeld, 2010).

Organizational support and limitations

Organizational Climate

Environmental resources were also available in the child welfare agencies and facilitated social workers to cope with work-related challenges. Within the child welfare agencies, there was an opportunity for social workers to talk about their experiences, obtain support, supervision and guidance from colleagues and supervisors (Cahalane & Sites, 2008).

Participants further reported that they had received support, which involved being offered introductory training programs for staff, although the content of these programs differed in the different child welfare agencies. In addition, some social workers received peer assistants for mentorship purposes. Social workers also reported that they benefitted from continuous professional development trainings. Moreover, having fun among social workers was regarded as a way of being supported in child welfare agencies.

They give you education here all the time. They train you. Basically, while you are with your supervisor [you are training]. You have external education, where to go for psychotherapy; they give you time out of this office and you learn everything that has to do with this work. Therefore, I think it is very nice from this working environment that you feel really happy getting further education (Informant 3).

Everybody who starts work gets a mentor. I had a mentor here as well. You go to the mentor and ask questions and she shows you around and helps you. This office is very important. Everybody has a mentor when they come here (Informant 1 from group interview).

The above practices were described as indicative of a good organizational climate (Cahalane & Sites, 2008). Good introductory programs for staff encouraged employee retention. Moreover, peer assistants helped social workers to understand the agencies and learn techniques to address their problems (Collins, 2008; Lipsky, 2010). Continuous training improved social workers' performance and job satisfaction (Frost et al., 2015; Welbourne, 2012); at the same time, having fun made the job easier by creating an "*emotional engagement*" (Welbourne, 2012, p. 26).

Support Systems

Informal Support

Informal support is characterized as the type of support that can be used inside and outside the organizations and involves having a close relationship with families, friends and peers (Collins, 2008).

We travelled a lot because most of the kids do not live in Gothenburg. They live all around and we have to drive a lot. So, we talk a lot in the car about things that might be difficult or things that might be good or bad or whatever. We have much time to just talk about things (Informant 1).

If I knock on the door and say: "hey, can I ask you something?" They usually reply: "yes of course". No one pushes me out or does not have time for me. I know everyone has a busy schedule but everyone takes time to assist new people. I feel that is helpful (Informant 4).

Furthermore, social workers worked in pairs which enabled them to share their concerns and boost each other's morale (Hasenfeld, 2010). In addition, supervisors provided support to their staff in the form of administration, educational and emotional support (Bradley & Höjer, 2009).

In the investigation team we are always two social workers working on a single case; therefore, you always have someone to help you. We attend meetings together so that

we can help each other with administrative work if necessary (Informant 3 from group interview).

I felt that they (supervisors) were very supportive. I mean we had many clients and they gave me few clients. So, they are really, you know, concerned. [...] She may ask, "as you are very stressed, do you want to talk to someone?" Then, she would give me time. I think [...] it was once a week or once every other week to meet with a therapist (Informant 3).

Welbourne (2012) reported that informal discussions were key to the provision of emotional support towards social workers, reduced hierarchical relationships (Berg & Kelly, 2000) and developed positive emotions among staff (Saleebey, 1996); consequently, they helped social workers to become resilient (Saleebey, 2006) at their jobs.

Formal Support

Collins (2008) described formal support as a process of evaluation, administration and supervision. This type of support follows the guidelines of the child welfare agencies (Berg & Kelly, 2000; Lipsky, 2010). In Sweden, formal support is categorised as case consultation, supervision and external supervision. The first type consists of a team comprising a supervisor and social workers, and its objective is to share cases and to provide different solutions (Berg & Kelly, 2000). Consultation is important to the professionals because they receive support, gain knowledge and develop commitment to work.

Our team is composed of four investigators from 0-12 years and we have one investigator; she is our supervisor. She does not have any clients but she helps us with all the clients. If we have questions, difficult questions or we are facing problems, she assists us to find solutions. And if there are big problems, she helps us by arranging meetings with children's parents or by giving contacts outside this organization if we need answers from somebody else (Informant 2).

According to Bradley et al. (2010), the supervision process in Sweden's child welfare agencies consists of providing constant support and educational training to the staff by direct supervisors. Supervisors held group meetings (case consultation) as mentioned before; provided personal time to social workers, assisted with some administrative work and provided continuous education (Berg & Kelly, 2000; Bradley & Höjer, 2009; Hasenfeld, 2010; Lipsky, 2010; Welbourne, 2012).

They read everything we write; so, they can see if we have done things rightly, followed the laws rightly, etc. (Informant 1 from group interview).

She supported me by introducing me to fellow employees when I was new. She gave me appointments to meet and talk about the organization, my role and my cases (Informant 4).

Another type of support mentioned was external supervision. Participants reported that they choose an external supervisor, usually a psychologist, to provide with them emotional and educational support, and they usually met outside the child welfare agencies (Bradley et al., 2010; Bradley & Höjer, 2009).

We have to find one and interview them and see if they fix up (related to the external supervisor's capacities). So, it is up to us to decide whom we want to have. It is not our boss who decides but the group that interviews the person and decides whom we want (Informant 1 from group interview).

I do not know if she is a handledare (supervisor). We have every second or third week to go to her in the city. And we are six people, five colleagues and I. And she is trained to support us. So, we can talk about our feelings or clients who make us angry, sad or something. We can talk about our feelings. I think she is a social worker or psychologist. I am not sure. She is trained to handleda (supervise) social workers (Informant 5).

It is evident that formal and informal support helped social workers to develop a sense of belonging. Yet, with the implementation of the New Public Management (Bradley et al., 2010) in each municipality administration (Bergmark & Lundström, 2007; Wiklund, 2006), it seems that not all the child welfare agencies addressed the same type of support, which could be a problem for some of the social workers.

Limitations of Formal Support

Participants were positive about the types of formal support they received. However, not all the social workers from the different agencies received the same type of support because each child welfare agency was influenced by the relevant local government's policies (Cocozza & Hort, 2011).

One of the participants stated that talking to the supervisor was very difficult, and this created a problem because there was lack of support for the social worker (Tham, 2007).

The problem is not the time when I talk to them. The problem is to get the time. It is very important for me to feel like I have a backup and sometimes I think it is a personal issue. I get really insecure when I am put into new situations. So, I really need the feedback [...]. But for me, it is important to meet every week.

Others reported that it was difficult when everyone talked at the same time while they were having case consultation. In addition, the meetings only focused on one particular case and the social workers felt it was unfair because they also had

several other cases to discuss. In this regard, social workers felt that case consultation meetings were not being well managed. Consequently, some social workers felt they were not receiving the necessary support from their supervisors and colleagues (Tham, 2007; Tham & Meagher, 2009).

Sometimes, we are many people and one person has a very big case and you are going to write it on the board and everything. I get bored because it is like: "Oh! It is not my case!" You feel your brain cannot take all the information because you want to focus on own cases (Informant 5).

External supervision also varied in the different child welfare agencies. At one occasion, one participant reported being confused about what external supervision was all about because it seemed that only 90% of the agencies received this type of support and the rest did not (Bradley et al., 2010). Some participants mentioned that they received external supervision twice a month, while others received it only once a month. Also, during the meetings not everybody got the opportunity to talk. Yet, providing external supervision costed much money and sometimes the agencies were forced to reduce their costs (Bradley et al., 2010; Bradley & Höjer, 2009). As a result, this limited the formal support that social workers received.

Once a month, you sit in a group with five people together for two hours. Sometimes, I think it is too little. Because we are a group of people that are having two hours once a month. Maybe we should be a small group or have more time (Informant 1 from group interview).

The views of the participants clearly show that there was still too much work to be done in the child welfare agencies in order to promote job satisfaction and reduce burnout among social workers so that they could provide improved services to their clients.

Conclusion

Findings of this study have shown that being new in a child welfare agency was associated with many demoralizing experiences for social workers. Moreover, there was a high level of staff turnover in the child welfare agencies despite the limited available statistics to explain the situation (Tham, 2007). With this problem, child welfare agencies were obligated to hire social workers who did not have previous experience in this field. Many of them just had their BSW degrees. Just by being new, they faced many challenges in their jobs. Nevertheless, they developed coping mechanisms and received support from their agencies to become resilient to provide support to families and children in need of social work help.

This study focused on the perspectives of the newly qualified social workers who had recently been employed in child welfare agencies. It particularly focused the challenges they faced, coping strategies they adopted and support they

received. The challenges were associated with the social workers' transition from universities to their current positions because the social work curriculum focused mainly on theories rather than practice. Another challenge was the administrative work that the social workers undertook as part of their routine work. Such administrative work led to negative consequences for their clients and the agencies. The consequences included clients' dissatisfaction with social work services and experience of stress among social workers. However, by developing coping strategies, social workers were able to find solutions to their problems. Moreover, child welfare agencies provided them with informal and formal support to foster coping with the challenges they experienced. In particular, child welfare agencies provided supervision, case consultation and external supervision as the forms of support to enable social workers develop resilience. Formal social support also varied from one child welfare agency to another since each agencies belonged to different municipalities that in turn had unique regulations that affected their operations (Cocoza & Hort, 2011).

In recent years, social work practice in Sweden has suffered much criticism. Such criticism has focused on the level of professionalism of the career itself (Cocoza & Hort, 2011), the approaches adopted by the child welfare agencies and their social workers (Tham, 2007). Adding other problems reported in this study, the future of the child welfare agencies and their clients is unclear. There is a need for relevant legislations to help these agencies to provide better services to guarantee the future and welfare of children and families that are being served by the child welfare agencies in Sweden.

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Chapter 12

Professional caregivers' perceptions, interventions and life plans for maltreated children in Lisbon, Portugal

*Kristina Duvnjak*¹

Abstract: This chapter presents professional caregivers' perceptions, interventions and life plans for vulnerable children considering their broken homes, behaviour and needs for care in a shelter home in Lisbon, Portugal. The aim of this study was to gain insight into the social contexts in which maltreatment occurred and how it influenced children's behaviour and resilience. This study was conducted among professional caregivers in a shelter home for formally maltreated children in Lisbon, Portugal. Data were collected from professional caregivers, children's files and observation of the children in care. The data were analysed using the method of thematic analysis. Findings show that children experienced feelings of abandonment, anger and defied rules of conduct. Despite their experiences of maltreatment at home, the children wished to be reunited with their primary families. These findings suggest important implications for social work practice with regard to making plans for family reintegration, family therapy and re-socialisation of the children.

Keywords: Professional caregivers, shelter, violence, maltreatment, family and resilience.

Introduction

Millions of children globally have experienced violence that leads to serious consequences for themselves, their families and the states. Eradicating violence against children by the year 2030 is only possible if the United Nations General Assembly succeeds in enhancing cooperation among various agencies, civil society and children to prioritise child protection and care (UNGA, 2016, p. 5-6). This study is informed by the strengths perspective, which postulates that children can exhibit resilience through non-compliance and opposition to rules of conduct. Paradoxically, neither professional caregivers nor children are usually aware that the seemingly problematic behaviour exhibited in contexts of significant adversity may be manifestations of strengths and resilience. This lack of awareness often creates unfavourable attitudes and poor decisions among professional caregivers and results in the use of ineffective interventions for the needy children.

1 Erasmus Mundus MFamily Master Programme, 2nd edition, E-mail: kristina.duvnjak@gmail.com

My personal experience growing up in Serbia motivated me to conceptualise and conduct this study. In Serbia, it was common for teachers in schools to evoke the “golden days” of the communist regime during which children were silenced in fear of authority and punishment while being characterized as “good” and “decent”. It appeared that experiences of violence and frustration among children were hidden under “silence” and “aggression”, which were similarly noticeable behaviours among maltreated children in Lisbon, Portugal. This study aimed at examining how professional caregivers perceived formerly maltreated children in Lisbon, Portugal who often presented with misconduct and the interventions as well as life plans, they devised to improve their situations.

Literature review and theoretical framework

Literature on child maltreatment indicates that children’s interpretation of life experiences differs according to factors. These include children’s individual characteristics (McGee, 1997), power imbalances (Spyrou, 2011, p. 152), characteristics of listeners (Welbourne, 2012, p. 6), and safety of the environment in which interviews with children take place (Ornduff & Monahan, 1999, p. 360). It is acknowledged that children’s “voices” can no longer be taken for granted and considered as the “voice of truth” because children can also tell lies (Spyrou, 2016, p. 7). Children with experiences of maltreatment, as the literature suggests often do not share their experiences of being maltreated with others because of lack of awareness of being maltreated (Erickson & Egeland, 2001, p. 7-13) or embarrassment and stigma in society (Stanley et al., 2012, p. 193). There is growing evidence that the “truth” often lies in children’s silences (Spyrou, 2011, p. 157) as well as in maladaptive behaviour (Welbourne, 2012, p. 6). MacLure et al. (2010, p. 498) noted that silence consist of “energies” which are not empty but rather of “voices” that are more powerful than any verbal speech.

This study was conceptualised and implemented using the following theoretical frameworks: (i) the ecological approach, (ii) attachment theory, (iii) resilience approach and (iv) the strength perspective. The ecological approach was developed by Bronfenbrenner who claimed that humans could not progress in isolation from environmental factors (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 3-16). New ways of thinking in which human behaviour is analysed through the lens of contextual factors has been applied in studying issues of child maltreatment. For example, Erickson and Egeland (2001, p. 12) reported that during the last two decades of the 20th century, there was a growing awareness that child maltreatment could no longer be explained only as consequence of parental pathology; but rather as a result of broader contextual influences on the family and children. In addition, John Bowlby, the founder of the attachment theory, noted that the basis for all pleasure and suffering are the bonds themselves, which do not let people easily abandon those to whom they are attached. According to Howe (2005, p. 5-7), parental roles are especially difficult for parents with histories of maltreatment during their own childhood because they unconsciously evoke their past memories. Although such

parents do not plan to cause harm to their children, their initial desire of not to reproduce the cycle of violence is often ruined by their pathology. The resilience approach and strength perspectives are increasingly being applied in social work practice in a radical departure from the deficit-oriented model that has been dominant for decades. In the 20th century, resilience which is the individual's capacity to overcome adversity was considered a characteristic of strengths (Waller, 2001, pp. 290-291). However, contemporary literature considers resilience as products of contextual factors. In the context of this study, examination of the children's experiences of maltreatment is conducted using ideas of Ungar and the ecological approach to resilience (Ungar, 2008). An alternative to understanding resilience is the constructivist approach, which posits that in the face of adversity children do not have time to think what is right or wrong. Because their priority is to mentally survive and not to "lose themselves"; they adopt any behaviour that helps them "feel healthy", even if it implies delinquency (Ungar, 2004, p. 24-25). A similar explanation for the seemingly maladaptive behaviour can be found in the ideas of the strengths perspective. According to Anderson et al. (2009, p. 193-194), people who survive adversities are never silent. Moreover, their opposition to the rules developed in the context of adversities represents their "method of survival".

Child protection in Portugal

The committee for protection of children and youth (CPCJ) is an official and non-judicial institution in Portugal whose main responsibility is to protect children from harm or, in case of high risk, remove them from the environment in which their well-being is at risk of being damaged. The CPCJ collaborates with agencies and bodies that are either private or public in protecting children and youth (CNPCJ, 2016). The work of shelters for children in care is particularly guided by the Children and Youth Protection Act in Danger Law No. 142/2015. According to Article 50 of the Children and Youth Protection Act in Danger Law No. 142/2015, a shelter must be able to accommodate children in case of emergency, be equipped to provide them with educational and therapeutic support and be designed to address their special needs (PGDL, 2016). This present study was conducted in the context of a shelter for children who had been previously maltreated in their respective primary homes in Lisbon, Portugal.

Analytical framework

The researcher adopted a multilevel approach with regard to conceptualisation, data collection and analysis. This multilevel approach is presented below in Figure 1. The multilevel approach summarizes the main theories, concepts and levels of analysis explored in the current study. At the macro level, as citizens of the global world, children's lives are influenced by the legislation accepted at the global level, such as the CRC as well as national structures and welfare systems. At the meso

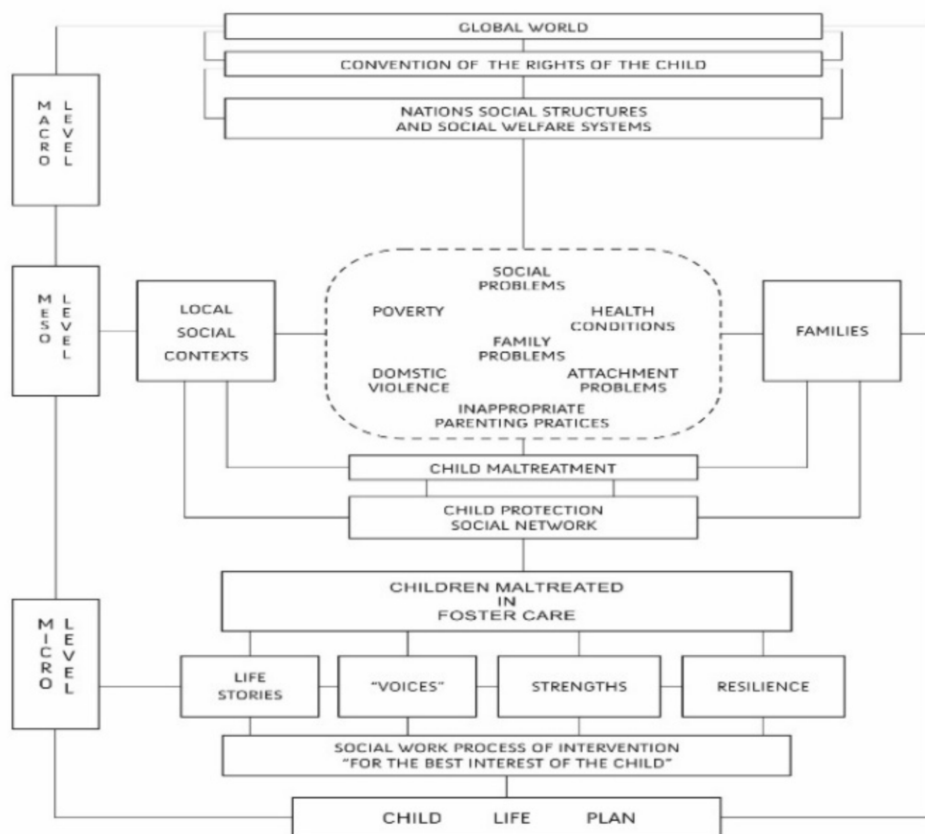


Figure 12.1 Analytical framework

level, which is the focus of this study, contextual factors such as poverty, sickness, unemployment, lack of integration of immigrants, poor cognitive skills and inappropriate parenting practices affect children. At the micro level, this study analyses profiles of children placed in the shelter.

Methodology

The researcher conducted a qualitative study that adopted a case study design. This study approach required collection of detailed data from participants. As Bryman (2012) stated, details which look like nonsense in the eyes of the observer can be completely understandable in the eyes of those “embedded” in a particular social milieu (Bryman, 2012, p. 401). The case study was chosen because it facilitates exploration of the “nuanced reality”, which can only be understood from the

ground (Flyvbjerg 2004, p. 120-121). This study was conducted among professional caregivers of children in a shelter home in Lisbon, Portugal. This shelter home accommodated 12 children aged between 5 and 12; 14 full-time professional caregivers and several volunteers. In this study, five professional caregivers were sampled by the means of purposive sampling techniques. These were the manager, a psychologist, social worker and two educators. The data were collected using unstructured interviews with the professional caregivers, review of the children's files and participant observation; data were analysed using the method of thematic analysis. For purposes of anonymity and privacy, names of the shelter and children were changed; only pseudonyms are used in this study to ensure privacy and anonymity of participants.

Findings and Discussion

This section presents findings and their discussion according to the major themes that emerged from the data.

Table 12.1 Description of the children in care

Name of the child	Year of Arrival	Current Age	Country of origin	Possible (p) or confirmed(c) experience of maltreatment
Rute	2016	5	Cape Verde	Neglect (c); psychological (p); physical (c)
Ema	2014	5	Cape Verde	Neglect (c); psychological (p)
Julio	2013	12	Portugal	Neglect (c); psychological (p); physical (p); sexual (p)
Marta	2013	6	Portugal	Neglect (c); psychological (c); physical (p)
Elizario	2015	10	Guinea	Neglect (c); psychological(p); physical (p)
Tamara	2015	9	Portugal	Neglect(c), psychological (c)
Tiago	2015	9	Portugal	Neglect(c); psychological (p)
Rui	2015	5	Portugal	Neglect(c), psychological(p); physical (p); sexual (p)
Belmiro	2015	10	Portugal	Neglect(c); psychological(c); physical (p);
Dalila	2014	10	Portugal	Neglect(c), psychological(c); physical (p) sexual (p)
Olivia	2009	10	Portugal	Neglect(c), psychological(c); physical (c), sexual (p)
Diana	2010	8	Portugal	Neglect(c), psychological(c); physical (c), sexual (p)

Socio-demographic profiles of the children

As Table 1 below shows, children in the context of this study had differing sociodemographic profiles and indeed experienced a combination of various forms of violence in their respective primary families.

The above data shows that all the twelve children placed in the shelter had experienced neglect and psychological abuse in their respective homes. Nine children had experienced physical abuse inflicted by different family members. There was a possibility that five children had suffered sexual abuse in addition to neglect and physical abuse. These children presented with overlapping somatic injuries. The finding that children in this study had suffered multiple forms of abuse is consistent with those of previous researchers. For example, Erickson and Egeland (2001, p. 8) reported that children rarely suffered only one form of violence. In the present study, ten out of twelve children were also patients with various health conditions including cardiovascular conditions, speech problems, and cognitive delays, problems with concentration, muscular atrophy, and respiratory problems.

Social structure and family contexts of child maltreatment

Contextual factors such as poverty were reported to have contributed towards maltreatment of children who were in care at the shelter home. Accordingly, relationship between poverty and child maltreatment has been previously reported elsewhere (Berger, 2004, p. 742). Professional caregivers reported that they were aware that parents of the children in care at the shelter home experienced serious material and financial hardships. Such parents were employed in low-paying, for example, as cleaners. Such parents did not afford day care services and consequently children spent much time alone or were cared for by older siblings (children) at home. Researchers have previously noted that economic hardships hardly spare children when their parents are preoccupied with basic survival (Qvortrup, 1994, p. 18). According to Qvortrup (1994), children as a social group, as the case is with other social groups often are adversely affected because of their lasting affiliation with particular social classes. The following quotation shows that children were often present during their parents' arguments triggered by economic and financial hardships in their families:

The father was always working. He is the person who is vigilant... the mum and two aunts do not have work. He was always... He put the money... in the house and the discussion was about this... The money... Belmiro... the two sisters of the mother in the house... Spending money and doing nothing ... and then break off... and start to discuss and be aggressive... (Psychologist about Belmiro's father; Belmiro is 10 years old)

Culture and its influence on parenting practices was another striking feature coming "from above", which caused violence in families of the twelve children placed

in the shelter home. As Scannapieco and Connell-Carrick (2005, p. 79) reported, people will consider violence as normal if their culture approves it. Moreover, children who had been maltreated at times felt strange upon arrival at the shelter home where they could not be beaten. In extreme cases, some children requested professional caregivers at the shelter to punish them for no apparent reasons. It is a surprising finding that children expected to be punished anyway even at the shelter home. McGee (1997, p. 20) has similarly reported that children raised in the context of violence in which no one discussed physical punishment later normalized the experience of violence; they also developed a belief according to which all parents interacted with their children by using violence. It is noteworthy that professional caregivers in keeping with the strengths perspective did not label parents, for example, as child abusers but explained the situations of parents and children using the ecological model (MacKenzie et al., 2011, p. 1638). According to this model, child maltreatment was viewed as a consequence of the "cumulative effects" of various external forces experienced by the affected families. It is remarkable that all parents of the twelve children were of low socio-economic status. In particular, the four immigrant mothers whose children were in care at the shelter home were informally employed as cleaners, had separated with the fathers of affected children and lived without reliable social networks for support. In addition, all European parents whose children were also in care at the shelter home were divorced and suffered from various health conditions including alcoholism, drug addiction and depression. One similarity between the immigrant and European mothers, which was reported in this study, concerned these mothers' struggle to escape from their gloomy past. While the immigrant mothers were struggling to overcome poverty by assuming low-paying jobs, European mothers were struggling with a history of child abuse including incest. In particular, two European mothers who suffered from incest during their childhood had run away from their birth families to become commercial sex workers in Lisbon. These two women had also married husbands who were substance abusers. Such a low socioeconomic status implies that the two European mothers were not able to effectively care for and protect their children. Ungar (2008, pp. 221-225) reported that resilience suggests the ability of a person to look for opportunities in the community, while at the same time the community may allow or deny the affected person the opportunity to be helped. It is thus evident that the experience of violence and development of insecure attachments undermined the capacity of these mothers to be effective parents (Howe, 2005). Additionally, the mothers of children in care at the shelter treated their children as though they were adults. The following quotation illustrates that mothers overestimated capacities of their children:

The relationship is equal... it is not the mother and child equal relationships. When she has troubles or conflict with someone, she tells him when she visits... (Psychologist, about Julio's mother; Julio is 12 years old)

Maltreatment and resilience of children

In this subsection, a summary of the children's observed experiences of maltreatment and resilience is presented. While the children in care at the shelter home could be categorised as powerless and victims because of the maltreatment they suffered in their homes, on the contrary, they were regarded as survivors by their professional caregivers. When strategies for survival are analysed through the traditional approach to resilience, only one child named Rute, who at the age of five reported a case of violence perpetrated by her stepfather to a neighbour, can be considered as a winner among the twelve children. In addition, when Rute's case is analysed through the ecological perspective, it is clear that apart from distinguishing what was right from wrong due to her personal character and intelligence, the neighbour to who she reported the case of violence was also willing listen to her. The neighbour understood and reported the case to relevant authorities for further intervention (Bell & Romano, 2015, p. 55). In contrast to Rute, most of the other children receiving care at the shelter suffered from significant limitations including physical and intellectual disability; therefore, they did not report cases of maltreatment to their neighbours. However, these children developed resilience according to what was contextually available and feasible (Ungar, 2008, p. 225). In general, all the children who were receiving care in the shelter had lived in violent families and consequently developed anger and opposition to rules of conduct.

Masten and Wright (1998, p. 14) have stated that whether children's compliance to the rules of conduct is as adaptive behaviour or a manifestation of powerlessness depends on the context in which it occurs. In the context of this study, Tamara and Tiago who were siblings did not simply accept their grandfather's threats that they should leave his house. Leaving their grandfather's house could have made them more vulnerable to abuse. Therefore, defiance developed during life in the violent family, which was later on exhibited in the shelter was their protective and adaptive behaviour.

Interventions by professional caregivers for the children

It was found that professional caregivers worked hard to modify undesirable behaviour, which the children exhibited on arrival at the shelter home. Such behaviour include failure to maintain hygiene and follow daily routines. In response to the undesirable behaviour, professional caregivers showed affection towards the children. Showing affection was timely because the children had experienced a history of abandonment and neglect. The following quotation illustrates this point:

When she shows episodes of anger, I go there and hug her a lot, she stays calm. Ok. In addition, she begins to cry...cry...cry...cry...But then all is ok... and pass. (Psychologist, about Marta, 6 years old)

The finding that professional caregivers showed affection to the children is consistent with the findings of Waller (2001, p. 291) who noted that it is not possible to make a conclusion on whether a child is resilient or not because no one can be resilient constantly.

Professional caregivers at the shelter home listened to and elicited children's stories about their experiences. This work required professional caregivers at the shelter home to collaborate with one another because there were some who were more skilled than others in eliciting children's stories. An important role of the professional caregivers involved eliciting true stories about the experiences of maltreatment. Parents often threatened their children to deny that they had been maltreated if their cases were presented in court. Accordingly, two sisters who had lived at the shelter home for six years denied that they had experienced violence at primary home when their case was presented in court. While many parents did not reform or prepare to receive their children from the shelter home, some parents worked hard to address personal problems such as alcohol addiction and established a relationship with their children at the shelter home.

Life plans for the children in care

Professional caregivers were obliged to write reports on the wellbeing of the accommodated children and make life plans for their reintegration with their birth families. The children were normally expected to be reunited with their birth families in a period of six months to one year. Reintegration of the children with their birth families could occur during the above period if family members showed the desire to be reunited with their children and when the children exhibited good conduct following rehabilitation. Parents were also expected to demonstrate that positive changes had occurred at home to ensure safety and care of their children. In the absence of parents' cooperation, the shelter home presented cases in the court suggesting alternative measures including adoption for the affected children. While most of the children in care at the shelter home expressed a wish to be reunited with their birth families, various factors often prevented this possibility. For example, parents often did not have sufficient resources to be able to take care of their children; some parents had serious health conditions including mental illness and addiction to substances of abuse, which undermined their capacities to care for their children. Despite these challenges, professional caregivers at the shelter home looked for alternatives including contacting children's relatives and family friends; unfortunately, no much success was usually registered regarding adoption of the children by their relatives and family friends. Professional caregivers also presented reports on the economic hardships experienced by parents whose children were in care to their respective municipalities to obtain, on their behalf, allowances for medical, housing and employment support. Obtaining such support contributed to building capacity for the parents to take care of their children.

One of the reliable sources of support for children in care at the shelter home was the Friendly families. The Friendly families was a volunteer organisation in

Lisbon that was purposefully examined and assigned some children from the shelter home for foster care. At the time of the study, three children were expected to be fostered by Friendly families and five children were being prepared for reintegration with their families. Only the future of four children out of twelve at the shelter home remained uncertain.

Conclusion

This study has shown that the socio-economic context of families influenced maltreatment of children in a complex manner. Child maltreatment triggered maladaptive behaviours among the children. Such behaviour social withdrawal, anger outbursts, and an inclination to tell lies. However, many of the children showed interest in being raised in their family contexts to the extent that they could tell lies to protect individuals who abused them. While some of the behaviours described above can be mistaken as signs of defeat and devastation, children at the shelter home were actually resilient and full of strengths. Manifestations of resilience and strengths should be understood to have been influenced by the children's limited resources including health, and the available support in their environments.

Professional caregivers at the shelter faced challenges when they tried to reintegrate children with their birth families. These included not only the parents' economic hardships and health problems but also their experiences, which according to the attachment theory undermined significantly their parenting capacities. Although some parents demonstrated improvement in their life situations by finding employment and decreasing alcohol consumption, they were still generally considered incapable of providing adequate care and protection to their children. These findings imply the need for increased cooperation among different shelter professional caregivers and collaborative practice with other institutions including medical to address effectively the complex needs of formally maltreated children in Lisbon, Portugal.

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Chapter 13

Social workers perceptions and responses to economic abuse of women in intimate relationships with men in Sweden

Lindsay Mae Coutts¹

Abstract: Violence against women in intimate relationships with men is a prevalent and serious social problem that negatively affects women's life in many ways. Economic abuse is a form of intimate partner violence in which abusers who are often men control their partners' access to financial resources and independence. Generally, there is limited research on economic abuse as a form of intimate partner violence in the context of Sweden. The aim of this study was to examine how social workers perceive and respond to economic abuse as a form of intimate partner violence against women. A qualitative exploratory case study was conducted. Empirical data were collected using semi-structured interviews with eight participants from five agencies in Västra Götaland County. In addition, secondary data including from review of policy documents and practice manuals were collected. Thematic data analysis was conducted. Four themes emerged from the data: social workers' awareness of economic abuse; normalisation of economic abuse; ethno-cultural dimensions of economic abuse; and navigating through the barriers of bureaucracy to respond to economic abuse. The analysis is based on the liberal feminist conceptual framework. Findings show that social workers were well informed about and understood economic abuse as a form of intimate partner violence against women and that it leads to serious consequences. Despite the absence of formal support and programs that address economic abuse towards women in Sweden, social workers identified a clear role in responding to this particular problem in their interventions. This study shows that economic abuse is a highly salient form of intimate partner violence experienced by women in Sweden. Therefore, there is a need for targeted policies and services to address economic abuse and support women who experience it.

Keywords: Economic Abuse, Intimate Partner Violence, Sweden, Social Workers

Introduction

The World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Report (2016) ranked Sweden as one of the most gender-equal countries in the world in terms of women's access to education, employment, healthcare and politics. Nevertheless, intimate partner violence against women by men remains one of the most pervasive and serious social

1 Erasmus Mundus MFamily Master Programme, 3rd edition, E-mail: lindsay.coutts@gmail.com

problems in Sweden. Intimate partner violence in Sweden has largely been attributed to factors such as individual deficits, pathologies, social conditions and 'other' cultures. Dominant perspectives have portrayed perpetrators as 'violent male immigrants' who legitimize the use of violence through entrenched patriarchal beliefs of their countries of origin (Elman, 2001; Lundgren, Heimer, Westerstrand, & Kalliokoski, 2001). In addition, survivors are characterized as women who initially experienced violence as children that made them unconsciously seek out violent men after reaching adulthood. Elman and Eduards (1991) discredited the 'violent male immigrant' conception, noting that Swedish men abused the majority of women surveyed, most of whom were also Swedish (as cited in Elman, 2001, p. 43).

The national prevalence study on exposure to violence in Sweden conducted in 2014 showed that 14% of women sometime after the age of 18 had been subjected to physical violence or threats in close relationships (Andersson et al., 2014). In 2016, it was estimated that only one quarter of intimate partner violence cases were reported to police in Sweden (NCK, n.d). This reluctance to disclose experiences of abuse has been attributed to stigma associated with reporting and formal help seeking. Molina (2002) asserted that gender equality has become a value-laden ethnic marker of Swedishness. Thus, failing to achieve equality in a relationship may be perceived as a failure to live up to the norms of what a modern Swedish heterosexual couple is supposed to be (as cited in Enander, 2010, p. 210). Furthermore, because of the strong women's shelter movement in Sweden, women are expected to leave intimate relationships at the first sign of violence — if women chose not to leave, then they are perceived as having accepted the abuse (Enander, 2010). In general, the abuse and control that woman in Sweden experience is complex and has been underestimated.

Economic abuse is a serious form of intimate partner violence commonly used by men to control their partners' financial resources and independence. Unfortunately, research on economic violence has received far less attention than physical, psychological and sexual forms of intimate partner violence. It is only in the last decade that understandings of economic violence have begun to emerge in empirical studies. These studies have shown that economic violence is a distinct and prevalent form of intimate partner violence that has many damaging consequences and that it often occurs alongside other forms of violence against women (Sharp, 2008; Adams et al., 2008; Postmus et al., 2012; Sharp-Jeffs, 2015). Similarly, social workers reported that economic abuse was a form of intimate partner violence they commonly encountered in almost all abusive situations presented by their clients in Sweden. However, this recognition is not apparent in current scholarly research, policy or formal service delivery in Sweden, as definitions, prevalence rates and responses to economic abuse are largely absent. The aim of this study was to explore perceptions and responses of social workers regarding economic abuse of women in intimate relationships with men in Sweden. Because social service agencies and shelters were often first points of contact for women escaping abuse, it was appropriate to explore economic abuse from the social workers' perspectives.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Intimate partner violence has been defined as an ongoing pattern of behaviour in a relationship where one partner uses tactics of power, coercion and control over the other (Danis & Bhandari, 2001, cited in Postmus et al., 2012). A large body of literature has examined causes, consequences and contexts of physical, sexual and psychological violence. Yet, forms of intimate partner violence such as economic abuse have not been given due consideration in research. Adams et al. (2008, p. 564) defined economic abuse as “involving behaviour that controls a woman’s ability to acquire, use and maintain economic resources, thus threatening her economic security and potential for self-sufficiency”. Economic abuse has frequently been overlooked in studies of intimate partner violence because prevalence data has come from large-scale surveys of physical abuse. Using only a few questions to measure economic abuse, these surveys subsequently lumped together findings with emotional abuse as ‘controlling behaviours’ or ‘non-physical abuse’ (Tolman, 1989; Outlaw, 2009). This presentation of data was evident in Sweden’s first and only national prevalence study of men’s violence against women that was carried out in 2001 (Lundgren et al., 2001). Outlaw (2009) advocated that there is no basis for the assumption that all forms of non-physical abuse are alike, and doing so undermines the intensity, frequency and experience of economic abuse in particular and intimate partner violence as a whole. This empirical oversight has translated into governmental legislative action towards intimate partner violence that often does not recognize economic abuse as a form of intimate partner violence (Sharp-Jeffs, 2015; Antai et al., 2014). Therefore, national policy responses to intimate partner violence in Sweden do not include economic abuse. In addition, various national and regional organizations intended as important public information resources narrowly and inconsistently describe experiences and consequences of economic forms of abuse rather than its severity and prevalence.

Although the majority of reported cases of economic abuse have been women with lower formal education levels and income, experiences of economic abuse have been reported by women in all socioeconomic groups (Adams et al., 2008; Postmus, Plummer et al., 2012; Mathisen-Stylianou et al., 2013; Sharp-Jeffs, 2015). Moreover, Adams et al. (2008) suggested that the nature and consequences of economic abuse might differ among women from ethnic minority groups, low- to middle- to high-income earners and to women seeking informal help.

It is common for married and cohabiting couples to share a joint bank account and for one partner to manage the bulk of the couple’s finances within a relationship. The central difference between this common pattern of financial decision-making and economic abuse is control (Huang et al., 2013). Postmus, Plummer et al. (2012) established a framework for understanding economic abuse using three categories: financial control, exploitation and sabotage. ‘Economic control’ involves? ?behaviour such as intentionally withholding financial information from the partner; making important economic decisions without the partner; making a partner to ask him for money; and a man monitoring all expenses incurred by a woman (Sanders, 2014; Mathisen-Stylianou et al., 2013; Postmus, Plummer et al.,

2012). 'Economic exploitation' includes a man generating debt under his partner's name; misusing government benefits; and having a woman's earnings forcibly taken from her (Sharp-Jeffs, 2015; Postmus, Plummer et al., 2012; Adams et al., 2008). 'Economic sabotage' involves demanding that a woman quits her job; showing up at the woman's place of employment and harassing her and co-workers; and using physical force if she attempts to work (Sanders, 2014; Postmus, Plummer et al., 2012). Some women have reported that simply showing a desire to work or to acquire further education was met with threats of violence (Sanders, 2014). Unlike other forms of abuse, men can employ an additional arsenal of economically abusive tactics even once the relationship has been dissolved (Mathisen-Stylianou et al., 2013; Bergwall & Jansson, 2014). Women have reported experiences such as their ex-partner prolonging sales of joint property and refusing to pay child support allowance (Sharp, 2015).

Economic abuse severely hinders women's ability to leave abusive relationships as they are often forced to unduly depend on their partners for livelihood (Adams et al., 2008; Postmus, Plummer et al., 2012; Bergwall & Jansson, 2014). Barnett and LaViolette (1993) stated that many women who finally leave the relationships experience a decrease in their standard of living, end up living in poverty, become reliant on government assistance or risk becoming homeless (as cited in Adams et al., 2008, p. 568). In addition to women reporting economic abuse resulting in overwhelming debt, many had difficulty re-entering the workplace and had little confidence in managing their finances (Sharp-Jeffs, 2015). Consequences of economic abuse restrict a woman's sense of agency and autonomy in her own life; thus, support that facilitates recovery of economic self-sufficiency, stability and empowerment is vital.

Social workers in many different workplaces often assist women and children who are experiencing abuse in Sweden. Dufort et al., (2013) found that women in Sweden often sought support through the healthcare system or social service agencies. While the immediate needs for security and protection often take precedence in these settings, other essential concerns such as women's economic insecurity usually remain unattended. Social work practitioners play a pivotal role in stabilizing the women's situation while ensuring their short- and long-term needs are adequately met. Due to the intertwined nature of the forms of intimate partner violence and their correlation with conditions of poverty, it is essential that economic aspects be given due attention and consideration. This may be particularly important considering women that seek formal help are often in vulnerable circumstances characterised by having lower educational levels and fewer social or economic resources (Elman, 2001; Dufort et al., 2013; Burnett et al., 2016).

The current study is based on the liberal feminist conceptual framework of intimate partner violence. Generally, the liberal feminist theory asserts that societies prescribed gender roles present barriers to women's access to opportunities and economic self-sufficiency (Postmus, Plummer et al., 2012). Normative beliefs of finances and economics privilege men over women even in societies that favour egalitarian ideologies. Socialization of men to take charge of financial

decision-making endorses beliefs that women are incapable of managing finances and that they must rely on men for such tasks (Postmus, Plummer et al., 2012; Sharp- Jeffs, 2015). Because these beliefs have become so deeply internalised, women who experience economic abuse often fail to recognise it as a form intimate partner violence.

Various feminist ideologies have important implications for social work practice and the manner in which social workers conceptualize and approach their work (Coates, 1992). Individualism and self-determination are key values of liberal thinking; therefore, the identification of problems and subsequent intervention occurs at the individual level. According to Nes and Iadicola (1989), liberal feminism has largely viewed problems as stemming from individual deficits in sex-role socialization. Therefore, social work interventions are aimed at promoting self-determination among individuals by providing support that breaks down barriers of inequality and challenging sex-role behaviours and structures in society that disadvantage women in society (Nes & Iadicola, 1989). In this way, practitioners seek to make changes within the existing social system, policies and legislation rather than calling for a complete dismantling and reconstruction of such structures.

Methodology

An exploratory qualitative research that employed a case study design was conducted. An interpretive constructivist position was assumed in this study. This position allowed me to interpret how social workers constructed understandings of economic intimate partner violence as experienced by their service users, and how they addressed it in their professional and social contexts. This perspective stresses the subjective meanings embedded within the narratives and coincided with a hermeneutic tradition. The tradition entails multiple ways of interpreting our social world that can be dependent on our social and historical contexts as well as our pre-conceptions. A qualitative approach emphasizes learning from the perspectives of participants as well as the role of context in contributing to understanding of the social phenomenon being studied (Becker & Bryman, 2012). A case study design was adopted because it facilitates collection of rich and detailed data in participants' real-life contexts.

Data sources and collection methods

Participants were recruited from Gothenburg, and surrounding municipalities in Västra Götaland county in Sweden. Individual shelters and social service agencies were contacted by telephone and the research intentions were explained before requesting their participation. Eight participants, that is, five social workers at shelters for abused women, two social secretaries from social service agencies and one economic advisor working at a women's shelter were enrolled for this study. All of the participants were female with professional experience in their respective fields

of work, ranging from 1.5 to 25 years. An interview guide with specific questions and topics was administered; prompts when needed during the interviews were used. Written informed consent was obtained from each participant outlining the intentions of the study, participants' role and stating that interview sessions would be audio recorded. Interviews were conducted over a three-week period, with each taking approximately one hour. Interviews with participants were conducted in English. As a source of secondary data, social service laws, policy documents and grey literature about service delivery and resources pertaining to family and intimate partner violence were reviewed.

Data Analysis

The method of thematic analysis was used to analyse the collected data. This method is commonly used in qualitative case study research to identify common thematic elements across research participants and relevant documents (Kohler-Reissman, 2008). Thematic analysis concentrates on 'what' is being said rather than 'how'; this allowed interpretation to be the focal point of examination, which coincides with the hermeneutic spiral process used throughout the analysis of data (Paterson & Higgs, 2005).

The set of criteria offered by Lincoln and Guba (1985), that is, (i) credibility, (ii) transferability, (iii) dependability, and (iv) confirmability were employed to assess the methodological integrity and trustworthiness of this study. Additionally, adherence to ethical standards of conducting sound and responsible research were adopted. The Norwegian ethical regulations for Master's research were followed, as prescribed by the University of Stavanger. ? ?Names of all participants and any other directly identifiable information were concealed to uphold confidentiality and their right to privacy.

Study limitations

A notable limitation of a qualitative case study is the lack of generalizability and application to wider empirical conclusions. Social workers who work in direct practice with women who have experienced intimate partner violence were chosen specifically based on their rich context-specific knowledge regarding the issue of inquiry. This case study aimed at being the basis for further descriptive and evaluative inquiries into economic abuse in Sweden by increasing reader's confidence in its inferences (Stake, 1994; 1995). Subjectivity is an essential aspect of understanding and social action, despite the criticism concerning misinterpretation of findings or the tendency towards confirming researchers' preconceived notions (Stake, 1995; Flyvbjerg, 2006). I acknowledged the influence my preconceptions had on my interpretations and on the final assertions, I made. Nevertheless, I feel that my use of the hermeneutic spiral allowed me to capture vividly and accurately social workers' perceptions. All participants were fluent in English and agreed to participate in the interviews in English; however, I acknowledge that English was not their first or preferred language.

Findings and Discussion

Four themes emerged from the data: (i) social workers' awareness of economic abuse, (ii) normalisation of economic abuse, (iii) ethno-cultural dimensions of economic abuse, and (iv) navigating through barriers associated with bureaucracy in responding to economic abuse.

Social Workers' Awareness of Economic Abuse

Participants reported well-informed understandings of economic abuse as a form of intimate partner violence among their service users. The participants' perceptions of economic abuse were informed by the lived experiences of women they meet in day-to-day practice, which translated into concrete awareness of their roles in responding to it. All participants reported that economic abuse is a form of intimate partner violence experienced by many regardless of their levels of income and formal education, ethnicity or age, as reported in previous research (Adams et al., 2008; Postmus, Plummer et al., 2012; Sharp-Jeffs, 2015). Even though participants noted that shelter-seeking women were those who often had lower income, lower levels of formal education and were not Swedish by birth, this could be understood by considering what Adams et al. (2008) stated about the nature and the consequences of economic abuse that differs among women from diverse minority groups and demographics. Despite the absence of empirical research and prevalence data (Lundgren et al., 2001) to support the claims made by these social workers, their accounts indicated that economic intimate partner violence was indeed a salient social problem impacting women in Sweden.

Participants' perceptions of economic abuse were illustrated by considering experiences of women they met and behaviours they identified in these abusive situations. Their perceptions are closely aligned with Postmus, Plummer et al.'s (2012) classifications of economic abuse as economic control, exploitation, and sabotage, which were subsequently used in this section to present the findings. Participants reported having met women who had abusive partners who controlled their access to financial resources and personal earnings as the following quotation illustrates:

Even if she is working, her money goes to his account. Then she has to beg for money to buy things for herself and her children. She has to tell him everything, what things cost and explain why she bought certain things (Shelter Worker 1)

Similar experiences were reported in the study of Lebanese women who also stated they often had to beg for money from their husbands and that some were even denied money for their children's expenses (Usta et al., 2013). In a qualitative study of women in St. Louis, USA participating in an economic redevelopment program, many reported that their male partners strictly monitored all expenses by accompanying them to the stores and controlling the entire household finances (Sanders, 2014). Participants also commonly reported that in addition to having restricted

access to money and resources, men exploited women's financial resources, earnings and the family's social welfare benefits.

Many of these economically abused women have not been in Sweden for long and they have been told to sign a paper they do not understand because they do not understand Swedish. As soon as they have their own money, husbands have forced them to put it in their accounts and they are in charge of the money (Shelter Worker 4).

Economically exploitative tactics such as those stated were widely reported by social workers. Other forms of abusive behaviour include men signing loans/contracts for phones and cars under their wives' names or forcing women to sign them; accruing high debt in the woman's name; and misusing or controlling government benefits. These exploitative tactics were reported by the participants' parallel findings in previous literature (Postmus, Plummer et al., 2012; Sharp-Jeffs, 2015; Adams et al., 2008). Destruction of personal property is another type of economic violence commonly reported in previous studies (Postmus, Plummer et al., 2012; Sharp-Jeffs, 2015). Manifestation of economic abuse was exclusively noted in national organizational definitions in NCK (n.d) and Socialstyrelsen (n.d) labelled 'material violence' and 'material/economic vulnerability', but not identified by any participants. Moreover, some women had reported to workers that their partners prevented them from pursuing employment and educational opportunities through various means of sabotage.

They said I could not study Swedish because he did not allow me. I needed to call him or take pictures and show that I am in class or at work. He has been coming to work or calling at my workplace and acting very badly (Shelter Worker 3).

Through active sabotage and discouragement, her ability to acquire money and become self-sufficient is hindered, thus forcing her to be overly reliant on her husband for financial needs. Participants in this study illustrated a clear awareness and understanding of the economically abusive behaviours women have been subjected to while in intimate relationships, which are comparable to findings in other studies (Postmus, Plummer et al., 2012; Adams et al., 2008). Moreover, two social workers recalled women who continued to experience economic abuse even after they ended the relationship with their partners.

One girl I met had [experienced] a very violent situation. However, when she left, he had no sexual possibilities; he had no physical possibilities; he still had economic possibilities. He told her that we bought the house together and now you have to pay half the rent. Therefore, she had to pay the rent for many months even though she was not living there, and had her own rent (Shelter Worker 2). ?

This quotation shows that economic abuse can occur even in situations where there is no physical proximity between partners; this characteristic sets it apart from other forms of intimate partner violence and makes it much more

damaging to a woman's long-term wellbeing. Similar inferences were made in previous studies where women reported their ex-partners prolonging sales of joint property; refusing to pay child support; and some not even knowing the extent to which their partners put them in debt until after they left (Sharp-Jeffs, 2015; Bergwall & Jansson, 2014; Usta et al., 2013; Mathisen-Stylianou et al, 2013; Fawole, 2008).

In addition to illustrating their awareness of economic abuse through how it has been used against the women they have met, participants reported various consequences associated with economic violence. When social workers met economically abused women, they were usually in substantial financial debt that was incurred by their partners. Others had difficulty in providing adequately for their children and often felt they could not leave the abusive relationships, which were similarly reported by women in other studies (Adams et al., 2008; Postmus & Huang, 2012; Postmus, Plummer et al., 2012; Sharp-Jeffs, 2015; Sanders, 2014). Participants also reported that many women had exhibited a diminished sense of self-esteem; sense of hopelessness in getting out of debt; while some expressed a complete lack of knowledge on how to manage their own finances. It is evident that economic intimate partner violence has serious immediate and long-term consequences for the abused women.

Upon examination of the public documents, social policies and manuals applied in social work practice, the recognition and understanding of economic intimate partner violence seemed far less advanced compared to the depth of the participants' perceptions. The features in social workers' reports of economic abuse parallel behaviours listed in the assessment for psychological abuse in the standardised assessment manual known as FREDa (Socialstyrelsen, 2014). However, presenting economic forms of abuse as a subscale of psychological abuse has been highlighted by some researchers as common but problematic. Lumping together all forms of non-physical abuse undermines the complexity, intensity, frequency and experiences of economic abuse and intimate partner violence as a whole (Outlaw, 2009). All but one participant reported using FREDa in their practice; however, unlike this manual, their perceptions framed economic abuse and psychological abuse as separate dimensions that are intertwined parts of the completely abusive situation. Acknowledging that economic intimate partner violence is a significant and distinct component that often occurs alongside other forms of abuse has been advocated by numerous scholars (Adams et al, 2008; Postmus, Plummer et al., 2012; Mathisen-Stylianou et al., 2013; Sanders, 2014; Sharp, 2008; Sharp-Jeffs, 2015). Discrepancies between the social workers' perceptions and this practice manual indicated that these workers' understanding of economic abuse have been informed by professional experiences rather than formal discourse. The participants' depth of understanding of economic abuse spoke to the value and potential implications that these perceptions hold in terms of practice and policy enhancement.

Normalisation of Economic Abuse

Another prominent aspect of the social workers' perceptions of economic abuse that was frequently reported was that economically abusive behaviour was perceived by women as normal aspects of financial decision-making in a relationship. They noted that gender norms have placed men as responsible for financial management and decision-making within relationships.

Economic abuse is being normalized; maybe she thinks it is normal that he should be in charge of the money because he is the man or he is her husband. Therefore, they do not understand that they are being abused in this way (Shelter Worker 4).

As the above statement suggested, prevailing stereotypes that managing economic affairs is a man's primary duty make it difficult for women to differentiate between normal and abusive patterns of financial decision-making in a relationship. This notion reflected a liberal feminist perspective of gender role theory through which men and women are socialized to carry out different roles and societal expectations, which are reinforced through stereotypes and norms (Lindsay, 2004, as cited in Whitaker, 2015, p. 886). Mathisen-Stylianou et al. (2013) asserted that specifically economically controlling behaviour may be covert and easily blended in "normal" financial behaviour that occur between individuals in relationships.

In addition, some participants described procedures within the social service system that they perceived as containing embedded stereotypes, which allocate public benefits under the man's identity number in married and cohabiting couples.

There is still the system that if you are on welfare and you are a straight couple, the couple is registered in the man's name and personal identification number and the woman is just being paid through his name and does not have direct access to the benefits (Shelter Worker 5).

This quotation shows that such a procedure embodied a traditional gender norm of economics that has normalized and potentially perpetuated men's economic control and abuse over women. A liberal feminist explanation is further supported because the policy environment of Swedish social services encourages the notion of 'equality of opportunity' rather than 'equality for outcome', which is fundamental to liberal values (Saulnier, 2000). Here, it was apparent that men and women have the same right to financial benefits and support; yet, when they entered the social system as a couple, there is a male-bias in which women are by default denied equal access based on sex and sex-role socialization (Nes & Iadicola, 1989). Considering that some social benefits are specifically provided to low-income persons and families, this gender-biased allocation forces women into further dependence on their partners and prevents them from leaving abusive relationships. Participants also perceived this process of normalising economically abusive behaviour of men as a coping strategy by women in preventing further violence.

One woman I met said that she did not go to work because she knew he would not allow her to go. She did not go because she wanted to avoid getting hit and abused (Shelter Worker 3).

Participants asserted that with all forms of intimate partner violence, it was very common that women did not perceive many acts used against them as abusive. Due to the normative beliefs surrounding economics, this may be even truer for economically abusive tactics. Adams et al. (2008) reported that many women left their interviews feeling cheated, upset and confused because they simply did not see the behaviour they were experiencing as abusive. This finding emphasizes the need for providing consistent and thorough information about economic abuse through public fora for intimate partner violence. Furthermore, it stresses the role of social workers and other helping professions in informing women about economic forms of abuse and validating their experiences.

Ethno-cultural Dimensions of Economic Abuse

Some participants reported perceptions that associated women's experiences of economic abuse with aspects related to ethnicity and culture. A few of the participants stated that certain ethnic groups, particularly from Middle-Eastern countries hold patriarchal attitudes and traditional gender role expectations that placed men in positions of dominance over women and socialized them to be in control of the family.

For women from Iran, Iraq, Syria, their husbands are in charge. If you do not have a husband to pay your bills, your brother or your father does. They are used to not having money; they just have money to buy things. Therefore, sometimes when they come here to the shelter, they do not have bank accounts and bank cards. They do not have anything because everything is under their husband's control (Shelter Worker 1).

This account suggests that cultural attitudes held by men in these ethnic groups are different from those of Swedish men. The attitudes of men also endorse the use of violence over women and make women unduly dependent on them. Interestingly, participants also stated similar gender norms of family economics in the Swedish society and institutions. Accordingly, Swedish men were as likely to perpetrate intimate partner violence such as economic abuse against their partners as men from ethnic minority groups were. Although some participants viewed economic abuse as often a product of entrenched patriarchal attitudes, which has been supported in examinations of economic violence in Iran, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon and Palestine (Haj-Yahia, 2000; Fawole, 2008; Usta et al., 2013), other research reported Swedish gender norms and men's perpetration of intimate partner violence (Elman, 2001; Lundgren et al., 2001). Nevertheless, the perception of intimate partner violence as an imported problem in Swedish society is enduring, despite empirical evidence to suggest otherwise (Elman & Edwards, 1991, as cited in Elman, 2001). Taken

together, women of all ethnicities experience economic intimate partner violence. However, the nature and consequences differ for women of ethnic minority groups (Adams et al., 2008). Participants reported aspects that may cause women from other countries to experience certain types of economic abuse more than Swedish-born women.

We have to make sure the information gets out to society about what help you can get, especially for women coming from other countries and are new in Sweden. Because from my experience, they do not know much about Sweden and their husbands will not tell them. Husbands and families will not tell them their rights; they are lied to and they do not know what rights they have (Social Secretary 2).

As this quotation suggests, men may intentionally withhold information from their partners when they move to Sweden — using women's lack of awareness of their rights in their host country as a way of maintaining the traditional power relations within the family. To ensure that women are not informed of rights, are isolated from society and economically dependent on them, men usually prevent them from taking Swedish language courses and finding paid work. Some participants reported that due to fewer social and economic resources, this might be the reason why women from ethnic minorities are overrepresented in shelter services. The large number of women from ethnic minorities seeking shelter services also supports the societal belief that violence against women is a problem brought over from other cultures.

I know there is possibly as many Swedish women, but I think there are many reasons why it does not show. I think many people want to find explanations like, well, if it is abuse, probably it is someone from another country because it is about the religion there or it is not us; it is them (Shelter Worker 4)

Participants reported assisting Swedish women with similar experiences of abuse as women of other ethno-cultural backgrounds, but conversational support was more frequently sought rather than shelter. They stated that shelter supports were used only when women had no other alternative and Swedish women might be more reluctant to seek help due to stigma:

I also think that there is still much shame if you are being abused in your home. I think many Swedish women are afraid to go to the authorities; they do not want to be that woman; the one being beaten. Therefore, they try to turn to someone else instead... you are not supposed to be living like this in Sweden (Shelter Worker 4).

Consistent with literature (Elman, 2001; Dufort et al., 2013), participants reported they believed Swedish-born women were more likely to seek support from their families and friends. This quotation illustrates that there is a lot of shame associated with help seeking from social services and fear of acknowledging being in an unequal relationship. Lundgren et al. (2001) asserted that Swedish-born women

might feel social pressure to reinterpret their experiences of violence to align with the norm. These ethno-cultural rationalisations signify the complexity and struggle of making sense of a complex issue and present a conundrum between liberal feminist and radical feminist explanations of economic abuse. Lindsey's (2004) explanation of gender role theory is reflected in perceptions of strong gender norms placing men in control of family economics (as cited in Whitaker, 2015, p. 886). However, some participants associated entrenched patriarchal systems linked with certain ethnic minorities to the instrumental use of economic violence, oppression and control in the family, which is more descriptive of gender power theory within a radical feminist perspective (Nes & Iadicola, 1989).

Navigating through the barriers of bureaucracy to respond to economic abuse among women

Responding to economic abuse was reported as a complex task for social work practitioners considering the structural context in which they worked. Participants reported that the institutional and legislative systems presented barriers in responding to economic abuse among women. Consequently, women were confronted with bureaucratic obstacles that hindered their efforts to become economically self-sufficient and prolonged their exposure to economic abuse.

The Social Service Law Chapter 5:11 mandated social work practitioners [Socialtjänstlagar- SoL 5 kap.11 §] (Sveriges Riksdag, 2001) and regulated their practice through SOSFS 2014:5 (Socialstyrelsen SOSFS, 2014). This law stipulates the primary task of providing protection and safety to women in abusive crises, while developing individualized treatment plans. Yet, their work entailed much more than just meeting the need for safe refuge.

I would say that when women come here, their situation is usually very chaotic. Many things have to be resolved; they do not only need help to talk about the violence that they have suffered. Therefore, that is our work, to find out what is the help that women need, not the help that we think they need, or social services or families think that they need. (Shelter Worker 5)

Although protective aspects are placed at the fore of social work intervention with women experiencing abuse, many of them often required multiple challenges to be addressed to stabilize their situations. Participants explained that shelter services may prevent physical, sexual and psychological abuse but that was insufficient to end exposure to economic abuse. Participants' statements aligned with Hearn and McKie's (2008) claim that policies and services are framed so narrowly that once the need for safety has been achieved it is as if all the woman's problems have been solved. The same legislation and policies that aimed to provide avenues of services and support to women experiencing abuse also created burdensome, time-consuming processes to get the adequate support that they are entitled to.

The legislation of the social service law states that a person who leaves violence and flees their home has the right to extra social welfare and support. Because that is an extraordinary situation, but in practice, this is a long and complicated process (Shelter Worker 5).

Participants reported that policies did not translate effectively into practice and that bureaucratic complications only add to women's economic vulnerability and prolong any potential to regain financial self-sufficiency. Similar concerns were identified among shelter workers in Ontario, Canada, that the social system processes discouraged, hindered or at the very least prolonged the potential for economic self-sufficiency (Burnett et al., 2016). SOSFS: 2014:5 practice regulations stipulated that treatment plans will be developed with regard to the individual's self-determination and integrity (Socialstyrelsen SOSFS, 2014, translated), which is a highly-valued approach within liberal feminist social work practice (Nes & Iadicola, 1989). Furthermore, liberal feminist explanation suggests that by trying to make all women equal, they are not considering individual complexities and intersecting identities that may ultimately lead to different experiences of violence and the need for different support (Nes & Iadicola, 1989; Saulnier, 2000). The treatment course may fail to attend to the unique needs of women from diverse ethnicities and demographics.

Additionally, participants reported a complete absence of formal organizational responses or support programs that dealt with consequences of economic abuse that the women had experienced. In the report of women's group support [Utväg Göteborgs kvinnogruppverksamhet], the operational definition of intimate partner violence included economic violence along with a comprehensive description (Bengtsson, Marinovic, Olbers, Söndergaard, 2015). Yet, the support programs offered did not address economic abuse with women any further than simply acknowledging it. Considering the prevalence of economic abuse reflected by participants and other empirical studies, and that it occurs alongside other forms of abuse (Sharp-Jeffs, 2015), the lack of formal response in programs to economic abuse is highly problematic. By failing to address economic abuse, the complexities and consequences of women's abusive experiences are not being fully realized or attended to. Due to this gap, shelter workers integrated their own responses into their practice involving numerous tasks of a practical nature. This commonly involved the responsibility of informing and validating women's experiences.

We who work in shelters can work with the practical things: teach them how to pay bills, how to make a budget, depending on what their situations are. We also talk about it, try to make women themselves see that this is abuse. I cannot simply say you were abused; you slowly make the women themselves see that this is not okay; this is not normal; this is abuse (Shelter Worker 2).

Participants also reported providing women with basic financial literacy and skills in economic management such as budgeting, paying bills and applying for

government benefits. Integrating education and advocacy into their practice was seen as essential when working with women who had experienced economic abuse because they were often left feeling incapable of managing their finances and in some cases never learned functional management skills. Furthermore, these supports legitimized women's experiences of economic violence and challenged the normalisation of this behaviour, which was noted as a key role of service providers (Burnett et al., 2014; Postmus, Plummer et al., 2012). Yet, participants recognized the limits of their expertise in addressing the long-term consequences of economic abuse, which suggests the need for more formal responses.

Participants stressed the importance of preventive and developmental strategies such as raising awareness of economic violence to a policy-level to help initiate formal responses and supports. However, these initiatives were admittedly side-lined due to the demands of primary protective tasks in their day-to-day practice. This reflected a liberal feminist approach in which responses are implemented within the current institutional and legislative frameworks. Nevertheless, participants reported engaging in meetings within their local organizational networks to share knowledge and contribute to practice enhancements. The social secretaries stated they took responsibility in critically questioning and changing working methods that may inadvertently disadvantage women and perpetuate economic abuse; for example, the allocation of benefits to men by default and not allowing social benefits to be divided or reallocated in cases of partner separation without reported proof of violence. In addition, they believed that meeting married couples as a pair could hamper women's opportunities to disclose abuse. Their efforts aligned with Nes and Iadicola's (1989) assertion that social workers must work to challenge sex-role behaviour in society and structures that disadvantage women.

Finally, national and regional public resources as well as assessment manuals applied in social work practice provided inconsistent and mostly narrow understandings of economic violence. Not only does this create an unclear understanding for professionals responding to intimate partner violence, but also misinforms women who are seeking help.

Conclusion

Participants had well-informed understandings of economic abuse as a form of intimate partner violence, which is highly prevalent and has serious short- and long-term consequences for women's economic self-sufficiency and overall well-being. Participants reported that economic violence was present in almost all abusive situations they encountered in their day-to-day practice. Based on women's lived experiences, they described economic abuse as being used against women in ways that control, exploit and sabotage their economic resources. However, economically abusive tactics were often not perceived as abusive due to gender norms of economics that normalize men's control over

financial decision-making. Social workers associated economic abuse with ethno-cultural aspects such as entrenched patriarchal attitudes, traditional gender role expectations and norms of equality that often endorse men's use of violence against women, influence women's vulnerability and their differential experiences of economic abuse.

Although participants reported a clear understanding of economic intimate partner violence and its consequences, the absence of these understandings in policy impede the development of service provisions that respond to it. Therefore, shelter workers developed responses within their workplaces that inform and validate women's experiences of economic abuse as well as support basic education and skills building in financial management. However, social workers were limited in the services they provided, and women often confronted bureaucratic obstacles that hindered their efforts to become economically independent and prolonged exposure to economic abuse. Nevertheless, social workers reported engaging in advocacy, awareness raising and efforts to promote procedural changes in service delivery.

While social workers' perceptions took on both radical feminist and liberal feminist explanations of violence against women, their social work practice and institutional structures assumed a liberal feminist perspective. Economic violence against women was an issue both distinct and severe. Recognizing that responses to economic violence in literature, political and social service contexts in Sweden were inconsistent and largely absent, this study suggests that social workers play a pivotal role in theorizing and addressing economic intimate partner violence in the context of Sweden. Furthermore, this study sheds light on social policies, practice and service delivery that can be enhanced to respond more effectively to economic violence in particular and violence against women in general.

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Conclusion

Capacities, Contexts, and Interventions with Families, Children and Youth

Cláudia Pereira, Joana Azevedo, Justus Twesigye and Maria das Dores Guerreiro

Across the world, families, children, youth, and social welfare providers do more than endure adversity. Their agency actively reshapes how societies respond to it. The thirteen chapters of this book collectively address the main research question: How do families, children, youth, and social welfare providers mobilise strengths and resilience in responding to adversity and social change across diverse contexts? The main contribution is to analyse how agency and adaptation are systematic and context-specific. Families and professionals are not merely passive recipients of hardship; instead, adversity often reactivates both innate and acquired capacities, facilitating positive adjustment and survival even in the most demanding circumstances.

Across varied global settings, the findings demonstrate that families, children, youth, and social welfare workers consistently shape responses to adversity through active engagement and resource mobilization. Whether through self-care strategies observed among street-connected girls in Dhaka, collective actions among Ugandan youth, or adaptive parenting in immigrant Filipino families in Norway, positive outcomes are reliably fostered by coordination, innovation, and relational support networks.

This research advances the strengths and resilience perspective by showing that resilience is not simply an individual trait but a complex, contextually embedded process. Social support, built through networks of trust, presence, and shared resources, is fundamental to activating both personal and collective agency. These processes align with theoretical frameworks such as Saleebey's (1996) strengths perspective, which emphasises individuals' capabilities, resources and potentials rather than deficiencies or problems, and Minuchin's (2007) multi-crisis environments, illuminating the role of intersecting pressures like migration, poverty, gender and discrimination.

The present work addresses these methodological gaps by incorporating the perspectives of children and youth through participatory and strengths-based research designs. In addition, the research designs integrate narrative inquiry, thematic analysis, and mixed-methods approaches, exploring participants experiences

in depth. This foregrounds lived experience and positions participants as active contributors in knowledge production. The chapters consistently employ comparative research and co-learning models to ensure robust, context-aware findings.

Empirical results indicate agency, resilience, and empowerment that are enacted across disparate contexts — children's participation in educational settings, youth-led peacebuilding initiatives, peer support among urban girls, and the negotiation of identity among immigrant families. The synchronisation of individual and group capacities through social networks results in enhanced well-being, adaptability, and institutional fit.

Immigrant experiences reveal both the strengths and the exclusionary practices embedded within social welfare systems, underscoring the need for context-specific inclusion strategies. The research undertaken by these authors serves to simultaneously clarify and inform both academic communities and public opinion, thereby contributing to dispelling the myths and prejudices frequently associated with vulnerable populations and groups that face systematic disadvantage or risk (Haas, 2023).

The findings suggest implications for working with families, children, and youth from a strengths and resilience perspective.

- a) While it is unfortunate to experience any form of adversity, such experiences often do not totally hinder the affected families, children, youth and social welfare workers from realizing positive life outcomes. At times, such experiences reawaken and activate deployment of both innate and acquired capacities that guarantee positive adjustment and survival against the odds.
- b) Social support obtained from people's social relationships and social networks is timely in activating personal and collective agencies. Collective agency facilitates commitment of essential personal resources and those mobilized from social networks for a positive adaptation and growth. These may include both material and emotional resources such as money, trust, praise, and presence, which collectively manifest in one's boosted capacity and resilience.
- c) Discovering the strengths of families, children, youth and social welfare workers requires co-learning and co-creation among various actors, including the affected families, children, youth and social welfare providers. In contexts of secure social relationships, and interactions people's talents and resources, which may be dormant or underutilised.
- d) Understanding the concepts of resilience and strengths is contextual; they are understood differently in diverse cultural and social contexts. Therefore, having contextual knowledge regarding what it means to be successful, ethical, or unsuccessful is critical in assessing people's strengths and capacities. Furthermore, people may choose unique strategies and modalities for effective social functioning or coping with adversity in view of their cultural beliefs, norms, values and the official government policies.
- e) Policies and principles that public social welfare institutions uphold reflect the collective consensus and aspirations of the host communities. Therefore,

such systems underlie the dominant philosophies, values and norms regarding what is considered appropriate and desired conduct. For immigrants, such systems may be viewed as exclusionary. Thus, specific inclusion adjustments are necessary for people on the margins to participate effectively.

- f) Being a social welfare worker with families, children and youth who also experience significant adversity can be a daunting task. Therefore, social welfare workers require social support to develop and sustain strengths and resilience for their own favorable outcomes and those of their clients.
- g) It is imperative for practitioners, researchers and policy makers to identify strategies and implement programs that are empowering and grow the strengths and resilience of the families, children and youth as well as those of social welfare workers because of the attendant benefits.

This book occupies an innovative position in the evolving map of social welfare and resilience research. It directs the field toward participatory, cross-cultural research that incorporates beneficiaries as co-producers of knowledge and practice. By operationalising strengths-based theory within local and international fieldwork, the research offers not only empirical insights but also structural models for future policy and intervention development.

Notable strengths of the study include its methodological novelty, empirical grounding in diverse contexts, and integration of comparative data with local narrative. The research demonstrates how resilience is developed through networks, institutional engagement, and policy reform, thus defining a new trajectory for strengths-oriented research and applied practice. The book stands as evidence of the effectiveness of capacity and collaboration-driven approaches in social welfare, demonstrating measurable improvements in well-being and social equity.

The research presented in this work also merits recognition for the authors' efforts to overcome linguistic barriers, contextual differences, and transnational challenges, while conducting fieldwork and engaging with new theoretical and methodological approaches. Research developed as part of MFamily dissertations has led to several publications and has been widely disseminated (for example, among others, Turda et al. 2026; Lourenço and Nayak, 2025; Nazridod, Pereira and Guerreiro, 2021; Pereira et al., 2021; Artamonova, Guerreiro and Höjer, 2020; Adeboye, Guerreiro and Höjer, 2019).

Limitations persist, primarily concerning generalisation and scalability, as qualitative methods can restrict large-scale inference. Small sample sizes and reliance on self-reported data limit longitudinal assessments, and there is an acknowledged need for larger intersectional and quantitative work. These boundaries suggest future research should address broader populations and incorporate more integrative designs for deeper insight and scalability.

In conclusion, this work unifies the strengths and resilience perspective for families, children, youth, and practitioners, weaving together themes of migration, transnationalism and diversity, gender and empowerment, and co-learning across global social welfare practice. The achievement of this volume resides not only in its findings but in its methodological and practical contributions, pointing toward

sustained inquiry and commitment to capacity-building in social welfare systems. The publication reflects the enduring effectiveness of collaborative and strengths-based approaches, accounting for the resilience and adaptability of all involved.

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Families, Children and Youth at the Crossroads of Changing Welfare Systems

Families, Children and Youth at the Crossroads of Changing Welfare Systems brings together the research findings of students from various cohorts of the Erasmus Mundus MFamily Master's programme, coordinated by ISCTE – University Institute of Lisbon. The contributions explore how families, children, young people, and social care professionals mobilize resilience and agency in contexts shaped by multiple and intersecting crises. Drawing on the strengths perspective, the authors examine the activation of individual and collective capacities across diverse global settings, including those affected by migration, poverty, and social vulnerability. Through participatory research approaches, they investigate the dynamic interplay between social networks and welfare systems, highlighting their contribution to adaptation, social inclusion, and equity. This volume follows the publication of Families, Children and Youth in Global Contexts (Editora Mundos Sociais, 2021), further enriching the scholarly legacy of the MFamily programme.

Justus Twesigye

is the Dean of the School of Social Sciences and a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Social Work and Social Administration at Makerere University. Justus Twesigye has served as a guest researcher at CIES-Centre for Research and Studies in Sociology, Iscte. Also, he was the Coordinator at Makerere University for the Erasmus Mundus, MFamily programme from 2015 to 2022.

Maria das Dores Guerreiro

is Professor Emerita at the Department of Sociology, Iscte – University Institute of Lisbon and Associate Researcher at CIES-Centre for Research and Studies in Sociology, Iscte. She has been a former coordinator of the Erasmus Mundus MFamily programme led by Iscte (1st to 5th editions) and served as vice-rector for internationalization at Iscte (2018-2025).

Cláudia Pereira

is Research Professor at the Department of Sociology, Iscte – University Institute of Lisbon, and Researcher at the Center for Research and Studies in Sociology, CIES-Iscte. She is currently the scientific coordinator of the Emigration Observatory and co-director of the Erasmus Mundus program on Coordinated Humanitarian Response, Health and Displacement.

Joana Azevedo

is Associate Professor at the Department of Sociology, Iscte – University Institute of Lisbon, and Researcher at the Center for Research and Studies in Sociology, CIES-Iscte. She is currently director of the Iscte MSc in Humanitarian Action and director of the Erasmus Mundus programme on Coordinated Humanitarian Response, Health and Displacement.



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