Empowering newcomer parents: A qualitative study on children's perspective regarding their parent's participation to It's My Child

MSc Thesis Youth, Education and Society

Student:	Marlien Burgers
Student number:	5637066
Institution:	Utrecht University
UU-supervisor:	A. van der Baan – Ünlüsoy
2nd UU assessor:	A. Sarti
Organization:	It's My Child
Supervisor:	S. Shat
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EMPOWERING NEWCOMER PARENTS

Abstract

Newcomer status for a family who just migrated to or seeks refuge in a new country comes with many challenges. One of these challenges is the shift in parent-child dynamics with parents often lacking the knowledge of the systems in the new context. A relatively recent organization, It's My Child (IMC), aims to empower newcomer parents who experience this shift. Current study intended to find out whether children of newcomer families noticed any (positive) developments when their parents joined IMC. This study addresses the following question: How do children experience their parent's participation to IMC? A qualitative research was conducted with eight participants with different national backgrounds. They all participated in an individual online semi-structured interview. Results indicated participants have a positive opinion about IMC. They mention several positive experiences, these differ per participant, and mostly concerned improvements in the life of their parents, for example building a social network and become more independent. Strengths of the study include the difficult target group that was reached, as it is scientifically and practically relevant. Limitations were the age group, language barrier and social desirably responding.

Samenvatting

Nieuwkomer status voor een familie die recent gemigreerd is naar of toevlucht zoekt in een nieuw land brengt vele uitdagingen met zich mee. Een van deze uitdagingen is de verschuiving in ouder-kind dynamieken waar ouders vaak kennis te kort komen over het systeem in de nieuwe context. Een relatief nieuwe organisatie, It's My Child (IMC), heeft als doel nieuwkomer ouders die deze verschuiving hebben ervaren te empoweren. De huidige studie had als doel om uit te zoeken of nieuwkomer kinderen (positieve) ervaringen hadden nadat hun ouder deelnam aan IMC. De studie zocht een antwoord op de volgende vraag: Hoe ervaren kinderen de deelname van hun ouders in IMC? Een kwalitatief onderzoek is uitgevoerd met acht participanten met verschillende nationale achtergronden. Ze namen allemaal deel aan een individueel online semi gestructureerd interview. De resultaten indiceerden dat participanten een positieve mening hebben over IMC. Ze benoemden meerdere positieve ervaringen, verschillend per participant, meestal wat betreft verbeteringen in het leven van hun ouders, zoals het opbouwen van een sociaal netwerk en onafhankelijk zijn. Sterke punten van de huidige studie bevatten de moeilijke doelgroep die is bereikt, wat zowel wetenschappelijk als praktisch relevant is. Beperkingen zijn de leeftijdsgroep, de taalbarrière en sociaal wenselijke antwoorden.

Keywords: empowerment, newcomers, parental support program, It's My Child, child perspective evaluation, migration

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Due to numerous reasons, people move from the country in which they were born and have grown up, to another country. Reasons to move and leave everything behind differ, as these reasons might be voluntary as well as forced because of dangerous circumstances (King, 2012). Nevertheless, all people who migrate or seek refuge face challenges in losing their trusted situation and coming to a new environment (Eldering, 2014; Schulpen, 1996; De Haan, 2011; Sochos & Diniz, 2011). These newcomers, regardless of their status as immigrants or refugees, often lose their basic support networks and lose ties with places and people when transferring their life into a new country. They experience being distant from friends, family, a familiar environment and missing out important events (Eldering, 2014). At the same time, newcomers are usually faced with adjustment challenges, such as a new language, a new physical environment and new ways of conducting many aspects of daily activities (Schulpen, 1996; Sochos & Diniz, 2011). Besides, they have to understand a new culture's perspective of the world, including main values, beliefs and practices. So, all newcomers face challenges, regardless of their age and history. Moreover, newcomer parents have to deal with the challenges not only for themselves, they have to take care of and for their children as well. Therefore, it is important to learn more about families and child raising dynamics in the context of migration.

One social domain that is highly impacted by migration is child rearing (De Haan, 2011; Eldering, 2014). According to De Haan (2011) most studies on this topic have shown negative consequences of contrasting parenting traditions (e.g., Suàrez-Orozco & Suàrez-Orozco, 2001; Roer-Strier, Strier, Este, Shimoni, & Clark, 2005; Perreira, Chapman, & Stein, 2006). Where the cultural distances described in these studies are often seen as the reason for stagnation in parenting practices. For example, the loss of power positions in the family or the inability to find appropriate solutions in the new setting (De Haan, 2011). Parents are likely to experience stress, a loss of status and they are unable to develop effective parenting strategies in the new setting.

Above all, De Haan (2011) emphasizes that parenting after migration changes form. This has to do with different conceptions of parenting and childhood in different places of the world. In most literature this is explained as a change from "traditional" or "pre-modern" model of parenting to a "modern" model of childhood. The modern model of childhood sets childhood apart from adulthood, shifts the care from parents to professional caregivers and provides children with life trajectories outside of the parents' scope (De Haan, 2011). However, these confrontations with modernized forms of parenting does not always result in smooth process of adaptation (De Haan, 2011). Additionally, since parents are in a new environment, they may not feel connected to the community around them (Eldering, 2014).

While parents are struggling to find their way in their new environment, their children often adapt faster to the new situation (Scheffer, 2013). The children acquire the new language more easily than their parents and have a greater capacity to adjust to the new culture (Gordon, 1996). As a

consequence, sometimes a dependency reversal takes place, which means that parents depend on their children to arrange things, such as contact with the school, even though children should expect support from their parents in the childrearing situation (Lusse, 2013; Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003). Role reversal may lead parents to feel a loss of their status or authority over their children, which may in turn lead to feelings of frustration or hopelessness (Zimmerman, 1990; De Haan, 2011). For children this reversal may mean little or no parental support.

For the well-being of the parents themselves and their children, it is important that parents retain their parental role (Kaplan, Liu, & Kaplan, 2001). So, even in the environment of the new country they function as the primary caregiver of their children. In order to let them retain their role as a parent, they have to feel confident (Zimmerman, 1990). Parents fulfill different roles, such as giving support and have a warm relationship with their children (Kaplan et al., 2001), providing a secure and stable environment, intellectual stimulation, good models of values (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003) and parental supervision (Driscoll, Russell & Crockett, 2008). In the current study, the meaning of the parental role is focused on taking care of practical matters, being available for the child to answer practical questions and come up with solutions for challenging situations, as this is mostly changed due to migration. The loving relationship is out of scope of this study.

Research on the significance of parents' role in adolescent development has emphasized the importance of parental support and control for a wide range of socialization outcomes of their children (Gecas & Seff, 1990; Kaplan et al., 2001). This includes global self-esteem and adolescents' psychological well-being (Harter, 1990) and adolescents' educational goals and future plans (Davies & Kandel, 1981). The importance of parental support for their children is also seen in how children feel more appreciated, and hence exhibited greater self-confidence and happiness after increased support by their parents (Driscoll et al., 2008). Newcomer parents feel undermined in confidence, but also in the parenting domain and competencies, especially the control of children's behaviors and power (Renzaho, McCabe & Sainsbury, 2011). Besides, this has far reaching effects on the family and the parent's belief in their ability to influence other life-related decisions among children, such as health or nutrition, and the family dynamic.

There are several factors that have impact on parents feeling more in control of and involved in their own life. Participating in the environment and building a social support network is such a factor (Elderling, 2014; Zimmerman, 1990). Previous studies have found evidence that links social support directly to positive parenting (Crnic & Greenberg, 1990; Hashima & Amato, 1994; Lee, Anderson, Horowitz, & August, 2009). Parental support programs aim at giving parents the feeling that they have the skills, knowledge and control to support their children and improve the bond between parents and their children (Thorslund, Alfredsson & Axberg, 2019). One such parental support program in the Netherlands specifically aimed for newcomer parents is It's My Child.

It's My Child (IMC) is a foundation that focuses on empowering parents and aims to ensure better wellbeing for their children (It's My Child, 2019). Empowerment is the state in which people

feel like they gain mastery over issues important and relevant to them (Zimmerman, 1995). An empowered person has a sense of trust in self and others, an enhanced awareness of viable resources, and an evolving sense of purpose and responsibility to the environment and one's own family (Shepard & Rose, 1995). At the individual level of analysis, it is referred to as Psychological Empowerment (PE) (Zimmerman, 1995). IMC aims at giving participants back their mastery and control over their own life and democratic participation in the life of their community using the three components of PE (It's My Child, 2019; Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988; Zimmerman 1995). First, the intrapersonal component, referring to how people think about themselves, includes perceived control, self-efficacy, motivation to control and perceived competence. To support parents in reaching this level, IMC has the intention to make parents aware of the influence they have on their environment. Second is the interactional component where people gain an understanding of their community. Important characteristics are critical awareness, understanding causal agents, skill development and transfer across life domains and the resource mobilization. Through activities parents can organize on their own, IMC supports parents to gain awareness about the choices they can make regarding achieving goals they set, including the values, culture and resources around them. The third and last is the behavioural component, which refers to the actions taken to directly influence outcomes. Included are community involvement, organizational participation and coping behaviours. Participation in IMC and community activities, or organizations, are directed in achieving this. According to the theoretical basic of PE in IMC, parents have the opportunity to develop themselves, become confident and improve their knowledge and skills in order to take care of their children in the new environment.

Initially, IMC is connected to Ithaka (internationale schakelklassen - ISK), where children in secondary education (twelve to eighteen years) who just arrived in the Netherlands go to school. Because their parents usually have a newcomer background, it is challenging for them to support their children in the new environment (Eldering, 2014; It's My Child, 2019). Using the empowerment method, the ambassadors (trained volunteers) encourage parents to come up with solutions in their own manner and to take steps of planning and implementing activities accordingly (It's My Child, 2019). Through its connection to a school, IMC can come in contact with parents. The parents join the children for their first intake at Ithaka, and at this moment the ambassadors of IMC can contact the parents. Furthermore, parents are informed by the school about IMC, or are aware of the existence because of their contacts, and they reach out to the foundation to participate if they feel the need.

A need assessment research among newcomer parents and participants to IMC revealed that parents wanted more involvement in their children's development (It's My Child, 2018). A second study on the needs of empowerment of ethnic minority parents conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews with six team-leaders of schools and educators, and four parents (Manolaki, 2019). This evaluation of the method of IMC revealed positive outcomes such as more self-confidence, language improvement and awareness of the systems in society from the perspective of parents. Finally, a third

study by Ghasani Averus (2019) has systematically explored the parental views regarding their participation to IMC using a process evaluation approach and conducting semi-structured interviews with eleven respondents. The last study revealed that parents experienced positive developments in multiple domains such as the education and social sector (Ghassani Averus, 2019). For example, parents learned more about the educational system and throughout psychological sessions a parent learned more about children and how to communicate to them. So far, only the experiences and opinions of the parents were investigated. To investigate whether children have noticed an influence of IMC as well, further research is needed.

The experience of newcomer children is important to study in order to understand integration patterns of this group (Suárez-Orozco, 2001). Studies have investigated the academic development of these newcomer youth (e.g., Morse, 2005; Porche, Fortuna, & Rosenberg, 2009; Rotich, 2011). However, when it comes to the perspective of newcomers on migration of the family in a broader sense, studies generally address parents or adults. In order to learn more about the process of migration and starting a life in a new environment, it is important to take into account the opinions and experiences of youth as well, as their story is deeply intertwined with the future (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2015). So, we could learn from the experiences and opinions of newcomer children to create a fruitful environment for integration. Because early experiences in new contexts are really important and defining for the future of these newcomers. This research population of newcomer children is hardly ever studied, which might be a result of the language barrier, a lack of parental networks or lack of parental insights.

Current research aims to study the experiences and opinions of the children when a parent participates in IMC. The perspective of children is central, in the sense that their opinions and experiences are a starting point in finding out if the participation in IMC of parents has an influence on the children. This study addresses the following question:

How do children experience their parent's participation to IMC?

The following sub questions are included:

- *What do the participants know about and think about IMC?*
- *How do they experience interaction with the parent after joining IMC, in terms of parental involvement and empowerment?*

It is expected that children would notice a difference in the aid they provide for their parents, especially for issues that typically require their involvement in newcomer families (e.g., translating official documents, accompanying parents for various tasks, etc.).

Theoretical framework

Parental involvement

One of the most important aspects of parental involvement is the loving relationship between parent and child which contributes to creating a positive self-image of the children (Lusse, 2013,

Jeynes, 2012). Parental involvement contributes to the school achievements of children (Bakker et al., 2013; Lusse 2013). Furthermore, this effect applies regardless of the socioeconomic status of the parents and remains important during secondary education as it significantly contribute to success at school (Lusse, 2013). Not only the children gain from parental involvement in multiple ways, also parents experience benefits. Among other things, parents experience increased parental confidence, satisfaction and interest in their own education (Hornbey & Lafaele, 2011).

The involvement of parents can take different forms and it concerns active involvement in activities in school as well as support at home with homework and other learning processes of the children (Lusse, 2013; Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003). Epstein (1995; 2009) developed a typology in which the collaboration between parents and school can be divided in six different types of activities. The first type, parenting, suggests parents should take care of their children, support them and create positive conditions at home to stimulate the child's development. Communicating is the second type and addresses communication between parents and schools, in giving and receiving information. Third is volunteering of the parents at school activities. The fourth type refers to learning at home, as well as giving support as monitoring the homework. The fifth, decision-making, is about the formal parent participation in school decisions and form parent councils. Lastly, collaborating with the community is important in how parents interact with other parents.

The contact between parents and school also has a significant positive relation to school success in secondary education (Lusse 2013; Jeynes, 2012). However, to reach this point of good contact between parents and schools, there needs to be conformity (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003). It is important to connect to the capacities and wishes of parents and to make a connection to the community when forming parental involvement. This might especially be a challenge for parents new in a country (Timmerman, 2015; Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003). Challenges could be caused by the low level of speaking the language and a lack of knowledge of the (Dutch) educational system. For example, Bendixsen and Danielsen (2020, p. 361) found that "*migrant children's educational opportunities can be limited by their parents' unfamiliarity with the school's way of operationalizing linguistic structures, systems of organization, and models of learning, particularly if the school is not consciously working to counter such issues*". Moreover, parent's beliefs about their role in their children's education may vary (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). When working with culturally diverse families, it is relevant to examine those beliefs. Hornby & Lafeale (2011) pointed out important barriers concerning parental involvement related to ethnicity and culture.

Furthermore, in order to reach parental involvement, it is important that school and parents communicate in combination with empowerment (Shepard & Rose, 1995). Empowered in the sense that parents are developing their sense of trust in self and others, an enhanced awareness of viable resources, and an evolving sense of purpose and responsibility to the environment and one's own family (Shepard & Rose, 1995). Involvement programs may be created including these basics. As

Shepard and Rose (1995) emphasize, this might be especially supportive when dealing with isolated, at-risk families.

Empowerment

To reach the point of parental involvement, a parent must have the confidence that they improve their child's development (Zimmerman, 1990). Empowerment contributes to parents' awareness of their influence on their own and their children's lives (Shepard & Rose, 1995). The core of empowerment lies in gaining mastery over issues that are of concern to a person (Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988; Zimmerman, 1995). Zimmerman (1995) describes the individual level of empowerment as Psychological Empowerment (PE). The construct of PE contains perceptions of personal control, a proactive approach to life and a critical understanding of the socio-political environment. Both the mind and behaviour are influenced through PE (Zimmerman, 1995).

Empowerment links individual strengths and competencies to natural helping systems and proactive behaviours to matter of social change (Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988). According to Zimmerman (1995) PE takes different forms for different people, different forms in different contexts and it is a dynamic variable that may fluctuate over time. This makes it hard to measure empowered outcomes. Nevertheless, one important empowered outcome is that parents have a sense of competence (Gibson, 1995). In other words, they feel as having enough knowledge and skills to do things in their lives.

Parents participating in empowerment programs feel a greater degree of empowerment in considering themselves in relation to their family at the conclusion of the support groups (Banach, Iudice, Conway, & Couse, 2010). Furthermore, in the same study, it was found that at the end of the support group parents left the group with a greater understanding of their child's needs. Another important component of empowerment in family support programs is the knowledge of available resources and according to several studies this knowledge improves as well (Banach et al., 2010; Jurkowski, Lawson, Mills, Wilner & Davison, 2014). Outcomes of empowerment in family supporting programs suggests improvements in parenting (Jurkowski et al., 2014).

Although the overall effect of empowerment in families seems positive, little research has been done on the influence of empowered parents on their children's outcomes. One study by Taub, Tighe, and Burchard (2001) found that family empowerment was a significant predictor of change in children's externalizing problems while in services. Nevertheless, they emphasized there are no clear norms on the measurement of empowerment and the outcomes which makes it hard to reflect on findings. Another study suggested that by empowering families to develop possible solutions to problems or needs, the professional is not only helping with the current situation, but also helping the family develop skills to solve future problems independently (Graves & Shelton, 2007). The findings indicate that family empowerment is an important factor in children's outcomes, suggesting that additional resources and services should be directed toward enhancing the empowerment of parents (Graves & Shelton, 2007).

Method

Research design

This qualitative research was intended to explore the perspective of children whose parents participated in IMC regarding the influence of IMC on the parent-child relationship. The aim is to understand the meaning and experiences of the participants regarding parental empowerment (Fossey, Harvey, McDermott & Davidson, 2002). Furthermore, this type of research design illuminates the subjective meanings and social contexts as understood by a group of children whose voices are hardly ever heard in scientific research.

Participants and procedure

Participants in this study included children of parents and parent-ambassadors active in IMC. All of the parents have been participating in IMC for a minimum of 20 weeks. However, an important difference could be drawn between parents and parent-ambassadors in which the latter group already finalized their participation and are now working on empowering other parents. This distinction was important to provide different perspectives according to how long a parent was participating.

In total, eight youngsters, two boys and six girls, participated (12 to 18 years-old, the average is 15 years and 6 months). National and cultural backgrounds differed, as well as personal circumstances, for example reasons for moving to the Netherlands, as outlined anonymously in Table 1.

Table 1.

Participant information

Participant / gender	Age	Parental status in IMC	Where from	How long in NL	Language used in interview
1. N / female	14 years and 1 month	Ambassador	Middle East	3 years	Dutch & English
2. L / female	18 years and 0 months	Ambassador	Middle East	Almost 3 years	Dutch & English
3. Z / female	12 years and 11 months	Ambassador	North Africa	Almost 1 year	Dutch
4. M / male	16 years and 5 months	Participant	Central America	8 months	Dutch & English
5. F / female	15 years and 0 months	Participant	Europe	Almost 1 year	Dutch & English
6. M / female	15 years and 11 months	Participant	Asia	8 months	Interpreter & English
7. Mm / male	15 years and 2 months	Ambassador	East Europe	1 year and 6 months	Interpreter & Dutch
8. S / female	16 years and 9 months	Participant	North Africa	9 months	Interpreter & Dutch

The recruitment of participants was done through contacting parents directly and personally by the ambassadors of IMC and the researcher. All parents and parent-ambassadors were actively participating in IMC, which meant they were at least once a week in contact with IMC. Parents were expected to ask the children if they wanted to participate, and, if both parents and child agreed, they received an information letter, signed the informed consent and took part in the study. The youngsters were informed during the online interview to check whether they understood what their participation meant. They were also asked for their agreement to participate, and to be recorded, again to fulfill ethical responsibility. Some of the participants did not speak English or Dutch sufficiently. In those cases, an interpreter was present. All youngsters participated in an individual, online, semi-structured interview. All data was conducted during the months April and May in the year 2020. The semi-structured interviews were transcribed and analyzed.

Data collection technique

Using the online technological possibilities, the researcher was able to collect data during circumstances where face-to-face interviews were not. The interviews were conducted using a videocall, which allowed the researcher to interact with verbal and non-verbal cues, this provides an equal authenticity level with face-to-face interviews, since the visible part of the impression management process can be evaluated (Sullivan, 2012). Since the interview was semi-structured, some guiding questions were drawn up (see Appendix A). The content of the questions was selected upon a topic list based upon defining what the participants knew about, thought about and how they felt about IMC. These questions served as a guideline, which makes the qualitative data comparable (Cohen & Crabtee, 2006). Furthermore, semi-structured interviews enabled elaboration on certain topics, so that participants had the freedom to express their views in their own terms and allowing the participants to bring forth relevant topics connected to the interview objectives (Cohen & Crabtee, 2006; Shapka, Domene, Khan & Mijin Yang, 2016). The goal was to let the children openly discuss their perspective and experiences. All interviews were conducted by only one and the same interviewer which has a positive impact on the reliability.

Data analysis

The objective of current study was to explore the perspective of children on their parents' participation in IMC, to identify whether the participation has an effect on the children's life. The first step in the analyzing process was to transcribe all eight interviews and start labeling. All the experiences and opinions concerning IMC were highlighted. Afterwards, those experiences and opinions were coded in line with the two sub questions. The first sub question included all knowledge and reactions about IMC of the participants. For example, what they thought the foundation does and if they think it is a good organization. For the second sub question it was important to take into account all observed changes by the participants. To illustrate, participants mentioned they observed their parents having more social contacts and knew more about the new educational system, which

were respectively considered as empowerment and parental involvement. After coding the single concepts, the codes were compared for all interviews to draw up certain labels. For example all expressions of participants suggesting their parents made contacts with others or were making new friends, such as "she went there [IMC] and started to make friends" and "she gets more relations with other people who talk Dutch and who can help her", were labeled as '(parental) social network'.

Findings

In this section, the description of the most important findings from the interviews will be provided. Three different themes emerged from the analysis, all with their own subtopics. The first theme is the opinion of the participants about IMC, the second theme concerns their positive experiences which is divided in multiple topics and last are the points of improvement.

Opinion about IMC

Most participants had ever heard about the name "It's My Child". However, some were not familiar with the name. After explaining what organization was meant, the participants all understood it was the organization in which their parent participated, and they were all familiar with IMC. All participants expressed their satisfaction concerning the organization. Most of the participants referred to IMC as a good organization. Important aspects were that parents could go there for help and guidance. All of the participants knew it was for parents, and some added it was a nice help for especially newcomer parents. The helping aspect was another important subject as half of the participants mentioned that IMC helps parents. The fact that multiple parents interact is also recognized by participants as they feel that parents can learn from each other and can come up with solutions based upon joint ideas.

2. L. "I know they help parents to learn more about the Dutch system and how to interact with their children, I think. They share their experiences and try to help each other, get what they want and I think, I have never been there but as far as I know, is that they just have a bunch of parents from students and they all share what their problems are and they try to solve it together."

Furthermore, a lot of the participants think they would join IMC if they become a parent themselves. Main reasons are to meet other people and to learn more. The suggestion was made few times that they would join IMC as ambassador, since they see the value of IMC for their parents. Other participants do not think it matters whether you are a newcomer or not, it is in general a nice way to join a community and talk about parenting. In the end, almost all participants would recommend joining IMC for other newcomer parents. This is based upon how satisfied they see their own parent with the participation in IMC.

6. M. "She talks during dinner that she had fun that day and made friends as well, and it makes the family bright and it is fun to talk about. I am happy that my mom is happy joining IMC."

To sum up, the participants have a positive opinion of IMC. Their statements reflect that the perceived function of the foundation is to support parents and build a community.

Positive experiences

All participants shared multiple positive observations after their parent(s) joined IMC. These different topics are; *social network, school support, independence, time allocation, self-development, parent-child relation, language and the Netherlands.*

Social network. Half of the participants expressed the importance of making new contacts when living a new country. Besides the fact that parents get the chance to meet new people at IMC, one participant highlighted the detail that parents get in contact with parents who are in a similar situation. It is explained how important it is to have a social network, to talk to people whenever a person needs something. Furthermore, most of the participants mention how their parents made new friends, in addition some emphasized the detail that those friends are from different countries, which according to few participants also contributes to hearing different perspectives.

Some participants explain IMC as a community. One participant, who had moved to multiple countries during her life, felt that IMC made it easier for her mom to connect to other people and make friends, whereas in other countries this was not provided. All participants expressed their happiness with the fact that their parents are building a social network in the new environment. Reasons for this differ, as some see it as a learning opportunity and others refer to it as building a new life and making new friends to go out with.

School support. Since IMC is connected to Ithaka, the (old) school of all participants, most of the participants see a positive change in the school involvement of their parent(s). The fact that the office of IMC is located inside the school makes that the parents visit the school more often. Besides, they talk more to the teachers of the participants. One participant mentioned the fact that her mother visited the meeting about the reports of the students. Other participants refer to their parents better understanding of the school system, as they have more knowledge about the levels in Dutch education. Now, they can talk with their parent about the level they are in or want to go to. Also, for one participant it was clear her mother was able to reach out for extra support for one of her daughters who needed help with math. Additionally, this mother was inspired to share her positive experience and she helped another mother get help for her daughter when struggling with math.

5.F. Part 1. "And yes, my sister wanted help with math and so she [my mother] started asking people there and a teacher to help her [my sister], and yes, they help us a lot."

Part 2. "Yes, my mother also helped another mother with her daughter who wasn't really good in math. And she helped her, as she has never gone to school in her old land. And they also became friends."

Independence. Some participants expressed how important IMC was for their parents' independence. For example, to get to know the new environment and learn how to arrange all kind of practical things because they were supported by ambassadors from IMC. They see how their parents are supported and motivated to take action and achieving new goals. One participant mentioned how she felt relieved now her mom had someone else to turn to, since the participant had to go to school

and couldn't support her mother herself all the time. Participants explain that their parents are more independent since they have more knowledge of practical issues and more confidence to do things on their own.

   8. S. "Before my mom joined IMC she was really dependent. And she was really held back. Since my mom joined IMC she knows a lot more, and she is supported and helped. She is independent and she has more courage to do things, she knows more about her situation and understands very good that she has to arrange things on her own as well."

   Time allocation. Furthermore, for almost all participants it was obvious that their parents had a lot more things going on in their life. Especially the children of parent-ambassadors talked about the time their parents spent at IMC and how their parents are happy to do something. Some participants tell how busy their parents are with their function of ambassador, and that they share with their family they love to do it. Nevertheless, also the participants of the parents mention how they are glad that their parents have a place to go to, instead of sitting alone at home all day. Parents talk at home about their experiences and share their happy thoughts as consequence of going to IMC. It is mentioned that parents seem happier since joining IMC, as they are brighter in the interaction with the family.

   Self-development. Few participants notice a development in their parents' behavior. This is mentioned by participants above 15 only. It is described as being nicer to the rest of the family, talk more about what they did during the day and it has a good influence. Some participants mention how IMC allows parents to learn new things to eventually grow. One specific example is the improved communication style at home.

   6. M. "When she [my mother] wasn't really talkative before, she says like "do your homework", "do some cleaning up in the house". But that doesn't happen right now, it is like "can you help me with the groceries?", "can you help me with this?", like she is happy, she is bright."

   8. S. "I see my mother develop herself in a positive way, and this really gives me courage to finish school and it makes me think positive about building a life."

   Parent-child relation. All participants express that the happiness of their parents also has an influence on them. As almost all participants literally say; if my parent is happy, I am happy. This might contribute to the relationship between a parent and a child, as some participants feel there is a better ambiance at home. Few participants are also aware that their parents talk about parenting at IMC, and they feel that this might contribute to the interaction between parent and child.

   2. L. "Yes, I had a problem and my parents found out about it later. They also didn't know what to do about it. They asked me what I wanted. And then they went to there [IMC], and they had more possibilities. They are amazing parents themselves, but they just needed a little help."

   4. M. "She tells us about how IMC contributes to the process of the children, and the parents and children."

   Language and the Netherlands. Another mentioned positive experience of a parent joining IMC is the language development of the parents. A lot of participants know their parents got into

Dutch class because of IMC, and most parents are even following these lessons at the location of IMC. The Dutch level may also increase because they have the opportunity to interact with people who speak Dutch and can practice. One participant whose parent is ambassador at IMC feels the level of his mothers' English is also increasing as she practices it more. According to some participants IMC also offers the opportunity to learn more about the Netherlands, for example about housing, neighbours and the system. Some participants describe how they feel their parents can help them better, since their parents speak better Dutch and know more about the Netherlands.

5. F. "She [my mother] has Dutch lessons and she has more relations with other people who speak Dutch."

1. N. "If a mother knows more, she can tell her children more and help them better."

The labels can be further thematized in terms of empowerment and parental involvement. In general, the labels *independence, time allocation, self-development* and *language and the Netherlands* are considered as empowerment, as it allows parents to function more independent. The labels *social network, school support* and *parent-child relation* are more directly related to parental involvement, since it has an influence on the academic functioning of the children. Nevertheless, the two terms are highly integrated, and this makes the categorization superficial.

Points of improvement

To the question if there is anything they want to change about IMC, almost all participants replied with "nothing". Nevertheless, two points were made during all interviews which could refer to possible points of improvement. The first point was concerning the way there is communicated about sensitive topics at IMC and the second point is how it might also be challenging if a parent is often in the same building.

Way of communicating. One participant shared an experience of one of her friends whose parent also joined IMC. This experience involved an exchange of information and experiences about a sensitive topic, which created the parent to be overprotective. The participant emphasizes that some parents interpret things different because of their background. She felt that it is impossible to communicate in the same way with all parents at IMC, and cultural differences need to be taken into account when talking about such topics.

Challenges of being in the same building. Another point was made that one participant didn't only see positive things as a result of his parent being more present at his school. He felt that it depends on the reason why she would involve with his life. When she is concerned about his school achievements, or difficulties he experiences with schoolwork, it was fine she interfered or contacted teachers. However, he does not want her to bother him in his personal life. When he is with friends, he does not want his mother to keep interacting with him at school.

Discussion

This research intended to study the opinions and experiences of children of parents that participate in the foundation It's My Child (IMC). Based upon the findings it was clear that all participants had a positive attitude towards IMC. They know IMC supports their parents in different domains and think positive about the work of the foundation. All participants had one or more positive experience(s) because of their parents' involvement in IMC and saw positive developments. Those experiences differed per participant, and mostly concerned improvements in the life of their parents, for example building a social network, become more independent and adapt easier to the new (Dutch) environment. Personal needs were the key component in these positive experiences of IMC for the participants. Overall, children are satisfied with their parents' participation in IMC. However, little is mentioned about if the parents are gaining (back) control over their own life and the life of their children.

These results indicate that children have a positive experience as a result of their parent joining IMC, a parental support program based upon the principles of empowerment. This is in accordance with the findings of earlier research on the impact of empowered families on children (Taub et al., 2001; Graves & Shelton, 2007). Most participants mention more involvement of their parents in their schoolwork, and they experience this as something contributing. This is an important positive outcome as challenges for newcomer parents in education, such as a lack of knowledge of the new educational system, are met (Timmerman, 2015; Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Bendixsen and Danielsen, 2020). This might contribute to the school development of the children of newcomer parents.

Nevertheless, little is mentioned about the influence of the parents on their children in the sense of a better understanding, as well as only one participant explained how she didn't have to take care of her mother anymore. This might be explained by the fact that the children are not aware of the internal process their parents are going through. It is possible that the parents do not show or tell everything they have learned at IMC. Additionally, children tend to be very positive about their parents and don't want to speak about their flaws. So, they tend to tell their relationship has always been good and do not reflect on it or reflect on it in a positive way.

Participants mentioned the happiness of their parents had a positive influence on their own life. This can be explained by the assumption that parents' feelings of well-being will enable them to be more emotionally accessible to and supportive of their children (Kaplan et al., 2001). It is found that the self-esteem of parents and supportive parents have an influence on the self-esteem of an adolescent (Mayhew & Lempers, 1998). This might clarify why participants are so enthusiastic about IMC, as their parents are in a better mood around them since joining IMC.

Furthermore, based upon the findings it can be seen how parents are more involved. Parents have the opportunity to learn more about the system and get familiar with it, which contributes to the opportunities of newcomer children in a new environment (Bendixsen & Danielsen, 2020). Another finding showed how parents are in a better mood and create brighter conditions at home. This

stimulates a child's development (Epstein 1995; 2009). The foundation of IMC works together with the school of the children and an increased level of contact between parents and teachers and more visits of parents to the school are mentioned by the participants. The improvement in contact between parents and school has a positive impact on the school success of the children (Lusse 2013; Epstein 2009). Due to the interaction at IMC, parents expanded their social networks and got in contact with other parents. Because of this, there is a greater collaboration of parents in the community (Epstein 1995; 2009). Overall, the parental involvement has increased after joining IMC, which has a positive influence on the personal and academic life of children (Jeynes, 2012; Bakker et al., 2013; Lusse 2013).

An important strength of this study was that it involved a very specific and underexposed target group, namely newcomer children. Adolescents are rarely asked about their opinion and feelings they experience (Endicott & Liossis, 2005). Furthermore, little is known about the perspective of newcomer children regarding their family interactions and support they receive after migration. Therefore, the results of this study contribute to what newcomer children indicate as important for their parents' adjustment to a new environment. As well as it shows how children are aware of a lot of things going on and how their parents influence them.

Research with this target population was also challenging. During the data collection, it needed to be taken into account that the participants were (young) adolescents, as it differs from interviewing adults (McConaughy, 2013). The challenges for interviewing adolescents include building a trusting relationship early in the interview. Respect and openness are very important. Therefore, in the beginning there was room for some small talk. Furthermore, adolescents may be unwilling to disclose certain types of information if they hear the information may be shared. In order to counter this, it was made clear all answers were treated confidentially.

In addition to the age challenge, some difficulties were also experienced due to their background as newcomer. Some participants didn't speak Dutch or English at a sufficient level, and it was tried to find interpreters. Those interpreters were no professional researchers and important data might have gone lost in the interpretation from the mother language to Dutch or English. Besides, some participants turned out to speak Dutch on a lower level than previously anticipated. Because of these language barriers the interviews were not as expanded as intended.

During the interview, all children were positive and spoke in high regard of their parents. This is a normal tendency of children, as they would rather not share sensitive information about their parents with others (Barnard & Barlow, 2003). So, not sharing of negative experiences with their parents could partly be explained as a result of the interviews being done by a stranger. Another, partly, explanation could be socially desired responding (SDR). SDR can be defined as the tendency of a person to respond in a socially desirable manner, and to give answers that make the respondent look good (DeMaio, 1984; Paulhus, 1991). The major behavioural motive underlying SDR is a general need for social approval by the respondent. In the case of these newcomer youth it mostly concerns an

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approval of their parents' behaviour and mutual relationship. SDR might have a partial influence on the results as it could show a more positive picture than the real-life situation is. Children always try to talk in a good way about their parents. Nevertheless, this was taken into account when preparing for the interviews. The interviews started with an explanation of the confidentially, that it was anonymous and there were no right or wrong answers, just express their experiences. Furthermore, a safe environment was tried to create by explaining participants had the right to not answer or withdraw at any time without consequences. Additionally, the interview started with some small talk regarding a societal situation and non-sensitive questions regarding the background of the participant.

Another limitation is the lack of clear norms for empowerment. Empowerment in parents couldn't be measured. So, the influence of empowerment on children cannot be measured either. That is why this research only intended to set out the opinions and experiences of the children of parents participating in IMC. Further research should focus on how the empowerment of parents has an influence on the life of their children.

As mentioned, all participants saw positive outcomes for their parents after participating in IMC. There were slightly different findings compared to the previous study on the perception of parents participating in IMC. For example, parents mentioned their understanding of their children improved, where this wasn't stated by the children. Children mentioned their parents being brighter, as parents didn't elaborate on their personal well-being. It is relevant to study if there are differences between a parents' and its child's perspective on their relation and why there are differences.

Additionally, the opinions and experiences of newcomer children on interactions in the family after migration need much more research. This could contribute to learning more about this target group and how to improve adaptations to a new environment as well as help us understand how the newcomers also transform the broader society. Research should take into account the position of the researcher, as the power dynamic influences how much a child would share. In current study, the researcher was more on equal foot, connected to the community as the parents were familiar with the researcher. This had a positive influence on the perspective of the participant regarding the interview. This is a strong recommendation for future research with newcomer children, the researcher(s) should invest in the trusting relationship. Another recommendation would be to let the participants be active and more powerful in the interview. For example, let them bring a personal item and elaborate on it, or let them draw or paint something with as purpose to get them actively involved.

The implications for professional practice can be found in the domains of what the participants mentioned as positive experiences. As the domains that were mentioned, could be important reflections in how the support of IMC influences newcomer families. It is clear that all participants mention positive outcomes for their parents. Besides, one point of improvement mentioned by a participant was to be more aware of the different cultural backgrounds of newcomer parents and how this influences the communication style. This could be taken into account during the work of IMC and other parental support programs (for newcomers).

Parenting in a new environment brings a lot of challenges. Parental support programs offer parents support in parenting practices. It is important that parents feel like they are in control and gain mastery of things that matter to them, also referred to as empowerment. At the same time, newcomer children develop themselves quickly in the new environment. Yet, they still need the support of their parents, they are still depended on their parents. According to the experiences of children when their parents participate in IMC, IMC has a great contribution to the life of the parent in multiple domains, as well as it has positive outcomes for the children themselves. Children are able to express their satisfaction and explain how the parental involvement improves. These indications are highly relevant when taking into consideration adjustment of a family to a new, foreign, living situation.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Instrument semi structured interview

Introduction

Hi! My name is Marlien, super nice to meet you this way. I am a student at Utrecht University and an intern at It's My Child.

Before we start with this interview, I want to thank you for participating and want to make some things clear. First, are you aware of what you are participating in? This is a research for my thesis, and I will study your experiences, so please share all your thoughts, there a no good or wrong answers. The information I get during this interview will be treated really careful and your answers will be processed anonymous. People who read my thesis wont lead answers back to you. The participation is voluntary, and you can stop the interview whenever you want without negative consequences. If you don't want me to use the information you shared, you can state that as well. Do you have any questions left?

This was the formal part. Let's start with the interview. If you want you can get a cup of tea or coffee.

Questions

Topic	Questions
Introduction	1. How are you? 2. What do you think of the current situation with the Corona virus? 3. What do you do during the day now you can't go to school? 4. What do your parents think about the virus? 5. How do your parents inform you? 6. How about school, do you miss it? Why (not)? 7. Do your parents miss anything during the quarantine?
Backround	8. How old are you? 9. How long have you been in the Netherlands? 10. Where were you born? Did you grow up there? 11. What was your status when you came to the Netherlands (immigrant/refugee)? 12. In what level of education are you currently? 13. Could you tell me something about the differences between your previous school and now? 14. What do you find difficult in the Netherlands? 15. What do you like about the Netherlands? 16. How does your family think about the Netherlands?

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Home situation	17. Who are the people in your family?
	18. Who lives in your home?
	19. How do you get along with the people in your family/home?
	20. Who do you get along with best?
	21. Who do you get along with least?
	22. How do your parents get along?
	23. How do you go along with your mom? And dad?
It's My Child	24. Have you ever heard about It's My Child?
	25. What can you tell me about It's My Child?
	26. Are there differences since your parents joined It's My Child? Can you give me an example?
	27. What do you think of It's My Child?
	28. What do you like most? And least?
	29. What do your parents think of It's My Child?
	30. How do you know?
	31. What would you like to change about It's My Child? Why (not)?
	32. If you were a parent, would you participate in It's My Child?
	33. How would you describe It's My Child in a few sentences?