

**Investigating the Empowerment Needs of Ethnic Minority- Low Socio-Economic Status**

**Parents, Who Reside in Segregated Neighborhoods: the Case of the Netherlands**

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### **Abstract**

The current study examines the needs of Psychological Empowerment of ethnic minority parents who reside in segregated neighborhoods in two big cities in the Netherlands, Utrecht and Amsterdam. For the data collection in-depth semi-structured interviews  $n = 10$  were conducted. The respondents consist of educators of schools, characterized by uneven concentration of ethnic minority students, and parents with ethnic minority status, residents of segregated neighborhoods. Utilizing exploratory case study as research method, the results indicate that a significant number of the target population show a low level of Psychological Empowerment, based on the Nomological Network of Psychological Empowerment of Zimmerman (1995). Furthermore, factors which are found to have an impact on the empowerment level of this group are: socio-economic status; experiences of discrimination; level of socio-cultural integration; social control on the home-culture community. In regards to these findings, the study suggests that an empowerment program implied in those schools may be beneficial for this particular group, contributing to its empowerment, as well as facilitating the school-parent partnership.

*Key words:* empowerment, ethnic minority parents, low socioeconomic status

Onderzoek naar Empowerment behoeften migranten ouders met een lage sociaal-economische status gevestigd in achterstandswijken: een casestudy uitgevoerd in Nederland

### **Abstract**

De huidige studie bestudeert de behoeften naar Psychological Empowerment van ouders met een Marokkaanse en Turkse achtergrond woonachtig in twee grote steden in Nederland, Utrecht en Amsterdam. De datacollectie bestaat uit semigestructureerde interviews ( $n = 10$ ). De respondenten bestonden uit leerkrachten van scholen, gekarakteriseerd met een oneven concentratie van leerlingen met Marokkaanse en Turkse culturele achtergrond, en hun ouders, allen woonachtig in achterstandswijken.

Dit onderzoek maakt gebruik van een verkennende casestudy. Uit de resultaten komt naar voren dat een groot deel van de doelgroep een laag niveau van Psychological Empowerment heeft, gebaseerd op het 'Nomological Network of Psychological Empowerment' van Zimmerman (1995). Overige factoren die van invloed zijn op het empowerment niveau van deze groep zijn: Sociaal-economische status; ervaringen met discriminatie; het niveau van culturele integratie; sociale controle vanuit de thuissituatie met betrekking tot culturele normen en waarden. Deze bevindingen suggereren dat een Empowerment programma op school een toegevoegde waarde kan hebben voor deze specifieke groep. Een dergelijk programma kan Empowerment vergroten en daarnaast ook de school-ouder relatie verbeteren.

Trefwoorden: *empowerment, Turkse en Marokkaanse ouders, school-ouder relatie, sociaal-economische status*

### **Introduction**

The last years there is a significant growth in physical relocation of many populations. Population projections for the period 2000-2050, indicate that the non-western population in the Netherlands will double, from 9% to 17%, similarly to many other countries (Coleman, 2006).

The origin of the largest immigrant groups in the Netherlands are a Turkish, Surinamese, Moroccan and Antillean descent (MinJus, 2004). All four groups share some common characteristics, which are: low educational level, language and culture, which differ significantly from the Dutch. (Driessen & Smitt, 2007). Turkish and Moroccan immigrant populations share, next to the aforementioned characteristics, the same religion and immigrant history, while their integration has considered the most challenging among the other immigrant groups as well (Crul & Doornic, 2003).

Immigration consists of a stressful life change which may have an impact on self-efficacy beliefs. People from different cultures bring different experiences and have different expectations about the communities they interact with (Pelletier & Brent, 2002). According to Bronfenbrenner (1997), culture as the macro system affects fundamental sub- systems such as family, school, working place and community. The participation in these systems provides information about the self-efficacy of the individual (Oettingen, 1995).

Psychological empowerment provides a useful construct for understanding and improving the positive adaptation of the individuals, who have experienced diverse conditions (Fawcett et al., 1994), such as immigration experience, low socio economic status and discrimination. High level of psychological empowerment can be considered as an indication for positive adaptation among immigrants. However, immigrants who have experienced discrimination possess lower level of empowerment while perceived social support would be positively related to empowerment (Cakir & Guneri, 2011).

In the Netherlands, people with an immigrant background tend to shelter themselves from other groups and do not integrate sufficiently in the Dutch society (Vedder, 2006). Their social capital is limited and it mainly consists of relations with people, who themselves have a rather weak position in the host society, thus the potential social support is limited (Heckmann, 2012). Additionally, their bridging social capital, which is associated with employment and income (Lancee, 2010), may be limited as well. Therefore, this might have an impact on their belief of competence and self-efficacy, which influence significantly the well-being of the family. The formation of 'black' and 'white' schools in the Netherlands, in which black schools refer to schools with uneven concentration of low socioeconomic status ethnic minority students, may be seen as evidence of unsuccessful socio-cultural integration of immigrant families (Denessen, Bakker & Gierveld, 2007), of school's failure in contributing to that process (Vedder, 2006) and of low academic achievement of immigrant students, due to the fact that segregation, has proved to lead to underachievement (Heckmann, 2012).

Research has shown that ethnic minority concentration adversely affects school achievement as well (Crul & Doornik, 2003; Heckmann, 2008). Several studies have shown

that ethnic minority groups in the Netherlands insufficiently benefit from schools, despite the huge investments in the education (Glenn & de Jong, 1996; Dagevos, Gijberts, & Praag, 2003; Vedder, 2006). Besides that, the formation of 'black' schools signals the unsuccessful integration of those populations (Heckman, 2012). However, the construct of empowerment has not been given much attention, despite its relevance on the migration experience (Cakir & Guneri, 2011). Next to the moderating influence integration has on the well-being of the parents and the parent-child relationship, socio-economic status seems to be a strong indicator of parental involvement in the upbringing of the children (Stevens et al. 2007). Social and cultural capital of parents seems to be connected to educational and societal opportunities of their children. This fact does not refer explicitly to parents with immigrant status but mainly to low SES parents (Driessen, 2001). However, immigrant status often relates to low SES (Driessen & Smitt, 2007). Consequently, social and cultural integration is particularly relevant and important for immigrants. Their culture is often further away from the mainstream, compared to the Dutch low SES parents. Their participation can positively influence the school careers of their children (Driessen & Smitt, 2007).

Despite the importance of parents' participation and the benefits of such a partnership in children's achievement in school, the school environment for ethnic minority parents is often a foreign place, which results in isolation from it (Driessen, Smitt & Slegers, 2005; Heckmann, 2012). Provided the connection between parents' integration level, feeling of competence and educational and general opportunities of their children in the society (Driessen & Smitt, 2007), there is a need of more community support services for immigrant families, which will let parents share their needs, encourage them to get more involved (Heckmann, 2012) and which will give

them support for the design and improvement of their practices (Driessen, Smitt & Slegers, 2005).

One of such a community service is the 'It's my Child' institution. 'It's my Child' started at *Ithaka* ISK school in Utrecht in the academic year 2017-2018. The main objectives of this project are to empower newcomer parents with refugee and immigrant background, stimulate them to take action in their life and enhance their feeling of self-efficacy. Through this, they are able to reconstruct their parental role for the positive development of their children ([Ithaka ISK], n.d.). Given the positive outcomes in their feeling of competence, social integration and re-involvement in the development of their children, it is now seeking the possibility for further expansion in schools characterized by uneven concentration of ethnic minority families. However, it is unknown if its methodology can be applied successfully in those schools, given the different characteristics of that population.

### **Aim of the Study**

The purpose of this study is the investigation of the needs with regard to psychological empowerment of immigrant low socio-economic parents, whose children attend schools with uneven concentration of ethnic minority populations. More specifically, the study focuses on the current state and quality demands of this population regarding the three components of psychological empowerment: intrapersonal; interactional; behavioral (Zimmerman, 1995). Additionally, the level of sociocultural integration, the socio-economic status and the experienced discrimination will be examined as well, so as to investigate how those elements interrelate with their feeling of empowerment.

As for the sub- questions, these are: a) which are the parameters that enhance or undermine their feelings of empowerment b) which specific elements of IMC empowerment program can fit the needs of this target population, c) which alterations can the program imply, so as to be more appropriate to this target group.

### **Defining Concepts**

#### **Empowerment**

*Empowerment* refers to a process by which people, organizations and communities gain mastery regarding issues concerning them (Rappaport, 1987). Psychological empowerment includes beliefs that goals can be achieved, awareness about resources and factors that hinder or enhance one's efforts to attain those goals (Zimmerman, 1995). However, it does not refer narrowly to self-perceptions of competence but includes active engagement in the community, understanding of the socio political environment and learning about controlling agents and acting to influence those agents (Zimmerman, Israel, Schulz, & Checkoway, 1992). Consequently, sociopolitical or contextual factors are involved as well.

#### **Integration**

*Integration* has been defined as 'the inclusion of new populations into existing social structures of the immigration country' and it consists of four dimensions of process: Structural, Cultural, Social and Identificational: *Cultural* refers to the interactive mutual processes of cultural, cognitive and behavioral change of the individual as well as the host society, while *Social* refers to individual's social intercourse and group membership within the host country (Heckmann & Schnapper, 2003).

#### **Parental Self- Efficacy**



*Parental competence* involves behavioral, affective and cognitive components. An important competency component of parents is parental self-efficacy. People guide their lives by their beliefs of their personal self-efficacy, which may affect their perception of competence (Pelletier & Brent, 2002). One important aspect of parental self-efficacy is parents' belief that they have the knowledge and skills to positively influence the development of their children (Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler & Brissie, 1992), a fact that leads them to act accordingly by encouraging their children's potential (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997)

### **Parental Involvement**

According to Epstein (1987), "Parental involvement focuses on how schools assist families by helping them create home environments that will allow them to support children as students". Parental involvement consists of six types. Each of these types requires mutual reciprocation among schools, families and community. The types are: Parenting; Communicating; Volunteering; Learning at home; Decision making and Collaborating with the Community. The practices within each of these types can vary significantly (Fiore, 2001).

### **Research Design**

Qualitative research is considered to be the best approach in investigating culture, society and behavior, as it can be conducted through analysis and synthesis of people's own words, without transforming them into numbers (Hogan, Dolan & Donnelly, 2009). Therefore, it is chosen for the purpose of this study. More particularly, the exploratory case study will be applied, as it allows the researcher to effectively understand how it operates and functions (Berg, 2001). This formative explanatory study will give the possibility of better understanding the

selected population, in order to ensure that the program or study to follow will be culturally relevant and acceptable (Tolley, Ulin, Mack, Robinson & Succop, 2016).

### **Data Collection Technique**

The data collection technique utilized for the needs assessment of the target population was the semi-structured in depth interviews of educators and parents in 'black' schools. Open-ended question, written out to be asked in an ordered sequence, will be used in regards to the semi-structured interview (Tolley, Ulin, Mack, Robinson & Succop, 2016). The semi-structured interview is preferred in this case because it allows the researcher to probe beyond to the prepared questions (Berg, 2001). The content of the questions was selected upon a topic list (see Appendix A) based on defining the current state of the psychological empowerment and the parameters which enhance and hinder it.

Almost all of the interviews were held in the premises of the schools, while only one took place at the house of one of the parent-participants, as it was prerequisite for the participation. The average length of each interview was an hour. The language used for educators' interviews was English, while as far as the interviews of the parents is concerned, the used language was Dutch. In those cases, an interpreter was present, given my limited knowledge of the Dutch language. The data has been recorded and transcribed. Key points of the information obtained were shared with the respondents, in order to confirm the accuracy of their reflected experiences.

### **Respondents**

The respondents include:

- (a) Team-leader and Educators  $n = 6$  of schools, which are labeled as 'black' and
- (b) Parents  $n = 4$  with ethnic minority status, form Morocco and Turkey.

The educators of these schools consists the majority of the sample, as they can offer an overview of the situation and they could be recruited easier, given the short time of the data collection.

A smaller number of parents has been recruited to examine the perspective of the target group itself and for the triangulation of the information obtained. This was done to increase the credibility of the results.

The reason of selecting this specific population of parents is because Turkish and Moroccan parents share similar migration histories, as well as similar socioeconomic and religious backgrounds and their integration is considered the most challenging among the other immigrant groups in the Netherlands (Crul & Doornik, 2003).

The recruitment of the parents proved to be quite challenging. Team-leaders of schools, community members of those particular ethnic groups and personal efforts were utilized in approaching them. Most of the reactions were negative. By personal contact of parents, fifteen parents showed interest to participate in the research but at the last moment, they chose not to get involved. Therefore, I chose to interview four parents, who consented to participate. They are proven to be some of the few active parents in the school community. Additionally, most of them did not have a low socio-economic status, which was one of the parameters this study intended to investigate. However, they could provide us with a lot of insights not only about them personally, but also the average picture of the parents in the school and in the neighborhood.

All the respondents were asked to sign an informed consent form and the data collected is used only for the purpose of this study, to ensure the ethical part of the study.

### **Methodology of Analysis**

A deductive approach was followed in order to identify the key parameters, which contributed to answering the research question. The interpretation was formed by the research objective, which is the need of psychological empowerment of the targeted population and through identifying the factors which enhance or undermine their feelings of self-competence, guided by the existing literature used and the themes that may emerge spontaneously from the data

The first step of the analysis was coding and segmenting the data with regard to the pieces of text that reflect on the current situation of the respondents on the three components of the Nomological Network of Psychological Empowerment (Zimmerman, 1995): intrapersonal; interactional; behavioral.

The second step includes segmenting the data in regard to the factors which may hinder or enhance those components, such as *socio-economic status, discrimination, level of socio-cultural integration and social pressure/ rejection from their own community.*

After the coding of the single concepts, these concepts were grouped in higher order themes and connections were identified.

The coding of the interviews was facilitated by the qualitative analysis software N-Vivo (Richards, 2009).

## **Results**

In this section, the description of the results with regard to the current state of the respondents' PE is provided, followed by the factors that enhance or undermine their empowerment.

### **Current state of Psychological Empowerment**

All of the three components of the Psychological Empowerment form a picture of an individual who believes to have the capability to influence a given context (intrapersonal component), understands how the system works in this context (interactional component) and engages in behaviors to exert control in the context (behavioral component) (Zimmerman, 1995). Therefore, the presentation of the results is following this order.

The *Intrapersonal* component has been measured by collecting information regarding Domain Specific Perceived Control; Domain Specific Self Efficacy; Motivation to Control.

### **Domain Specific Self Efficacy**

Two thirds of the participants reflected that the majority of the parents do not seem to be satisfied with their personal growth and their current state. A strong indicator of this is the unrealistic expectations, in respect of the academic achievement of their children, which add pressure on them, as they often do not meet the reality and it has been repeated by most of the participants. A 49 year old team-leader characteristically referred: “-Do you think that those parents had the possibilities to reach their potentials? -No No No...They wanted to become other people, to have a better life. They are telling me about it ‘I could learn but I didn’t do it, because I didn’t have the possibilities’. That’s what I hear often.” So frequently the participants identified

that the parents do not seem satisfied with their achievements and their parental competence seems to be low in many cases, given the frequency of the reported problematic situations in the families.

On the other side, the minority of the participants expressed their strong satisfaction in respect of their achievement and their parental competence. This result has derived from most of the parents who participated in the research. They reported a high level of parental competence and fulfillment in respect to their development, supported by a few educators, who have observed positive indications in regards to those two aspects. A 44 year old parent said: *“Are you happy with this job? -Yes, sure. It is a very meaningful job. I was always wanted it!”* While another mother 37 years old referred: *“Proud!!! It makes me proud. And since I have children, I feel proud of myself. Before, I never felt proud in my life. Because of them I feel proud of myself. I have something to add.”*

### **Domain Specific Perceived Control**

The level of the domain specific perceived control has been indicated equally positively and negatively. From the answers of the respondents, a considerable percentage seems not to have strong perceived control while the same percentage seems to have sense of high perceived control too.

Half of the respondents expressed that many parents do not seem to have the control over their own families and their daily life. A 37 years old team leader said: *“A lot of appointments are stuck because parents call 5 min before the appointment ‘my child is sick /I’m sick’ because they can’t plan and organize their life well”*. In other cases, they seem to deal with situations in their life where they feel powerless and that they do not have control over it. One of those

situations was presented by a parent 37 year old who said: *“I got homeless because of a depth of him [the ex-husband]. I haven’t seen them [her kids] for many many years.”* It has been frequently referred that the parents, due to different circumstances, couldn’t take the control of their life in the desirable way: *“-You referred that there is a lot of poverty here.-Yes, there are. Not having jobs because they are sick or old or they didn’t develop enough and they are also a lot of women who don’t work because women have to stay at home.”* an educator 49 years old said, reconfirmed by many other participants, including parents and educators.

On the other hand, half of the participants indicated a high perceived control over the life of the target population, signaled by sense of controlling and acting independently in their daily life, as well as setting structure and boundaries in their families *“They know that they can talk to me but we have also rules. And they know them.-Do they follow the rules? -Sometimes not, but most of the times yes. They live still at home, so they have to. They should have respect always. That’s also from our culture.”* a mother 44 year old referred. Additionally, a repeated topic in the interviews was the high number of divorces, which is against the conservative and strict family rules of their communities and indicates the higher perceived control of those parents, in regards to their lifestyle. A representative comment of this situation is referred by a 37 year old team-leader: *“A lot of women who are divorced show their hair and they have more Dutch orientation.”*

### **Motivation to Control**

In respect to this subcategory, the interviewees indicated that the percentages of the positive and negative signs are expressed in a similar frequency and seem to inter-relate strongly with the above subcategory.

In half of the cases, parents show high motivation to influence the communities, in which they are part of. A team leader 47 year old said: *“You have parents who speak very good Dutch, very strong women. They come here at school and they tell us what we have to do with the child.”* While some of them showed that they have the desire to have the full control over their lives and to contribute in the development of their children, even though in many cases they lack the means, as a few participants referred. A parent with Moroccan background said: *“I don’t want to be dependent on my husband. I am now again dependent on my husband. I want my own salary again.”*

The other half of the respondents referred that many parents lack the motivation to contribute to their communities. That conclusion has been derived by answers to the questions regarding the participation in the formal elections and participation in the school councils: A parent of 37 year responded in the question regarding the participation in the formal elections as follows: *“-So before you didn’t participate. -No, I didn’t care”* While as far as the involvement in the school council, a team leader 49 years said *“-Would parents like to have for example more space to take decisions in the school, to get more involved? – Nooo!”*. In addition to those, a few comments regarding the desire of parents to contribute and control personally the academic development of their children have been made as well, like: *“Others who are a little bit like.... ‘It’s your thing and I...’, given by an educator 49 year old.*

The ***Interactional*** component has been examined by indications regarding the four sub-categories: *Critical Awareness of the Environment; Understanding of the Causal Agent; Skills Development; Participation in Decision Making.*



### **Critical Awareness of their Environment**

The majority of the respondents gave negative indications with regard to the ability of the targeted population to understand and comprehend their broader environment. This was a logical outcome as the majority of the respondents reported low awareness of the aforementioned topics. For instance they often trust sources without verifying the credibility of the information, like a participant 37 years old said: *“Parents come to me to explain what that someone in the family WITH A LOT OF KNOWLEDGE about education and they gave them an advice what TOTALLY doesn't work in the learning curve of the child. And they listen to them and they take it for granted”*; they lack the language skills, which can enhance their understanding of the environment; they often follow the news of their home land more than of the Dutch society. Moreover, respondents reported that the majority of them show limited knowledge of fostering the development of themselves and their children as active citizens. A fact illustrated by a 44 year old educator: *“They are satisfied because they simply don't understand, which are the possibilities, how to develop themselves or how to grow.”* Significant is the fact that almost all of the team leaders, who participated in the research, mentioned that the parents often express unrealistic expectations about the academic performance of their children, showing that they lack important knowledge over the educational system and the way the society works.

On the other hand, it was found that there is a smaller percentage of respondents who have a higher level of awareness regarding their environment, which mainly refers to those who are born-raised in the Netherlands. However this percentage seems to be low. *“Regarding the parents of the second generation?- Yes, I think so. They speak the language better, they know the*

*ways in society better, which paths to follow when you want to become a doctor and to get an education.*” a response given by a 46 year old educator.

### **Understanding of the Causal Agents**

This subcategory demonstrated a lot of similarities with the ‘Critical Awareness of the Environment’. Therefore the nodes have been collected and the results are very similar with that sub category.

Consequently, since the critical awareness of the environment seemed to be very low according to the respondents, the understanding of the causal agents seems to be quite low respectively. More than half of the participants responded negatively to this aspect referring to the highest percentage of the target population. This is illustrated by the following comment: *“They heard that they vote for <A> and they vote for <A>”* stated by a 37 year old team-leader.

While ... felt that ... , others considered positive indications such as , such as global knowledge regarding the sociopolitical environment and high level of awareness of their environment. One parent stated the following : *“-I watch regularly NOS. I watch almost never tv. I have a computer, this is how I get my information. But I am not a TV fan. I am surely up to date. -I guess, not only for the Dutch society but also for the Turkish?-Yes, as well. Also, for the rest of the world.”*

### **Skills Development**

As far as the skills development is concerned, the highest percent of the respondents indicated that is low. Parents often lack the language skills because they haven’t developed their capacities to develop their language skills, so as to support the development of their children. A 46 years old team leader stated that the parents *“Parents are not capable of helping their children. It’s not*

*that they don't want but they don't have the cognitive skills. Some parents... Some other parents do".* Because of this, the parents haven't reached their personal goals, such as meeting the requirements for having a stable job. Another parent 37 years old stated the following from an experience: *"I started working after secondary education. The situation was... My father didn't live anymore, my mother got very sick and I felt very responsible for my brother and for my older brother."*

A minority of respondents presented good indications, in regards to the skills development. Two of the parents expressed satisfaction with the way they developed their skills and the opportunities they got, which is reflected on the following statement by a parent 34 years old as well: *"Yes, I have followed a course for that. I did one for secretary, social service there where you also ehhh, work with people and all that. I have 3 certificates and I chose for care in the end. This is what I chose initially."* While the rest of the sample focused mainly on the negative indications of the skills development of the parents, all of them referred that there is also a considerable percentage, who have developed their skills and they have reached their personal goals: *"We have some parents in this school who indeed reached their goals and they are successful but a lot of parents haven't."* explained a 44 year old educator.

### **Participation in Decision Making**

More than half of the participants stated that the vast majority of the parents do not show the desire on taking part in the decision making at the school environment. They also stated that they do not seem to be politically active. Despite the fact that all the involved schools, gave the space to the parents to raise their concerns and share their view points, they do not seem interested, as the participation is significantly low. *"-Do most of the parents think that their*

*voice matter in the school community?-I think they don't care.*” stated a 37 year old team leader. Moreover, most of the parents do not seem to state their voice regarding the society, according to almost all of the team leaders, who have been interviewed. A 37 year old parent said the following: *“Last year, it was the first time in my whole life I voted. I voted Wilders.”*

On the other hand, a minority of respondents reported that they actively take part in decision making in the school environment. They also keep themselves up to date, regarding the society they live in and they exercise their right to vote. *“Yes, for example smoking on the schoolyard. I said something about that and now it's forbidden”* a parent 44 year old said, while another parent 34 year old referred: *“I am really politically conscious. I follow it very well I am up to date on what happens but the voting I do nationally.”*

The **behavioral component** has been measured by selecting indications referring to: *Community involvement-Social Capital; Coping behaviors.*

### **Community Involvement**

Most of the respondents reported that the parents are quite active in their own community, especially in the neighborhood level. A comment made by a 46 year old educator stated: *“They have a lot of parties here. They know each other. They are family from each other. The families are big and they talk about each other all the time”* Almost all of the respondents referred that the majority of the parents are significantly active within their community, while half of them referred that in some cases, families seem to live an isolated life, withdrawn from any social interaction. A 25 year old educator has characteristically referred: *“Because they are a lot of families from which I hear that the mother doesn't leave the house ever. I can't say everyone. As*

*teachers we have never seen the mum. We have been to the house, on the house visits, and we have never seen the mum while we do hear that there is a mum.”*

For the parental involvement in the school community, the vast majority the respondents reported very low participation of the parents in the school community. The majority of the parents seem to visit the school, when invited for the mandatory conversations regarding their children’s academic development. However, the level of participation in the school community has been reported as significantly low by all of the respondents. A team leader by the age of 49 years old referred: *“-So when they arrange meeting, how does it go? -I think... 20-30 parents come from the 500... It’s low. But when they are invited to come to school to have individual conversation with the teacher, they will come.”* This statement was also supported by most of the parent respondent. A 37 year old mother said: *“Last week there was a music performance of his classroom at school and I was the only parent. I was sitting there and I was ‘Where are you all??’ ‘Yeah, I needed to do my dinner...’ ”* According the educators and parents, the vast majority of the parents do not find it of importance to participate at the school community. Thus, there is a very small amount of active parents in all of the schools the interviews were conducted on.

Another level of community involvement which has been reported is the involvement in the Dutch community, signaled by indications regarding employment or participation in formal community processes. The majority of respondents reported low level of parents’ involvement. In many cases, the respondents have observed working instability of the parents or even unemployment; lack of interest on getting informed in regards to the socio- political matters and isolation in their neighborhood, which is reflected in the following comment *“...lack of*

*self-confidence to go abroad. And go abroad, is out of this area. What abroad is for you, leaving your country, for them is leaving the area, the neighborhood”* given by a 37 years old educator.

Another comment reflects these conclusions, given by a 37 year old: *“Work?? I don’t want to work. I prefer to bring my kids to school myself, to teach them”*

In most of the cases, respondents reported that unemployment is observed mainly as far as women are concerned, as it seems to be aspect of their culture. While as far as for the men, they seem to work in most of the cases, but quite often instability in their working life is observed. Despite the fact that most of the participants supported these conclusions, almost all of them referred that it does not apply to the vast majority but to a considerable percentage.

### **Social Capital**

As a direct result of community involvement, the social capital of the parents has also been measured. Almost all of the respondents reported that in most of the cases, the targeted population has very strong bonding social capital. They form connections within members of their own community, with whom they share similar characteristics and available resources.

On the contrary, the majority of the respondents indicated that the bridging social capital is often very low. This is due to the fact that the majority of them tend to stay in their neighborhoods, which characterized by high concentration of people with common ethnic minority background. A 46 year old educator stated by saying the following *“Just to show them more the world. This neighborhood is not only the world but it’s more than that”* , *“I think that the broad thing is the family and the friends in the country of their roots. In the Netherlands it’s more in the neighborhood and outside of it.”*

As for the social support, the majority of the respondents referred that the parents often do not have social support or they do not want to have any social support. Thus, during the interviews it was reported many times that even if very serious incidents take place. They don't seem to have somebody to rely on and they try to deal with it within the family. One of the team leaders by the age of 49 referred the following: *"No, no. They have low social support because they don't like to let others know that they have problems."* This statement has been confirmed by other educators as well as by half of the parents. One 37 year old parent responded: *"No, I do it myself. I don't like to call people to help me. I do it by myself. I can't remember that somebody helped me..."* However this does not refer to the majority of the targeted population but to a high percentage of it.

### **Coping Behaviors**

Half of the respondents reported that avoidance/withdrawal behavior is utilized by the targeted population. This conclusion is based on information such as keeping a passive attitude and victimizing themselves or their choice to isolate themselves in their own cultural group or even in their homes, so as to avoid confrontation with the lack of skills, such as the language.

On the other hand, the other half of the respondents reported active/problem focused behaviors, such as stand up for their rights when they are being discriminated against or by trying to integrate better in the society and utilizing alternative ways to solve problematic situations. A team leader 46 years old illustrated this in the following comment: *"Some parents do nothing with it, other parents are victims 'we are always this, we are always that'. Some others are just motivated to be more powerful. I want to show that I am a good Moroccan and good Islamite and I can do a lot of things, I'm very well integrated. It's is different"*.

### **Parameters Which Impact the Psychological Empowerment of the Targeted Group**

The order of presentation of those elements is based on the strength of the patterns that have been found in the data:

#### **Socioeconomic Status**

The vast majority of the educators who participated claimed that significant role in the above mentioned topics seem to be the socio economic status of them. All of the educators-respondents pointed out that socio economic status play a significant role in their lifestyle and in their level of empowerment. Often a comparison to the higher educated parents was done, consisting of the minority of the participating schools. According to them, the fact that their social life takes place in the neighborhood, the tight bridging social capital, the limited enrolment in socio-cultural activities and the loose boundaries in the family seems to be strongly related to the socio economic status rather than the immigrant background only. An educator 46 year old said: *“People here who don’t have much to spend, tend to stay in their neighborhood and not to travel abroad.”* In this case ‘abroad’ has the meaning of areas out of the neighborhood, as this is what they consider abroad, according to the majority of respondents.

The above assumption was supported in many cases by presenting the similarities of them with the Dutch low SES parents. Some of those comments are: *“Do you think that Dutch low SES parents have similar ways?-Yes, that’s what I am thinking about it, what do they do. But they also stay here and this is their life.”* has been stated by an educator 44 year old.

*“I see in this school that a lot of parents don’t discipline their children. And the Dutch low ses have the same.”* referred by another team-leader 49 year old.

#### **Discrimination**



Almost all of the participants mentioned that the majority of the targeted group has experienced discrimination, due to their cultural background. This conclusion has been supported by references on specific attitudes, such as the preference of native Dutch parents enrolling their children in schools, which are dominated by families with cultural backgrounds other than Dutch or unequal opportunities in the working environment, reflected by this comment of a parent 34 year old with Moroccan background: *“As a Dutch person you do have to prove yourself less. I have a friend who works hard in a company but she is the only Moroccan there. She has to prove herself 2 times more than the others, while the other can do nothing.”*

Additionally in many cases, participants referred to specific situations they were confronted with, due to their dressing style and their origins. A parent 37 year old referred: *“The neighborhood we lived in was difficult because they don’t love immigrants. So most of the times it was fighting and fighting for your rights”*

### **Socio-cultural Integration**

According to the interviewees, the sociocultural integration of the target group seems to be low, due to the concentration of them in neighborhoods, consisting of residents with similar cultural background and limited contact with indigenous. The majority of them seem to be satisfied with that fact and they do not try to integrate more in the values and norms of the Dutch society. In many cases, poor Dutch language acquisition was indicated. According to them, the relationship with indigenous seems to be peaceful and respectful, in most of the cases but that does not lead to a more personal level relationship.

A Moroccan participant 34 year old, who considers herself more Dutch than Moroccan, replied on the question, if most of the parents are like minded: *“No, no. Like I told you already, absolutely*

*not. You even have...I am surprised about it... that their kids are not allowed to come to school during Christmas.”*

Another phenomenon observed and supported by the majority of the respondents is the habit of Moroccan origin men of ‘importing’ partners from their home country, perpetuating the cultural gap. One Moroccan origin parent participant said: *“On this school I can tell you that for sure 80% are imported women.”*

Parents who belong to the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> generation, appear to be more integrated into the Dutch culture, as they master the Dutch language and are more exposed to the Dutch values and lifestyle. However, that does not apply to the majority but to a considerable percentage, due to the homogeneous neighborhoods. An educator 44 year old said: *“And half of the parents think they have to do it in the old fashion way and the other half is more adapted. I think the traditional/conservative type of parents gets smaller and smaller.”*

Remarkable is the fact that the majority of the participants indicated that the involvement in extracurricular cultural activities, like visits in museums, libraries, music is quite limited. However the participation in cultural events within their own cultural group is reported as high.

### **Social Pressure from home-culture community**

A topic which recorded through the interviews which, according to the participants, seems to influence the choices and the lifestyle of the target population is the social pressure by their own cultural communities. More than half of the respondents reported that, due to the concentration in the same neighborhoods, people are being judged for their choices and if one of them shows a more western orientation or rejects cultural norms, the pressure and the rejection is significant. A

representative example is an interviewee with Turkish cultural background who said: *“People can hate me, but I say all the time. You live here. If you are so in to your belief, it’s written in the Koran and I know it, that you need to fit where you live.”* *“They say to me ‘Oh you became Dutch’ ‘No, that fits me.’* Those aspects have been confirmed by the majority of educators-participants, who referred on some specific incidents they have been confronted with, like the followings given by team leaders 46 and 49 year old respectively: *“They like Erdogan. If you are Turkish and you are not for Erdogan, you have a very difficult life here. You can’t say it.”* *“A girl who was pregnant had to flee. We had to put her out of the home because one of the family member- the pater familias, the highest uncle- wanted to kill her. That kind of things... Very strong.”*

### **Conclusion**

The main question this research intended to answer refers to the needs of empowerment of ethnic minority parents, who reside in segregated neighborhoods in the Netherlands. This study has found that a significant percentage of this population exhibits low level of PE, based on all three components of the Nomological Model of Empowerment, presented in the results. In addition to that, it became apparent that the low-socioeconomic status has been presented as the parameter that undermines the level of PE the most, as it impacts their self- esteem and the choices concerning their personal development and their involvement within the community. This is followed by their experiences of discrimination that stems from having an ethnic minority status and the low levels of socio-cultural integration, which negatively impacts the state of the behavioral component and especially their bridging social capital. Additionally, the social pressure of the home-culture community has proven to relate to the PE, as it hinders the bridging

social capital and their personal development, if this is not aligned with the norms of the home-culture. It is important to refer that this outcome was not included in the topics of the study, but it has derived directly from the data. As for the role of an empowerment program, given the low levels of PE reported by the respondents, it became evident that it can be beneficial to the target population.

### **Strengths and Limitations**

This study presented a few limitations, which need to be taken into account in the interpretation of the data. One of them was the inability to recruit parents as the main source of data for the purpose of the study. Due to the characteristics of the target population and the limitation of the time, the recruitment was challenging and the data does not derive exclusively by the view of the group itself. Hence, the results have been mainly drawn upon the overview of educators and active parents in the school community. Nevertheless, the data from educators and parents complement each other, which is indicative of appropriate selection of the respondents and enhances the reliability of the conclusions drawn in regards to this population. On the other side, conducting an in depth study of a difficult to reach and often underrepresented target population (Yancey, Ortega & Kumanyika, 2006), consists one of the main strengths of this study.

The current study touches upon the specific population and to the selected context and it does not assure its implication to all parents with migration status. Each cultural group has particular characteristics and migration histories vary among diverse populations and contexts, therefore the results of this study cannot be generalized.

### **Discussion**

According to Zimmerman (1995) all the three components can fully capture the state of PE of the individual and the measures should be appropriate for the population and the context. Due to less relevance with the main characteristics of the target population, which are the immigration status and the parental role, a few sub categories of PE components has been given less attention. Those were: *resource mobilization* and *organizational participation*.

In the current study, it is evident that a considerable portion of the target population exhibits a low level of PE. Consequently, psychological empowerment seems to be beneficial. The *interactional component* provides a bridge between locus of control and taking action to exert control, by being actively involved in the community (Zimmerman, 1995). Therefore, while the *intrapersonal level* of the participants was not reported significantly low, the low level of *interactional level*- which consists of critical awareness of the environment, understanding the causal agents, decision making, skill development- seems to negatively influence the *behavioral component*. Thus, that explains the low level of participation in the community.

The participants of this study were trying to convey that one strong influence of parent's social capital-community involvement, awareness of their environment and self-efficacy is the socio-economic status. This evidence is being supported by almost all the educators and it has been triangulated by the parents' participants. The majority of the sample of the parents' respondents consisted of middle class parents, which presented an opposing image of the state of the parents, compared to how the majority of the educators have presented it. Moreover, they are very active in the school community, they are active socio-culturally, their social network is broad, including bridging and bonding and their awareness of the environment has been reported high. Additionally, they themselves underlined that they are not the most representative examples

in that community, by giving examples which reconfirmed the image the educators were trying to convey. Consequently, these evidences are in line with the finding of previous research, which supports the correlation among socio-economic status, social capital and self-efficacy (*Han, Chu, Song & Li, 2014*)

A second message identified by the participants is that the low socio-cultural integration of the target group is strongly related to their PE. Their lower level of socio-cultural integration is mainly signaled by the segregation of the target group in homogenous and economical deprived neighborhoods, which is in line with findings of previous studies (Gijberts & Dagevos, 2007; Vervoort et al, 2011). Ethnic residential concentration reduces the opportunities for interaction with other types of people. Thus that has a direct effect on their bridging social capital (Tselios et al., 2015). Furthermore, according to another study, people who share similar characteristics and live in high poverty neighborhood face alarmingly high rates of social isolation and weaker social ties (Small, 2007), which are related positively with low PE (Zimmerman, 1995). Additionally, the residential segregation is found to create the conditions, in which races are more likely to live in high-poverty neighborhoods (Small, 2007), which was apparent in the current study as well, given that the neighborhoods the parents are residents in were characterized by high concentration of ethnic minority families and high level of poverty.

In this target group, the bonding social capital was found to be very strong. However, although previous research has shown that ethnic minorities with higher levels of group identity feel greater psychological empowerment and positive well-being (Sciences & Orleans, 2010) the low socio-economic status (*Han, Chu, Song & Li, 2014*), the experienced discrimination (Cakir &

Guneri, 2011) , the relatively low socio-cultural integration level and the strong social norms, that characterize closed social networks, are strong parameters which undermine the PE of the group.

Given the findings of the study an empowerment program, such as the IMC, seems to be beneficial for schools of uneven concentration of ethnic minority groups. The ultimate goal of community services regarding immigrants should be to build a meaningful family and working life and the targets should be functional and facilitative (Beacco, Little & Hedges, 2014). This can be achieved by fostering participation through the enhancement of self- esteem, confidence and self-efficacy and not by focusing exclusively in the language acquisition, as the only parameter of integration (Nieuwboer & van 't Rood, 2016). This focus is in line with the main objectives of IMC program, which lie in enhancing individual's self-efficacy, foster participation and strengthen the social ties among the parents, serving the ultimate goal of it, which is encouraging a more balanced family life.

Studying the logic model of the intervention (see appendix B), it becomes clear that the intervention adapts to the specific needs of each target group, taking their cultural background and expectations into consideration. Furthermore, through the connection it has with the school, in which it is being implied, it can positively facilitate the parental involvement and it can bridge the cultural incongruence of school- family, by making the expectations and demands more clear for both sides. Next to that, the program focuses on the talents of the participants as well, which can bring benefits not only to the self-efficacy and confidence of the participants but as well as to the school community.

A considerable point which the study came across as well is the habit of Moroccan men “importing” partners from their home country. This fact underlines the continuously growth of

the first generation immigrants of this particular group over time. Thereby, this demonstrates the need of guiding them effectively in overcoming the challenges as newcomers, becoming active members of the Dutch society and positive role models for their children. Key points which consists the objectives of IMC, provided its already evident positive impact in regards to that.

One of alterations that the program can imply in order to fit the needs of this population is the focus on the bridging social capital of the participants, which in spite of its benefits, it has been reported significantly low among the target group.

Another considerable benefit IMC can offer in this population is the facilitation of the parental involvement, which has been indicated very low by the interviewees. The low participation of immigrant parents in school seems to lie in the cultural incongruence between home and school culture and the lack of required cultural resources, which enables them to be more involved (*Denessen, Bakker, & Gierveld, 2007*), rather than the lack of interest for the academic development of their children, given that their aspiration for their children education is quite high. Successful practices of encouraging parental involvement in ethnic minority parents seem to those which take the cultural aspect into account, rather than formulating expectations, which may not meet their needs (*Denessen, Bakker, & Gierveld, 2007*) and which seems to impact the level of participation of the parents at the current moment. Hence, IMC can function as mediator in this gap and it can bridge the cultural incongruence, through the direct cooperation with the school and the availability of multicultural ambassadors, who can identify the cultural aspects and foster more fruitful communication between parents and school.

### **Recommendations**



The current study was conducted via semi-structured interviews. However the specific topic could be investigated in depth by utilizing a mixed method approach. Interpreting the personal experience using qualitative approach and in addition to that, seeking the correlation between different factors which may have an impact on the empowerment, with quantitative methods, can provide a more in depth view of the specific topic.

Due to the practical limitations of time, the current study did not focus enough on how the social control in closed communities interrelates with the feelings of psychological empowerment of the individual and how it interferes with the integration of immigrant populations. Hence, future research could investigate the possible connection of it.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Topic List- Interviews

Empowerment	Way of Measuring the components
<p><b><i>Intrapersonal Level :</i></b>            Domain Specific Perceived Control; Domain Specific Self Efficacy; Motivation to Control</p> <p><b><i>Interactional Level :</i></b>  <i>Critical Awareness of the Environment;</i>  <i>Understanding of the Causal Agent; Skills Development;</i>  <i>Participation in Decision Making</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The level of <i>self-efficacy</i> has been identified by indication of satisfaction/dissatisfaction concerning their personal current state professionally and personally, the level of parental competence and self-confidence.</li> <li>● The <i>domain specific perceived control</i> and <i>motivation to control</i> has been measured in regards to the control over their families, their personal life choices and their desire to exert control in the society by stating their voice.</li> <li>● <i>Critical awareness of the environment</i> and <i>Understanding of the Causal Agents</i> have been measured by the knowledge over the educational system, level of awareness of the opportunities in respect of their personal and professional development and their desire to stay up to date. In regards to the second category the focus lied more on the sociopolitical environment of the target group.</li> <li>● <i>Skills Development</i> has been indicated by acquired skills which enable them to reach their personal and professional goals and to support the development of their children.</li> <li>● <i>Participation in decision making</i> has been measured by the level of participation in making decisions in the school environment as well as the society in general and by stating their voice in the formal elections.</li> </ul>



<p><b>Behavioral Level:</b> <i>Community involvement-Social Capital; Coping behaviors.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Community involvement</i> consisted of three major themes: <i>involvement in the cultural community</i>, measured by nodes regarding engagement in gatherings and special events of their communities and involvement in religious practices; <i>Involvement in the Dutch Community</i>, signaled by indications regarding employment or participation in formal community processes; <i>Parental involvement in school</i>, indicated by active or non-active participation in school events and gatherings.</li> <li>● <i>As for the social capital</i>, nodes have been separated in <i>bridging</i> and <i>bonding</i> social capital as well as <i>perceived social support</i>.</li> <li>● <i>Coping behaviors</i> have been categorized in active/problem focused and in avoidance/withdrawal</li> </ul>
<p><b>All topics</b></p>	<p><b>Examples of Questions towards parents</b></p>
<p><b>Socio- Cultural Integration</b></p> <p><b>Social Capital- Social Support</b></p> <p><b>Discrimination</b></p>	<p>Describe the neighborhood. Locals, immigrants, both</p> <p>Do you like this fact?</p> <p>Why yes, why not?</p> <p>Do you feel you fit in the Dutch culture/ people?</p> <p>Why yes/not?</p> <p><i>Could you please talk a bit about your friends/ Acquaintances?</i></p> <p><i>What is their nationality? Why?</i></p> <p><i>Do you have very close friends? Can you give an example?</i></p> <p><i>Do you feel that you can rely on them for example if you can't be at home, is anybody there that can take care of your kids/ borrow money?</i></p> <p>Do you think you have the opportunities with the Dutch in the working environment and in communities, such as school?</p> <p>Have you ever encountered with comments regarding your nationality?</p>

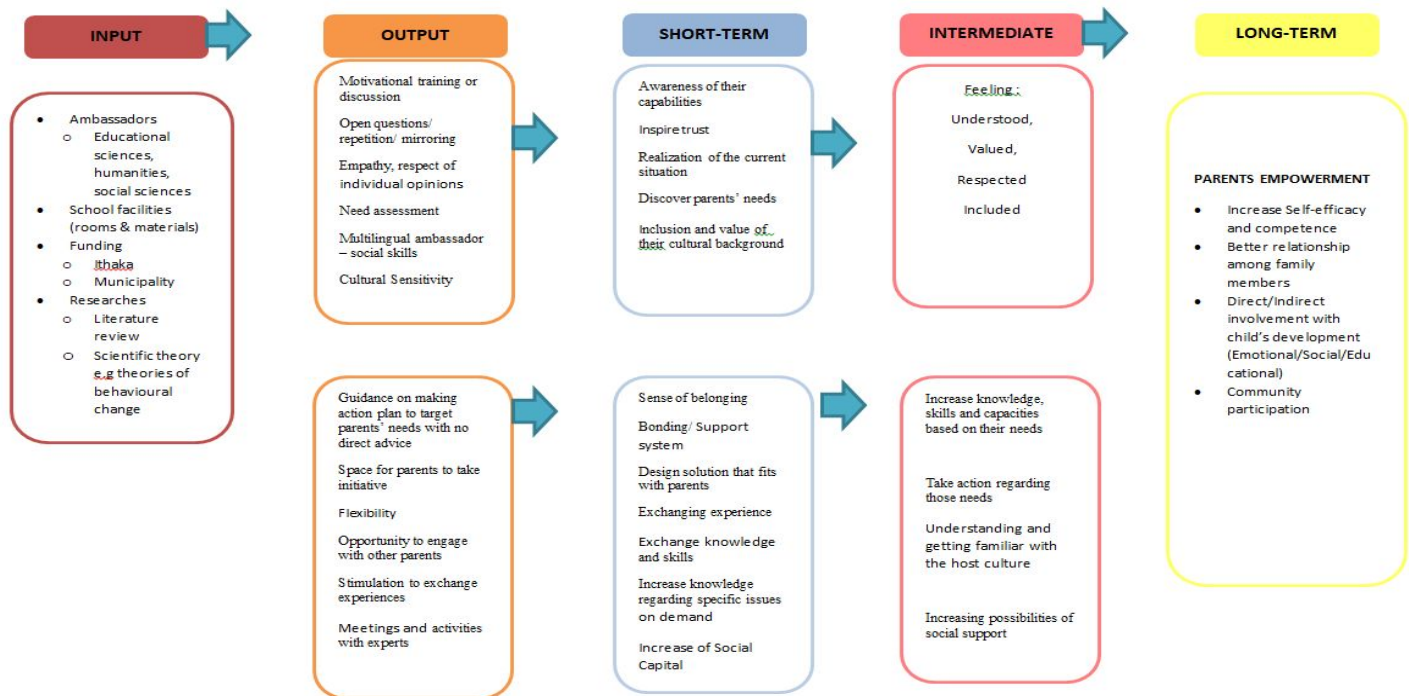
<p><b><i>Parental Involvement</i></b></p>	<p>Can you give an example?</p> <p>What's your opinion about the school?</p> <p>Relationship with teachers? Examples?</p> <p>How is the relationship with the other parents?</p> <p>How do you help you kid at home, regarding his/her academic progress?</p> <p>How do you get involved at school? (Ways of participation)</p>
<p><b>Familial relationship state</b></p>	<p>How is the communication going between you?</p> <p>Do your kids listen to you o important matters?(Do your kids consider you as a role model/ influential )</p> <p>What makes you feel that?</p>
<p><b>Empowerment</b></p>	<p>Are you satisfied with your job- Did you manage to do whatever you wanted in your life?</p> <p>Do you think that you have enough opportunities to achieve your goals?</p> <p>Do you think that you have enough information/understand well the Dutch system/ Dutch school, so that you can do things independently (without relying on someone else?)</p> <p>How do you usually spend your week?</p> <p>Do you watch the news/ Participate in the society?in any community , maybe in the neighborhood?(voting maybe/having opinion)</p> <p>When you have to contact bodies such as town hall: How does it usually go? Arranging all on your own?</p> <p>How do you see yourself as a parent? Are you satisfied with the way you support (psychologically) him/her?</p>

	<p>Do you think that you have the skills and knowledge to influence positively the development of your children?</p> <p>Do you feel that you need more help and understanding from the school (or any other body) as a parent? ...</p> <p>As a parent from a non-Dutch background, what experiences did this fact bring to you?</p> <p>Any examples?</p>
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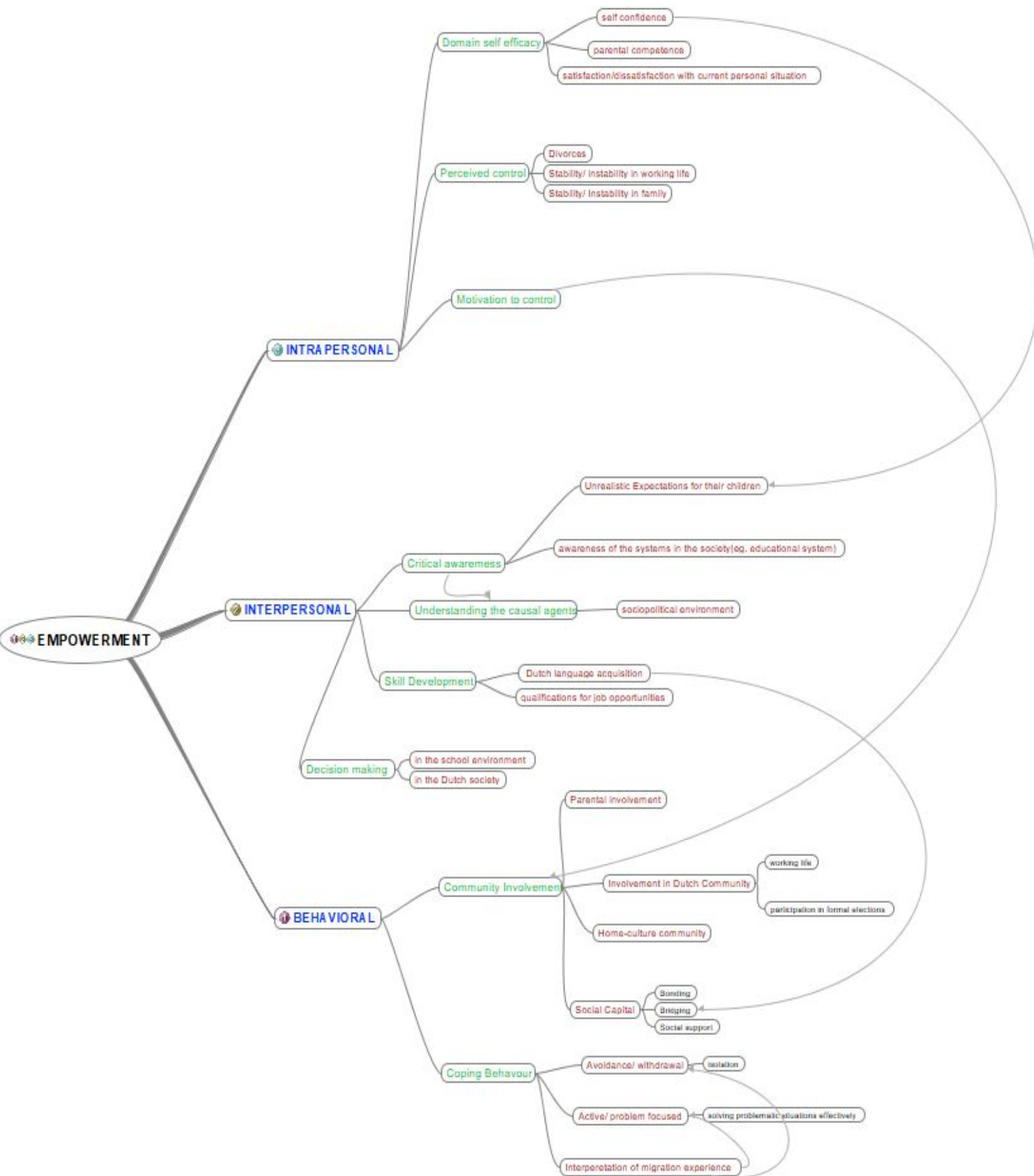
<b>All topics</b>	<b>Example of questions toward teachers</b>
<b>Socio- Cultural Integration</b>	<p>Why, do you think, there is this concentration of students in this school?</p> <p>What are the relationships that immigrant and Dutch parents form- or immigrants from different cultures with each other?</p> <p><i>Do you think that they have understood the Dutch values-habits-way of thinking? (What makes you believe that)</i></p>
<b>Social Capital- Social Support</b>	<p>How about their social network?</p> <p>Do you think they are active in the community</p> <p>Do you think that they have social support or not?/ Do they have people on which they can rely on? For example somebody that can take care of their kids when they are away?</p>
<b>Discrimination</b>	<p>Do you think, that the parents have experienced discrimination? Do you think they are treated the same with the Dutch people? (Maybe at the school environment? Working environment?)</p>

<p><b><i>Parental Involvement</i></b></p>	<p>What makes you believe that? How do you think they dealt with it?</p> <p>What's your opinion about the school- parent relationship? Do they get involved at school? How?</p>
<p><b>Familial relationship state</b></p>	<p>Do you think they understand the behavior of their kids? How is the communication going between them? Do the parents think that they are influential to their kids-that their voice r opinion matter to them?</p>
<p><b>Role of SES- Similarities and differences with Dutch low SES parents</b></p>	<p>Do you think that the ses has an influence on them? Do you think that there are similarities with the Dutch low socio economic status parents?</p>
<p><b>Empowerment</b></p>	<p>Do they think that they have the potentials to reach their goals? What makes your believe that? Do you think that they have given enough opportunities to achieve their goals? Or that they are aware of the opportunities around them?</p> <p>Do you think they can solve their problems effectively/ take the right decisions for their life?</p> <p>Do you think that they are satisfied with their situation in general?</p> <p>Do they have stability with their work?</p>

	<p>Do they vote?</p> <p>Do they participate in different communities?</p> <p>How do you see them as parents? In a general picture (active or not, protective, satisfied with their strategies- having control over their families)</p> <p>Do you think that they have the skills and knowledge to influence positively the development of their children? (How did you come up to that conclusion- What makes you believe that?)</p> <p>Do you think that they have enough information/understand well the Dutch system/ Dutch school, so that they can do things independently or to promote the potentials of their kids?</p> <p>In a general picture, do most of the parents think that their voice matter in the school community?</p> <p>Do parents engage with other parents?</p> <p>The fact that they come from a different country, gave them different experiences or skills? How do you think, it influences them as individuals and as parents?</p>
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Appendix C: Visual Demonstration of Empowerment



## Appendix D- Informed Consent

**Interview Informed Consent**

Research Project: Master's Thesis

Researcher: Stavroula Manolaki

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed as part of the above research project. Ethical procedures for academic research require that interviewees explicitly agree to being interviewed and how the information contained in their interview will be used. This consent form is necessary to ensure that you understand the purpose of your involvement and that you agree to the conditions of your participation. Would you therefore sign this form to certify that you approve the following:

- I..... voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.
- The transcript of the interview will be analyzed by Stavroula Manolaki as research investigator. Access to the interview transcript will be limited to the UU Supervisor and academic colleagues with whom she might collaborate as part of the research process.



- I understand that I can withdraw permission to use data from my interview within one week after the interview, in which case the material will be deleted.
- I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.
- I agree to my interview being audio-recorded and transcribed.
- I understand that in any report on the results of this research my identity will remain anonymous. This will be done by changing my name and disguising any details of my interview which may reveal my identity or the identity of people I speak about.
- I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in the Master's thesis.
- I understand that under freedom of information legalization, I am entitled to access the information I have provided at any time while it is in storage.

Signature of research participant

Date:

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I believe the participant is giving informed consent to participate in this study.

Signature of researcher:

Date:

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