



Breaking the Boundaries: Interdisciplinary Research Approaches & Methods

How are Bangladeshi Migrants Adapting to Scottish Schooling? A Case Study in the City of Aberdeen

Nazmun Nessa Bakth (Department of Economics, University of Aberdeen)

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Abstract: This pilot study investigates how Bangladeshi immigrant parents influence the way their children adapt to school in Aberdeen. A qualitative inquiry identified five main themes: language barriers, cultural and religious differences, friendship, and parental trust in school to explore relationships between migrant parent, children, and school. These themes explain possible interaction impacts between stakeholders and explore different dimensions of migrant integration. Despite migrant parents sincerely attempting to help their children to better integrate, there are linguistic, religious, and cultural gaps that are slowing down the integration process. Through the investigation of different relationships, interactions, and activities, this pilot study could provide a foundation for future research interests in migrant students' integration in Scottish schools. The study recommends special emphasis in several areas, including parent counselling, teacher–parent interaction, increasing parents' engagement in school activities, special meetings with migrant alumni, and Halal, or vegetarian food to be available in school.

Keywords: Bangladeshi Migrants, Child Schooling, Integration, Intergenerational Relationships Introduction



1 Introduction

Assimilation is never easy in any society, but schooling is one of the safest and quickest ways to ease migrant integration. Language barriers, acculturation stressors, resettlement stressors, hostility and such are cited as the major obstacles to migrant integration (EACEA, 2019). This paper aims to focus away from such deficit models and explore how immigrant parents influence child integration through their interactions with their children and the schooling system. School contributions to migrant students' integration can be influenced by their families, which are still less emphasised. As a Bangladeshi migrant in the UK and a member of Sylheti Diaspora, a well-known regional migrant group, questions about migrants' integration, education, dual citizenship, forced marriage, career, and so on are of particular interest to me. This study was inspired by Heckmann's (2008) work on integration of migrant students in European schools and societies. My research proposal initially emphasised the role of schools in student's integration, a distal causality, but has shifted to proximity causality research following the first interview that described how parental unfamiliarity about the schooling system, linguistic and cultural differences, and religious activities may influence children's integration. Such changes are common in social science research (Maxwell, 2005). Migrant families motivate their children to be attached to their school, overcome linguistic and cultural deficiencies, and become resourceful so that they can earn proper evaluation in the future labour market. However, religious and cultural differences valued by migrant parents may impose unforeseen negative influences on children's integration. This pilot study aims to address this ambiguous role of the immigrant parents in the micro level, with a view to producing a much bigger piece of work in the future.

Migration exposes children to new language, curriculum, environment, rules and schedules. As future citizens, leaders, intellectuals, and voters, immigrant children should be given special treatment to support their academic self-esteem (Bondy *et al.*, 2017). However, students from immigrant families may lack socialization and academic orientation akin to their peers (Apple and Franklin, 2004; Kao *et al.*, 2013), and consequently are facing discrimination, bullying annoyance, loneliness, truancy and so on (Qin *et al.*, 2008). Numerous studies showed that high mobility and poverty results in



slower academic achievement, higher dropout rates, and other school-related problems among migrant students (López *et al.* 2001; Huang, 1993). Previous research has found socio-cultural effects of migrant parents on school authorities such as regular exclusion from particular school activities (swimming, camping, parties, etc.) that might create misunderstandings and detrimental consequences for parent–school cooperation and students’ integration (Weiss *et al.*, 2019). Fuligni (1997) explained how parental aspiration and peer support can influence student academic achievement strongly beyond their socio-cultural background.

Aberdeen has been an excellent choice for migrants for its nature-based industries, employment opportunities, institutional excellence, and scenic beauty. Though Aberdeen City has been experiencing negative net migration flows for the last few years, the number of overseas in-migrants was 3182 compared to 1691 such out-migrants in 2016-17 (National Records of Scotland, Mid-2017). The same record shows that in 2017 there were 885 births to non-UK mothers in Aberdeen City. According to Aberdeen Multicultural Centre database (2018), almost 500 Bangladeshi migrant families are residing in Aberdeen. Unfortunately, very few studies have been done examining how Bangladeshi people are adapting to life in Scotland.

2 Literature Review

Students’ successful integration into schools is an obvious need for their efficient training as well as for achieving their full potential (EACEA, 2019). However, migrant students’ learning and development can be hampered by lingual and cultural gaps, and unfamiliarity to schooling system (Hamilton, 2013); socio-economic and political deprivations (Sinkkonen and Kyttälä, 2014); and social, emotional and health issues (Nilsson and Axelsson, 2013; Trasberg and Kond, 2017). The rates of low-achievement and early departure from education and training are higher for migrant students than the native-born students in almost all European countries (OECD, 2016). Diversity in origin, social capital, academic attainment and financial status of migrants require specific considerations for targeted groups in order to gain better educational achievement and integration (EACEA, 2019). Numerous interventions are identified in academic research



highlighting the importance of planning a comprehensive and systematic way for each host countries to reap the benefits of migration.

Manzoni and Rolfe (2019) praised school services and teachers' efforts in UK in easing up the lives of migrants, and identified the benefits local pupils are receiving from the migrated pupils.

For migrants in European host countries, Rudiger and Spencer (2003:28) emphasised the role of education as "a powerful tool in the integration process". In describing the power of education as a mediating force between migrants and locals they (2003:28) stated:

"In times of social tensions, when attitudes against migrants run high and when migrant and minority communities are perceived as resisting integration, education is expected to bridge cultural gaps."

They highlighted a social cohesion with both-way integration as the better solution for any multicultural society like the UK and advised the addressing of specific needs and experiences of different minority groups, minimising economic and social barriers, and including migrants in civic and political decision-making for better integration.

Hamilton (2013) stressed the importance of socio-emotional well-being of the migrant students along with language proficiency to nurse their anxiety and difficulty in adapting in the foreign schools. He also asked for teacher training, an enhanced support programme, and new research to support the betterment of migrant students. Porterfield and Scott-Little (2019) showed the importance of specialised training for the teachers to address and support multicultural students better in their early childhood. Sinkkonen and Kyttälä (2014) also pointed out the importance of the teachers' role, and asked for co-teaching and co-planning programmes in Finnish schools, to help migrant students beyond existing language programmes. Similar views are supported by Nilsson and Axelsson (2013) for Swedish schools and Trasberg and Kond (2017) for Estonian schools. Curl (2016) justified the necessity of preschool provision, showing how migrant students in France and Sweden are gaining university degrees at a higher rate than in Germany and Austria, where schooling starts late.



Heckmann (2008) studied educational disadvantage of migrant students in Europe, comparing type of school, duration of school attendance, and their achievements. He observed a general underachievement among migrant students in Europe with a few occurrences of overachievements. His findings suggest a need for greater roles for migrant parents, familial efforts to decrease linguistic barriers, diversified school programmes specially designed for migrant pupils, , an effective preschool system, comprehensive schooling, better budgetary provisions for schools with higher migrant populations and such for the overall betterment of migrant students and to address equality concerns.

Dusi *et al.* (2014) examined academic difficulties among immigrant children in Italy and specified that fear and loneliness of the children, low educational attainment of their parents, parental lack of familiarity about the foreign schooling system, and family stresses are the major factors causing these difficulties.

Contrary to classical assimilation theory led by the Chicago School of Sociology (Alba and Nee, 1997), portraying a singular-path assimilation for all, modern assimilation theory recognises the social dynamics of ethnicity (Alba and Nee, 1997; Portes, 1999) and interactions between host societies and immigrants (Heisler, 2000). There are proximate causes of assimilation coming from individual and group relationships and characteristics, while distal causes have their origin in institutions, markets, and the state (Alba and Nee, 2003). Assimilation dynamics have intergenerational impacts (Alba and Nee, 2003) and have race and ethnic specificities (Portes and Zhou, 1993).

Laghi *et al.* (2013) found that Chinese immigrants' children in Italy are doing better in their academic performance than native Italian children, as they have strong bonding with their parents that helps their social integration into a new society. Sunder and Uddin (2007) found that among Bangladeshi and Pakistani children, the former are performing better in London secondary schools despite facing more financial constraint. An explanation for this is that Pakistani students are facing multiple minority group effects, whereas Bangladeshi students are isolated from this multiple group effect, which helps the school to dedicate more resources to them. They also claimed that numbers of teachers from different ethnic groups are limited.



On the importance placed on education by Bangladeshi parents, Mapril (2014) found that ethnic Bangladeshis who moved from Portugal to Britain did so primarily to boost their children's educational opportunities. Portuguese-Bangladeshis felt their children would benefit from exposure to the English language and be better prepared to participate in the labour market, having been educated in the UK.

There is a gap in the literature regarding Bangladeshi migrant children's integration into schooling in Scotland. Integration in schooling and learning can be challenging due to linguistic or social gaps, and because of parents' lack of awareness of the schooling system. Thus, the contribution of this study is to investigate how parental understanding and practice supports Bangladeshi migrant children's integration into schooling in Scotland.

3 Method

3.1 Research Model

Much current literature emphasises proximate causes of assimilation in the case of ethnic intergenerational transmission. Following Brewer (2000), this study takes a humanistic approach to research in order to understand the lived experience and socially constructed reality of Bangladeshi migrants in Scotland.

Based on the limited scope of the research, all interviews were taken by the researcher selecting the participants through non-probabilistic convenient sampling from the Bangladeshi immigrant families in Aberdeen with at least one school-attending child and at least one working parent.

The major limitation of this study is the convenient sampling technique targeting Bangladeshi immigrants, however, this was necessary in order to find five interviewees within a short time. A focus group study was also not possible due to restrictions on time, which otherwise could draw depth from participants' interactions. An attempt to triangulate the data was limited due to a small sample size. However, we have participants with varying migration dates to develop a broad understanding of their integration following Patton (1999).



3.2 Research Design

This research relies on inductive reasoning based on a phenomenological approach that relates individual experiences to existing theories. Therefore, qualitative research methodology was followed to combine grounded theory with a phenomenological approach, giving the highest importance to subjects' encounters with real life and their lived experiences. In analysing the role of migrant parents in children's integration, this research aims to conceptualize what is going on by using empirical research regarding participants' concerns and actions. I carried out semi-structured, face-to-face interviews using open-ended questions as the method of data collection, following Kvale (2007). The scope of the study was limited to only Bangladeshi immigrants in Britain having at least one school-going child and having at least one of the parents working. The first condition is needed as this is a pilot study. The second condition ensures some stable income support for the migrant family.

As the study is working with a very specific issue, a small area of concern, the experiences, actions, and relationships of participants to emerging concepts can be probabilistic. Grounded theory works with any type of data (Glaser, 2001; 2003), but does not aim for statistical significance. Rather, the methodology relies on the constant comparative method to review the set of probability statements about the relationship between concepts, and then relate them to theories.

3.2 Research Question

During the interviews, the research participants and migrant mothers were asked to recall and describe their experience about the initial days of their children's schooling, focusing on school environment, friendship, learning, teacher care and so on. This was done to address our core research question:

How do Bangladeshi parents' understanding, beliefs and practices influence their children's integration in Aberdeen?

Subsequent to the research question, the interview was designed to explore the parent's role in the child's integration process according to three possible parts: (1) parents' unfamiliarity with the schooling system, school environment and culture; (2)



parent-school interactions; and (3) interactions between student, parent and school. Interaction with teachers, school friends and other guardians may change inherited characteristics or learned family culture. Parental inspiration and explanation may influence children’s opinion to institutional characteristics. Following the research question, the core questions asked to the migrant parents are as follows:

Can you remember the experience you had when one of your children first went to school in Aberdeen? Can you describe how your child began to adjust with the new environment? Tell me about the kind of activities the school offers to your children? Did you forbid your child to do anything in the school that other students of his/her class normally do? What are the suggestions, precautions and advice you will provide to one of your close friends recently migrated from Bangladesh to Aberdeen with at least one school going child?

3.3 Purpose of the study and mapping

While children are in a transformational process of life, school and parent remain the most influential mediators. The influence of schools on migrant integration has been well acknowledged in the literature. However, most discussions centre on the adaptation of migrant students to the new environment. A similar investigation is still obscure when the question is about migrant parents’ integration and how they help their children adapt. This investigation aims to understand how parental realisation of school environment, adaptation to culture, and understanding of schooling system influence migrant students’ encounter with school as depicted in Figure 1.

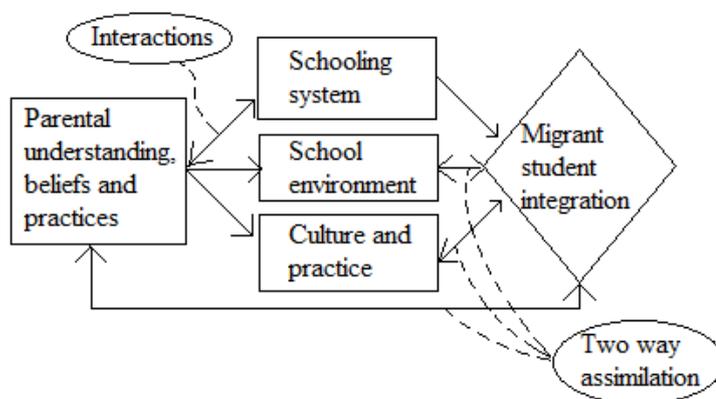


Figure 1: Study purpose and mapping



Both direct and indirect parental influences on student integration are shown in Figure 1, while probable interactions or two-way assimilations are represented by dotted lines.

4 Data

4.1 Sample

Five Bangladeshi immigrant families, settled permanently in the UK, were selected from Bangladeshi immigrants in Aberdeen, having at least one school-attending child and one of the parents working. A formal list of migrant people is available in many public data sources, including the UK Household and Labour Force Surveys, and Aberdeen City Council. Time and financial constraints led me to target the Bangladeshi migrants in Aberdeen only as they were easily accessible for my ethnic homogeneity. I selected six such families, having children currently studying in different schools in Aberdeen. However, I had to drop the first respondent as her three children had finished schools during my study period. This family is not included among my final five respondents, following Brewer (2000) who emphasised the necessity to maintain standardisation among interviewees. Nevertheless, this (now discarded) respondent played a key role in my recruitment, helping me find and interview three other participants. Whyte (1955) addressed the importance of informants in ethnographic studies. Interviewee I3 also helped me to find two other respondents. In this sense, I followed snowball sampling technique. A brief description of all the participants is given below with their pseudonyms, as real names were redacted for ethical reasons, without following any order:

Interviewee 1 (I1) is a non-working mother who migrated from Bangladesh to Aberdeen with two children, one boy and one girl, both going to school, 13 years ago. She is the only participant having her birthplace out of Sylhet (Noakhali) in Bangladesh.

Interviewee 2 (I2) was born in Bangladesh but her only child was born in UK. She migrated from Bangladesh 16 years ago directly to Aberdeen and has been working. Her child started schooling from nursery stage in Aberdeen.



Interviewee 3 (I3) was born in UK, but had extensive schooling experience in Bangladesh, Edinburgh and Aberdeen. She has been working and her children started schooling from nursery stage in Aberdeen.

Interviewee 4 (I4) was born in Bangladesh but had her schooling in the UK. Her children were brought up in the UK with the latest one having nursery schooling in Aberdeen.

Interviewee 5 (I5) migrated from Bangladesh 18 years ago, having completed her schooling in Bangladesh. All her children were born in the UK and had their nursery schooling outside Aberdeen. They are attending Secondary school in Aberdeen.

Apart from I4 and I3, the other three interviewees had their schooling in Bangladesh. Both I4 and I3 have good knowledge about the schooling system in the UK, high levels of language skill and better cultural orientation than the other participants. Two working mothers, I2 and I3, have some advantages through this in their own integration to local society. In all cases, it was mothers who participated in interviews; this may be the impact of the researcher's gender, or their attachments to child care and education. Four families are from Sylhet region in Bangladesh, one from Noakhali; four families have at least one girl child who is either going to school or has just finished; and one family had their children admitted to another school in the UK before enrolling in a school in Aberdeen. All the fathers had their schooling in Bangladesh. All the families are Muslims.

4.2 Data collection

All the interviews were recorded by the researcher after taking the written consent from the participants. Thus, interviewer effect was standardized. For similar reasons, interviews were undertaken using the same introductory statements and consent forms. Also, the main questions were semi-structured, based on the first interview, with a plan for probes. Questions were short, avoiding leading or hypothetical questions. Only two participants shared their experience in English, limiting the potential use of *NVivo*.



4.3 Ethical issues

The information collected was used strictly for academic purposes only, following the rules of University of Aberdeen Research Governance Handbook. Before participation, an informed consent process was agreed upon, with active consent from both students (children) and parents. The interviews were administered in a convenient place to the respondents, and most of the interviewees preferred their own house. Each interview took approximately one-hour to complete. All parents and students responded to the same questions in Bengali or English. All children were interviewed in the presence of their mothers. Being a British Bangladeshi mother of two school-going children in Aberdeen, it was easy for me to understand their experiences and translate the original version of the recorded interview.

4.4 Data analysis

Categorization, grouping and clustering the data was happening along with the interviews to follow the meaning and perspectives of the migrant parents, the structure of events over time, and points of tension, as suggested by Janesick (1994). Data collection was followed by coding, (Strauss and Corbin, 1994) then theorizing with a possible judgment through fit, relevance, workability, and modifiability (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Because of the brief descriptive nature of the verbatim text data, the theme identification techniques of Bernard and Ryan (2010) were employed, looking for repetitions, similarities and differences during the analytical process. .

5 Findings and Discussion

The narrative nature of the data led me to search for qualitative themes following Bernard and Ryan (2010), whereas the small nature of the pilot study limited this research to highlight future research possibilities. Themes are briefly discussed below, followed by a relational analysis between themes and research question.



5.1 Language gap

English speaking capability is a main obstacle to student integration. If parents are not helping to improve their child's English vocabulary, it may take a lot of time and effort on the part of the child. The elder son of the first interviewee, I1, needed two hours per day of special English classes in a specialised school to overcome his linguistic problems.

I1: I had to arrange private tutor for him. His schoolteachers used to send him to another school every day for two hours to take special lessons for English.

Interviewee, I2, was advised to avoid using Bangla, the mother tongue, at home.

I2: The only problem we faced was with her speaking late. Teachers suggested us to use English when speaking to her even in home to speed up her speaking.

Interviewee, I3, struggled with her two daughters following a visit to Bangladesh. Their understanding and expression in English became weak and they were confused.

I3: Later I had some struggle when we took them to Bangladesh for a couple of months, as they took time to adjust coming back. English language became a problem.

The fourth interviewee, I4, had her schooling in the UK and her English accent is better than all other participants. She had no such struggle with her children. The last interviewee, I5, did not complain about the same, as her children had started schooling in the UK before coming to Aberdeen. However, her children needed special help for their homework in the early stages of their schooling in the UK, and she managed to obtain help from several relatives as she was not capable. All the participants expressed common preferences of their children for Mathematics or Science over English. Thus, there are considerable similarities among the participants: in the expression of worries and in the importance of mentioning concern for the English language capabilities of their children. Interviewee I1 spoke emphatically about the English language four times in her interview, I2 repeated the subject twice, and I3 mentioned twice apart from complaining about the lack of subject choice in school. Hence, the English language barrier is a major theme in describing the process of migrant integration.



5.2 Religious difference

Regarding religion, Islam is the common religion in this study, seemingly influencing five different aspects of student-school interaction: (a) food intake; (b) dress; (c) participation in school activities; (d) extra-curricular activity; and (e) participation in school functions.

Parents forbid their children to transgress food restrictions in Islam. Each of the interviewees mentioned this repeatedly, and all confirm that they were used to packing lunch for their children before sending them to school - at least at the beginning years.

I5: Always take Halal food! [Putting emphasis in voice] Better take veg. In the earlier stage I packed them lunch as they may take chicken or lamb by mistake. Then we gradually counsel them about food restrictions and teach them to select food.

Most of them are continuing to provide lunch for their children and permitting them to buy selective food items with friends only on special occasions.

I2: Usually I pack lunch along with her. I am doing this still now, but now that she is in the secondary sometimes, I let her buy selective food from the school. Also, I discourage her to go out frequently with her friends during the lunch time though occasionally let her go on special occasions.

Thus, these migrant students are missing opportunities such as dining together and being with friends in school.

Parents are satisfied with school dress as long trousers and long-sleeved shirts are allowed, even in the gymnastic classes, and there are good changing rooms. Yet, surprisingly, they omitted talking about veils (Hijab) for girls. Excepting interviewee I5, all other interviewees have at least one girl going to school, but none mentioned the Hijab despite talking about long sleeved swimming suits; further, all send their children to mosque for religious training, and most of them talked about bullying in school.

I3: Bullying was a problem in Secondary first year. Some boys used to through stuffs to my daughters and scolded.

I2: We should be friendly to our children and teach them if bullied then complain to teachers, let the parent know.



I5: Be careful about smoking, bullying,...

Further study is required to ascertain the reasons for the missing information about the Hijab, as well as bullying and the possibilities of a connection between them.

All the participants appreciated different indoor school activities like gymnastics, physical exercise, sports, etc. Swimming is an exception. Some of the interviewees obtained long sleeved swimming costumes for their daughters, and permitted them to join the activity when wearing them.

I3: Didn't allow them to go to swimming when grown up, they went when they are of tender age. I didn't know long sleeve swimming dress were available.

I4: Girl child did not participate in swimming.

Migrants have ambiguous opinions about outdoor trips too. They do not like to let their children, specially, girl children, join trips to distant places or residential trips.

I4: Trip distance matters in deciding to let go.

I3: Not to give girls to tours taking them far... Even I didn't permit my boy to go to residential trips.

We found two interviewees, I1 and I5, permitting their sons to join residential trips and on one occasion only.

All the interviewees regularly send their children to religious training sessions operated by the local mosques. A large part of the child's leisure period is occupied by such religious training. Students get some out-of-school friendships through such programmes.

Migrant parents are not comfortable letting their children join all parties and functions, especially disco (dance) parties, Halloween parties, and so on, that may occur or extend after school hours.

I2: Did not let them go to parties, Christmas or Halloween, if not school programmed. Generally, in school parties, even if these are related to Christmas they observe, do not take part.

However, migrant students join formal school parties.



5.3 Student interaction

I1, I2 and I3 mentioned that their children made friends with other migrant students first. Interviewee I4 also hinted that a majority of her children's friend are migrant students. However, interviewee I5 stated that her elder son, who enrolled in a secondary school in Aberdeen after completing primary school in Birmingham, made a Scottish friend in Aberdeen before any others. Interviewee I3 said that many of her girls' friends are Scottish at Secondary level. Thus, it can be shown that linguistic barrier delays migrant students' integration through late or scarce friendship with locals.

If in any case children want to meet their old friends or hang out with them, they need to get permission from their parents. In case of girls, at least one parent accompanies them.

I2: ... [w]e take her to fast food shop and meet her friends with their guardians not alone.

I5: They do not go anywhere without telling me.

Obviously restrictions imposed by parents such as roaming with friends even in school lunch time, picking up and taking to school by guardians, avoiding lunch together and avoiding school trips influence migrant student integration with locals. However, parents sometimes allow their children some moments of their own too.

I2: ... she likes hanging out with friends and if I become too strict she will be upset.

5.4 Cultural gap

The cultural gap between migrant and local people always makes integration process difficult. All participants in this study understood this.

I1: There is a big cultural gap between us and the local people.

Unfortunately, this study sheds lights on very limited parts of this aspect. First, I recognise a fear among migrant parents about free out-of-school mixing with local students.

I1: ... [w]e asked them not to go out frequently in the school lunch time in the secondary.



I2: Also pick them timely from school. There are wicked students, don't let them mix with them.

I3: Don't let girl child freely mix with boys as they will see in the surrounding... Avoid students who smoke or behave bad... Be aware of smoking, they may give drugs.

I4: Picking up and taking to school will prevent them to mix with bad people ...

I5: Be careful about smoking, bullying, alcohol use, and mixing with bad students.

All the participants commonly felt anxious about letting their child mix freely with local students, but provide different reasons behind this. Some mentioned specific worries regarding smoking, drug or alcohol addiction and bad behaviour; others just portray their fear diffidently. Whatever the reason is, all the participants are found dropping off their children to and picking up from school. This continues even when the children are in secondary school, though in the later years parents sometimes let them travel on their own.

The migrant students commonly face problems in using school toilets. Interviewees I2 and I3 said their children arrive home at the lunch break to use toilets. This may be rooted in the culture of Bangladeshi people who use water in toilets differently from the typical UK way.

5.5 Trust of school

All the participants portrayed their confidence in school rules and trust of teachers. Everybody expressed her gratitude towards teachers for their service and care. Teachers are *good, helpful, great, supportive, responsible*, and they *assure privacy* according to their opinions.

Parents feel no reservation in letting their children participate in school activities, except residential trips. They even let their female children join religious parties at Christmas if arranged by the school.

I2: Did not let them go to parties, Christmas or Halloween, if not school programme.

Parents also obtain long sleeved swimming suits for their girls and let them take part in swimming activity arranged by school.



Themes in this pilot study are synchronized with established literature. That of the language barrier was addressed by Hamilton (2013) and the benefit of nursery schooling by Curl (2016). There is ambiguity in literature about the role of religion, especially Islam, on migrant integration (Kogan *et al.*, 2020). Similarly, cultural integration is questioned in multicultural migration and most studies focus on second generation integration (Diehl *et al.*, 2016). Schooling impacts on migrant student integration is similar to the finding of Manzoni and Rolfe (2019); obstacles due to parents' unfamiliarity of schooling system is as found by Dusi *et al.* (2014); complexity due to feeling of anxiety and fear by migrants echoes Craig (2015), and so on. However, this pilot study identifies these themes to guide future research on interactions between parents, migrant student and school. The thematic intuitions emerging from the parent interviews can be put together according to three core parts of research question as follows:

- (1) How do parents' unfamiliarity to schooling system, school environment and culture influence migrant student's integration?

My data shows mixed results on this issue. While lack of knowledge of the school system and Scottish culture did not affect some aspects of children's school participation, such as sports, short trips and parties, some restrictions were apparent. Migrants' children were, for example, unable to eat with their fellow pupils in school or on trips. This may have implications for integration. They had to adapt to some activities like the toilet system, swimming, lunch time break, and parental concern about smoking, alcohol intake, parties with dancing and music, etc. in addition to language and cultural barriers.

- (2) What are the influences of parent-school interactions?

My study shows parents trust teachers, school curricula, and school activities, but have some reservations about trips to distant places, free movement during lunchtime in secondary schools, and religious programmes.

- (3) Are there interactions between student, parent and school?

It is evident from my data that pleasant and amicable relationships are present among parents, students, and school authorities. Parents permit their children to short trips, girls to swim with long sleeved suits, and children to hang out with friends. Also, they are



occasionally allowed to spend time with friends, and join groups of friends eating out (in the presence of guardians) where parents observe some differences in their nature. School always builds confidence among migrant parents and students, provides a safe environment, and engages students in different activities.

The discussion above shows how migrant parents are helping their children's integration: they trust school, let their children participate in school activities, let them have friends, and suchlike. There are linguistic, religious and cultural gaps that are slowing down the integration process, but migrant parents are trying to lessen these, by accompanying children if they eat out with friends, using long sleeved swimming suits for girls' swimming activities, and teaching children to select vegetarian dishes.

6 Conclusion

The themes explored in this study provide insight into the parental role of Bangladeshi immigrant students' integration in Aberdeen and inspire a deeper inspection of the research question. The convenience sample restricted the study; however, as a Bangladeshi migrant, I had easy access to immigrant parents and the opportunity to shed light on this aspect. The study has inspired me to enquire how parental understanding and habits take shape in migrant children's integration, which interactions between parents, children, and school can be beneficial, and what segments of school life have the potential for assimilation. The discussion of different themes extracted from the narrative data motivates the main future research question: What can be done to improve parental influence on migrant students' integration? A possible focus may be on programmes such as parent counselling, teacher-parent discussion, involving parents in school activities, special sessions with migrant alumni, making halal or vegetarian food available at school, and such. Questions regarding individual migrant students' integration are also important, especially regarding the influence of extra English language training, enriched school sports facilities, increased school activities, counselling, and changes in school facilities. Research interests can also be driven towards how migrant parent-child interaction, religious institutions, and local students' behaviour and culture influence integration. Even though the primary focus on this research is as a pilot study that inspires future research, a brief policy can



be suggested for government consideration for further implications. First, public efforts to enhance school facilities such as better toilets, diversified school meals, and school parties should increase integration. Additionally, secondary schools can provide common rooms for students to use during lunchtimes. In addition, awareness programmes and workshops for ethnic parents should be implemented.

A relational mapping between our primary findings and possible future investigations is shown in Figure 2. This highlights the areas where initiatives can be taken to enhance parental confidence in the school system and the teaching staff. As our study indicates that restrictions on eating together, joining school trips, and such are decreasing possibilities of friendship between migrant students and delaying integration, potential small changes like assuring the supply of vegetarian food in the school, offering short school trips, and small class parties, should be examined in future studies. Migrant parents also need to be assured of school surveillance systems, facilities, and regulations. Further insights could be accumulated by observing other minority groups, particularly migrant students, who did not participate in various school activities.

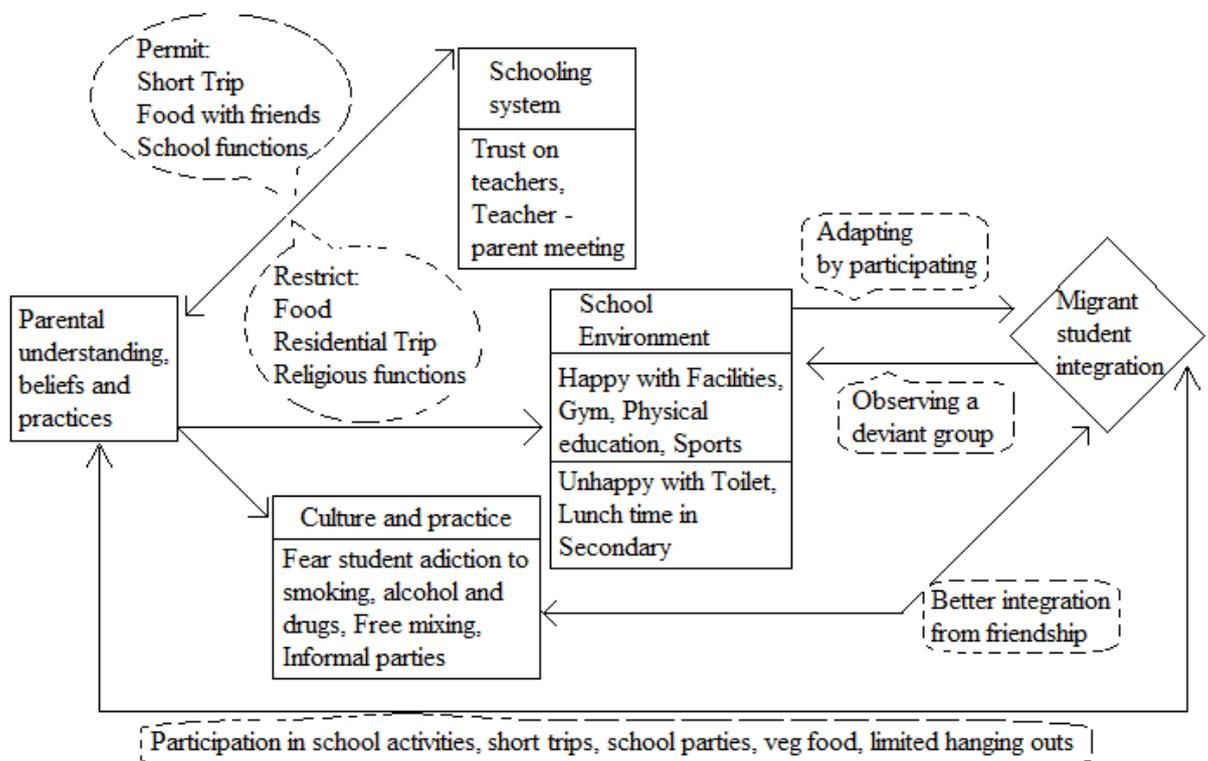


Figure 2: Mapping future research possibilities



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