Raising Children in Exile: Experiences of Highly Educated Eritrean Migrants in the UK

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Abstract

Child-rearing practices can be challenging for migrants who often require socio-cultural and emotional adjustments. This article discusses parenting in exile with a focus on the experiences of highly educated Eritrean migrants in the UK. Qualitative data are collected from eighteen highly educated Eritrean migrants selected through purposive and snowball sampling from the UK. The findings indicate that highly educated Eritrea migrants aspire to avoid harmful traditional ways of treating children and all the repercussions associated with them. Moreover, with the help of their educational qualifications, my participants support their children in social and academic activities and guide them to cultivate bi-cultural coping skills. However, the migrant parents face challenges related to lack of parenting experiences and familiar support systems. The article contributes to the advancement of migration knowledge by adding new perspectives to the nexus of migration and child-raising.

Keywords: Parenting, refugee, immigrant children, higher education, Eritrea

Introduction

The history of Eritrean migration is one that has lasted for many decades. The exodus of Eritreans before independence was mainly associated with the annexation of Eritrea by Ethiopia and the struggle for independence. Before the country's independence in 1991, there were thousands of Eritrean refugees scattered all over the world, about 450,000 of them living in Sudan (Farwell, 2001; Kibreab, 2002). Many of them saw Sudan as a temporary abode and sought to return when Eritrea gained its independence (Kibreab, 2000). Accordingly, about 180,000 Eritrean refugees (including 139,000 from Sudan) returned within the first seven years of independence (Bascom, 2005).

However, Eritrea is again back in the spotlight with 507,300 refugees at the end of 2018, a significant increase from late 2017 when this population stood at 486,200 (UNHCR, 2018). This number accounts for about 10 per cent of the country's five million estimated population (United Nations, 2019). Generally, Eritreans flee their country for socio-economic and political reasons (Kibreab, 2009; Tessema, 2010; Tessema & N'goma, 2009) and are likely to be granted asylum for reasons such as indefinite military conscription and political oppression (Sturge, 2019). Sturge (2019) reported that 92 per cent of the 25,385 Eritreans who applied for asylum in the European Union in 2017 were granted refugee status. This is the second-largest asylum recognition rate of the year after Syrians (94 per cent). Asylum seekers from Somalia held the third position with 70 per cent grant rate of the 17,645 asylum applicants in the same year. Moreover, various reports show that many of these Eritrean migrants are highly educated– a term used here to refer to those who completed higher education courses lasting two or more years (UNESCO, 2012). Most of them migrated after completing their university education in Eritrea (Arslan et al., 2014; Tsegay, 2019).

After receiving asylum, married migrants often strive for family reunion, whereas single migrants in most cases start looking for a partner. Migrants can apply for family reunion in the UK after they are granted refugee status or humanitarian protection. The UK family reunion provision allows adult refugees to apply for their "spouse or partner and children under the age of 18, who formed part of the family unit before their sponsor fled their country" (Home Office, 2016, p.4). Most single migrants look for a 'suitable partner' in Eritrea, the UK or other places to form a family and, thus, ease the loneliness they face in their host country. Research indicates that loneliness, homesickness and nostalgia negatively influence migrants' mental health (Gerber, 2016; Sedikides et al., 2009). Therefore, getting a

suitable partner and hoping to have children in the future, they believe that loneliness would evaporate and they could finally feel at home away from home.

Nevertheless, parenthood requires a great deal of time and commitment (Poduval & Poduval, 2009). Overall, parents need to provide basic needs, safe environment, good morals, appropriate discipline, and the right education to their children (Kiral, 2019; Landry, 2008). Failure to provide these needs can cause wide-ranging and long-term negative effects on the children. Moreover, child-rearing practices are significant factors for raising healthy and critical citizens (Driessen, 2003; Yunus & Dahlan, 2013). It is also important to note that some children with migrant background might need additional support in social and academic activities as they "perform relatively poorly at school" (Ismail, 2018, p. 2). In this condition, it is fair to say that those migrants with higher educational qualification can give them more support both in their academic and social lives (Atwell et al., 2009; Brădăţan & Kulcsár, 2014; Fokkema & De Haas, 2011). Furthermore, most Eritrean migrants expect that they would return to Eritrea once the push factors are resolved (Mezengi, 2005). They are committed to keeping their bond with Eritrea and their family in the country (Newland & Patrick, 2004). Thus, they want to marry or cohabit with an Eritrean, teach their children Eritrean values and traditions, and visit the country as much as possible.

Family has been a central component of migration research in general (Cooke, 2008) and socio-cultural integration of migrants, in particular (Beaton et al., 2018). However, there is a lack of research which investigates the complexities of raising children in exile (Diehl et al., 2016; Fokkema & De Haas, 2011; Heckmann, 2006; Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007). Through narrative interviews with eighteen participants, this article discusses parenting experiences of highly educated Eritrean migrants in the UK. The article is informed by the research question: how do highly educated migrants explain their parenting experiences in their host country? It argues that migrant parents teach their children Eritrean language, values and traditions to balance Eritrean and UK cultures and nurture multiple identities. The parents believe that nurturing multiple identities helps the children to prevent identity crisis and other confusions. Next, I discuss the migration-parenting nexus and, subsequently, briefly describe the methods used in this research article. Then, I explore the migrants' parenting experiences in their host country. Based on the data collected through narrative interviews, I show that parenting comes with a new challenge, especially to migrants who require socio-cultural integration into their destination country. However, with the support of their educational

qualification, highly educated Eritrean migrants help their children become responsible citizens who can understand and reconcile Eritrean and UK beliefs and cultures.

The Migration-Parenting Nexus

Migration is an integral part of human history. Human beings have been moving from place to place for social, economic or political reasons from their earliest days (Koser, 2016). Broadly, migration is usually explained in terms of time and space. It is defined as the movement of people that involves a change of usual residence across an administrative boundary such as a village, town, district or country (Kok, 1999). Migration can be in the form of immigration which is described as the number of people entering into a receiving area, or emigration which refers to the flow of people from a country over a given period of time. Moreover, there are two types of migration: internal, when migrants move within their country, and international. This article focuses on international migration, a situation where migrants live outside of their country of birth for at least one year (Poulain & Perrin, 2001).

Furthermore, the term 'migrant' comprises a wide range of people including those who migrate voluntarily and involuntarily, although the boundary between the two can be blurred (Bauman, 1998; Kempf, 2006; Wiese, 2010). As indicated above, the participants of this research article are forced migrants who experienced war, persecution and economic hardships in their home country, Eritrea (Kibreab, 2009; Tessema, 2010; Tessema & N'goma, 2009; UNHCR, 2018). Various reports show that the number of international migrants in general and asylum seekers, in particular, is increasing rapidly (United Nations, 2017). By the end of 2019, the world had 79.5 million forcibly displaced people compared to 70.8 million in 2018 (UNHCR, 2019). The UNHCR (2019) report further shows that nearly 26 million of those displaced in 2019 were externally displaced people or refugees, out of which children up to the age of eighteen account for around half of them. These refugees face a new and challenging environment, which requires socio-emotional adjustments (Boccagni & Baldassar, 2015), affecting their cultural identity (Kim, 2001; Wiese, 2010).

Many scholars noted that the social and cultural diversity of societies is increasing throughout the world (Suárez-Orozco, 2001; Wang, 2007). These diversities become greater as people travel far from home, making life challenging for migrants. In such context, migrants need to 'integrate' into the new culture to not only get essential services without abolishing their

culture of origin (Magnusson, 2014; Ward & Kennedy, 1999), but also raise children with multiple coping strategies (Perreira et al., 2006). However, it is important to note that refugees and asylum seekers are among the most powerless and marginalised people in the world, including, perhaps especially, in economically developed Western countries (Langmead, 2016; Stewart, 2005). Host countries through different regulations often impose cumbersome requirements which in many cases prevent migrants, even those with valid status, from getting various services (Home Office, 2014; Pezerović et al., 2019; United Nations Population Fund & International Migration Policy Programme, 2004). This further affects the process of integration which, to some extent, is based on the receptivity of the host societies (Lee, 2018).

Additionally, integration does not ensure that the migrants' culture of origin would be promoted or would always be intact or unchanged, adding complexities to the life of migrant parents. Host country governments are not legally obliged to actively promote migrants' cultures and languages (Baganha et al., 2006). Moreover, there are cultural differences in parenting between countries of origin and host (Aldous, 2006; Bergset & Ulvik, 2019; Bornstein, 2012). In many cases, these differences are reflected in the legal frameworks of the countries. For instance, smacking children is allowed in Eritrea (see High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2008), while it is illegal in many European countries including some parts of the UK (Welsh Government, 2019). Besides, factors such as parents' country of origin, school and social networks of children greatly affect the identity formation of immigrant children (Behtoui, 2019; Perreira et al., 2006). Despite these challenges, many migrant parents want their children to understand the cultural values of, at least, the origin and destination countries.

Methodology

Research Setting

Before addressing the methods used to collect and analyse the data for this article, it is significant to provide some information about the number, geographical location and characteristics of Eritrean migrants in the UK. There are more than 40,000 Eritrean refugees and British Eritreans in the UK (see Cockcroft, 2008; Home Office, 2019; UNHCR, 2018). The Office for National Statistics (2018) reported that about 31,000 of these residents are overseas-born and about 12,000 of them hold British citizenship. Even though more Eritrean men enter the UK and other countries as asylum seekers, the number of women in the UK is

boosted through family reunion, marriage or other similar means (Lijnders, 2018). This, among others, has equalised the gender distribution within the Eritrean refugees and British Eritreans in the UK (see Office for National Statistics, 2018).

Furthermore, the majority of the Eritrean refugees and British Eritreans in the UK live in England, particularly in London (more than a quarter of them), or in large cities in North West England, West Midlands, and Yorkshire and the Humber (Cockcroft, 2008; Office for National Statistics, 2013). Up to 2011, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland had fewer than 1,000 Eritrean refugees and British Eritrean residents in total (Office for National Statistics, 2013). Nonetheless, recent reports highlight growth in numbers since 2011 (for example, see Murphy & Vieten, 2017). In general, most of the Eritrean communities in the UK celebrate both Eritrean (Ge'ez) and Western holidays; conduct traditional ceremonies (such as wedding and baptism ceremonies); and attend Eritrean community churches.

Research Approach

This article is underpinned by data collected as part of a broader qualitative study, drawing on phenomenology, to examine and realise the circumstances of the participants in relation to their context (McNabb, 2008). Qualitative research has an unrivalled capacity to constitute compelling arguments about "how things work" in particular contexts, and at the same time is capable of producing very well-founded "cross-contextual generalities" (Mason, 2002, p.1). Phenomenology helps to explore the experiences of the migrants from their stories (Wiersma & Jurs, 2004). The participants of this research article were eighteen Eritrean migrants who gained a university degree in Eritrea, before migrating to the UK. As can be seen in Table 1 below, their ages range from 30 to 45 years old; and they had lived from two to ten years in the UK at the time of the interview. The participants were selected using purposive and snowball sampling; i.e. non-probability sampling techniques which focus on particular characteristics of a population that are of interest to the researcher to answer the research questions (Creswell, 2013; Teddlie & Yu, 2007). In this article, I position myself as an 'insider-outsider' researcher who shares similar identity, characteristics and certain experiential base with the participants (see Luttrell, 2010). My positionality as an Eritrean who studied in Eritrea and is currently living in the UK gave me an advantage as someone who can relate to the experiences of the migrants and to whose experiences they can relate.

Data for this article is collected and analysed through narrative interview and thematic approach, respectively, as they are particularly appropriate for understanding the stories people tell about their life trajectories (Creswell, 2013; Sarantakos, 2013). Narrative interview is a method that enables participants to tell stories about important events in their life and social context (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000). Hence, narrative interviews were conducted to allow the participants to express their experiences in their own way and from their own perspective (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Eighteen Eritrean migrants with both higher education qualification and children were interviewed for this article. Questions concerning the migrants' parenting experiences, challenges and opportunities were asked to solicit information in order to answer the research question. I applied the ethical principles of the University of Roehampton and the British Sociological Association (BSA) throughout the study. Pseudonyms were also used to protect the rights, privacy and safety of the participants.

Table 1 Participants' profiles

No.	Name of Participant (Pseudonym)	Sex	Age	Marital Status	Years of residence in the UK at the time of interview
1.	Semhar	F	30-35	M	5-7
2.	Senait	F	30-35	M	5-7
3.	Fanus	F	30-35	M	5-7
4.	Weini	F	36-40	M	5-7
5.	Helen	F	30-35	M	8-10
6.	Simret	F	30-35	M	8-10
7.	Haben	M	36-40	M	2-4
8.	Habtay	M	36-40	M	2-4
9.	Ermias	M	30-35	M	5-7
10.	Michael	M	36-40	M	5-7
11.	Meron	M	46-50	M	8-10
12.	Neguse	M	41-45	M	8-10
13.	Wolday	M	41-45	M	8-10
14.	Kibrom	M	36-40	M	8-10
15.	Solomon	M	36-40	M	8-10

16.	Simon	M	41-45	M	8-10
17.	Mehari	M	45-50	M	8-10
18.	Berhane	M	36-40	M	8-10

I used thematic analysis as it provides flexibility by summarizing key features of a large corpus of data, and at the same time offering a rich and detailed interpretation of the data by explaining the events as well as the context (Braun & Clarke, 2006). As Bowen (2009) indicates, thematic analysis needs careful and more focused re-reading and review of data. Hence, after transcribing the interviews, I read the transcripts several times for familiarisation with the data and generation of codes (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Maguire and Delahunt, 2017; Nowell et al., 2017). Then, the transcripts were reorganised into themes and analysed to address the issue under study.

Parenting in Exile

This section presents the findings and analysis of the data collected through narrative interviews. The findings are categorised into three themes.

Challenging Eritrean Traditional Culture

As indicated above, parenting practices play a significant role in raising healthy, disciplined, confident and successful children. Accordingly, my participants strive to avoid harmful ways of treating children. Most of them view their socio-cultural integration to the UK at family level. They believe that their success or failure, to some extent, could be determined through the success or failure of their family in general and children, in particular, in integrating into their host society while maintaining their Eritrean identity. Moreover, the participants noted that they first need to understand the host culture and way of life in order to help their children and, perhaps, avoid any legal repercussions. This suggests that being a migrant parent presents several challenges. This article indicates that some of the challenges are rooted in Eritrean traditional culture, which in many cases limits children's right to participate in decision-making that affects their life. It also allows corporal punishment for disciplinary purposes. According to the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (2008), the Eritrean delegation to the Committee on the Rights of the Child confirmed that a 'light beating' is allowed to encourage a child to study. Contrary to this, smacking children is illegal in many parts of Europe including some parts of the UK - -Wales (Welsh Government, 2019). Moreover, section 58 of the UK Children Act 2004:

Limits the availability of the 'reasonable punishment' defence in cases of alleged assaults by parents against their children. It removes the defence of reasonable punishment for assaults occasioning actual or grievous bodily harm, or which constitute cruelty. Parents who cause injuries to a child such as grazes, scratches, abrasions, bruising, swellings and superficial cuts risk being charged with actual bodily harm, for which the 'reasonable punishment' defence is not available. (Government Equalities Office, 2011, p. 53)

My participants stated that they adhere to the above law limiting the degree of corporal punishment by parents. They noted that corporal punishment causes physical injury, leads to aggressive behaviour in children, and negatively affects the parent-child relationship (see also Sege et al., 2018). Overall, Habtay, Neguse, and Senait argued that migrant parents have to challenge negative Eritrean traditional practices while focusing on the positive ones. Neguse opined that it is important to discuss with children and listen to their needs or concerns. He believes that creating a good relationship with children helps in setting a common agenda. Habtay and Senait on their part said:

There are lots of dos and don'ts in Eritrea. It is a bit prescriptive. There are aspects of the society that I really appreciate and others that I disagree with and do not want in my family. Therefore, I am looking for ways to compromise and take the good ones. It is a reconciliation of different cultural predispositions by taking good values. (Habtay)

The way we were raised does not encourage children to ask and explore things. We are reserved and shy. Many times, we leave things [out of fear or shyness] without understanding the main point. This is a big problem. I am a mom now, and I do not want to repeat that in my child. (Senait)

Habtay's and Senait's points show that Eritrean culture has some harmful practices like corporal punishment. Habtay's testimony suggests that Eritrean traditional culture should be interrogated to cast away any harmful practice. At the same time, like most of my participants, Habtay was not keen on solely relying on Western system of parenting. My findings suggest that Eritrean migrants can develop an effective parenting style by

assembling some Eritrean and British values and ways of child-raising. Reflecting upon her experiences, Senait explained that many questions or needs of children in Eritrea are overlooked or suppressed. They are expected to simply follow parent's orders without a question. As indicated above, they might also be beaten if they defy their parents' commands or refuse to behave as per the parents' desires. In this context, most of my participants concur that they do not want to repeat such circumstances in their children. They believe that authoritarian parenting, which is more controlling, less supportive and less participative, can negatively affect the development of children including their confidence, attitude and self-efficacy (see also Ang & Goh, 2006; Thompson, Hollis, & Richards, 2003).

The participants of this research article were raised in Eritrean culture which perceives children as obedient to parental authority. From their perspective, it requires time and awareness to avoid such traditional practices. In addition, they need cultural transformation to negotiate British and Eritrean cultures and, thus, support their children. For instance, they need to challenge the perception that parents have absolute power to enforce their decisions over their children. This is significant for not only the children, but also the parents themselves. Mistreating children would endanger parent-child relationship and put parents at risk because children in the UK have legal protection and freedom to challenge parental authority (Renzaho et al., 2017).

Cultivating 'British Eritrean' Identities
This article maintains that cultural identities are learned (Spencer-Oatey, 2012). The findings show that my participants do not assimilate into the host country by embracing every value, norm and principle they encounter. For instance, most of the participants of this research article prefer Eritrean communalistic lifestyle to the individualistic nature of the UK. Britain is found to be the most individualistic country in the European Union (Stone, 2017). On the other hand, my participants are interested in the fundamental British values (FBV) of democracy, rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs, which are expected to reflect the modern life of the country (Department of Education, 2016; Lander, 2016). Hence, they opined that their main challenge of parenting has been associated with influencing their children to cultivate dual identities or a new form of 'British Eritrean' identity.

Some of the children came from Eritrea through family reunion, while others are second-generation children born in the UK. Nevertheless, as indicated in this article, they both need to reconcile Eritrean culture with the UK way of life, or vice versa, for a successful integration outcome (see also Sam, 2000). Second-generation children have less difficulty in integrating into the UK. They are born and educated in the country. However, children born outside of the UK face socio-cultural and academic problems. For instance, Meron said:

> My wife and two children joined me in the UK as part of the family reunion. My children had to go to school and make friends, which was not easy at the beginning. I can tell that the situation was worse for my older child, who was in grade 6, than my younger one who was in her early stage of elementary school. My younger child took half a year to integrate into the system. However, the older one was struggling for about two years. Her English level was low [compared to native English speakers] and it negatively affected her academic performance.

The above narrative shows Meron's concern and experience regarding his children. Like their parents, the children struggle to adapt to the UK education system and make friends. Hence, they need social and academic support. In line with this, my participants explained that they tutor and motivate their children to effectively integrate into the new environment, including the education system. Meron stated that academic support was important to curve the deteriorating academic performance of his children. Moreover, as indicated above, the study on Somali community in Finland revealed that children with a migrant background have lower academic performance (Ismail, 2018). On the other side, my research corroborates the finding that parents' motivation and support have a significant influence on their children's educational success (Aldous, 2006). Despite ethnic and other differences, this shows that migrants, in many cases, share similar circumstances.

In addition, Meron's experiences indicate that his younger child integrated more easily into the UK. Although it might not be wise to draw generalisations from this specific case, it is important to note that Meron's testimony aligns with other studies (see Aslund et al., 2009; Clark, Glick, & Bures, 2009). For instance, Aslund et al. (2009) stated that age at arrival affects the integration of migrants into the host country. The authors explained that children who arrived at a higher age had "lower shares of natives" and "higher exposure to immigrants of similar ethnic origin" (2009, p. 1). The above testimonies generally point out that parental

guidance, age and educational level of children influence their integration level into the host societies. Furthermore, Wolday and Simon stated that migrants support their newly arrived families (partners and children) to integrate into the new society. Nonetheless, this does not mean that newly arrived partners are helpless in supporting their children to fit into the new society. My findings reveal that they play their part in the process of raising a confident, caring and responsible child.

This article indicates that children, like anyone else, gradually learn the UK culture and integrate into UK society. They master the English language, make friends and gradually tend to 'assimilate' to the UK culture. However, the issue of assimilation alarms my participants because it entails losing Eritrean culture. Therefore, they teach their children Eritrean language, values and traditions. For Simon, reuniting with his family was a relief. He supported his wife and children to fit into the UK. However, he noted that his children were gradually leaning towards British culture. Simon was worried about the future of his children -- losing their Eritrean identity and roots.

> I am worried that my children, especially those who were born here, might lose the Eritrean identity. I do not want them to be detached from their country of origin because it is home, where they do not need to worry about being accepted or being part of the community. Besides, I do not want them to face 'identity crisis' by hanging in between Eritrea and the UK. It could be a problem. So, I teach them Eritrean culture and values. (Simon)

As can be seen in the next section, Simon's account, which was also echoed by Habtay and Helen, highlights the parents' concern about the identity and future of their children. It is clear from the interview data that my participants wanted their children to earn the recognition of both countries and societies. They noted that having multiple identities would enable their children to effectively balance Eritrean and UK cultures. This is in line with the argument that cultural identities belong both to the past and the future (Hall, 1996). They are relational and incomplete which makes them always in process (Grossberg, 1996). Simon's statement, however, goes deeper than that. It shows the stigma migrants or asylum seekers experience in relation to who they are or their place of origin. As a result, my participants are not comfortable about telling people that they are refugees. This is because they could be misjudged, which affects their career opportunities and dignity as human beings. It is not

unusual for asylum seekers to be perceived as inherently poor, dependent and unskilled (see Stewart, 2005). This also affects children with a migrant background including those who were born in the UK. They may well feel marginalised in their own country.

Wolday told me that his son, who was in secondary school, had started to question his identity.

> My children feel that they equally [like anyone else] belong to the UK. However, as they get older, this perception starts to decrease. They start to notice things around them and [they] search for answers. For example, they notice that they do not have many White friends. They also notice that they get bullied because of their country/continent of origin. In such condition, they need parental guidance on their journey to develop an identity that could help them to face their environment with confidence. (Simon)

My participants are afraid that their children might be trapped between the two countries or identities -- belonging neither to the UK nor Eritrea. Besides, participants like Simon argued that there is systemic racism in the UK that affects the future and belongingness of their children. Research confirms that immigrant youth and second-generation children experience more bullying and other peer aggression than native-born or third-generation counterparts (Maynard et al., 2016; Pottie et al., 2015). Hence, as parents, my participants work to shape the cultural identity of their children by developing bi-cultural coping skills in the children (Perreira et al., 2006). They support the children to balance Eritrean culture and the UK way of life. In doing so, they play a significant role in their children's identity formation (Atwell et al., 2009; Aslund et al., 2009).

Opportunities and Challenges
The interview data indicate that educational qualification contributes to shaping the experience and life course of immigrants. In this context, my participants noted the importance of higher educational qualification of parents in guiding their children. It helps parents to work with their children and other partners at home, in schools and within their community. Explaining the difficulty of parenting and the importance of educational qualification, Habtay said:

For someone with my cultural background, parenting in this country is not easy. For example, the school environment in the UK is very different [from that of Eritrea]-- different language, culture and methodology. My educational attainment is, therefore, significant in understanding the system and culture. It helps me to understand why society behaves in a certain way. I know my own identity, culture, language and religion, which helps me to appreciate or look into other things. (Habtay)

Habtay's testimony indicates that parenting in exile is a challenging phenomenon. However, those with higher educational qualification have skills they can draw on to adapt to diverse social and cultural environments within and across borders. This corroborates the evidence that education affects immigrants' experience and life course including the modes of family structure (Brădăţan & Kulcsár, 2014). Most of my participants share Habtay's thought in using their educational attainment to identify the competing forms of cultural or national identities and address the implications of ethnicity, class, race and gender (see also Torres, 1998). Overall, they use their educational qualification to read about and understand the new environment and help their children to make the best of it. In particular, this was significant for those who had less or no parenting experiences as they were able to develop their skills by reading different books and other relevant resources.

My participants confided that a lack of earlier parental experience and family support affect parenting practices and experiences. Many of my participants had less or no parenting experiences. As migrants, they also had lost familiar support systems including family and community support systems (Smart & Smart, 1995). Explaining this, Habtay stated that "my child is my firstborn one and I did not have much experience in parenting". Helen explained:

In the UK, having children comes with great responsibility. Back home we [Eritreans] have family support and even the children play outdoor without anyone looking after them. Here, the system is different. Children should be watched out the whole day and we are on our own. The way we raise our children is also another challenges. I want to raise my children to be open-minded. I want them to combine both [Eritrean and British] cultures to help them become successful. I know it is not easy. I read different books to learn how best children could be raised in the UK and combine it with our [Eritrean] way. (Helen)

Habtay's and Helen's excerpts show the complexity of child-raising in the UK, where children are constructed as in need of more protection from a range of social issues, including drug consumption and criminal exploitation (Berridge, 2013; Stone, 2018). Both participants claimed that they were not able to get parental or family support as their family live in Eritrea and they are not easily allowed to enter the UK due to visa restrictions. The UK follows a very restrictive immigration policy for applicants from so-called developing countries, especially African countries (BBC, 2012; Kelland, 2018). Helen also associated the lack of parental support with the challenge that she faces in balancing work and child-raising. Studies show that women often interrupt their professional job to take care of their children (Shah & Shah, 2016). Some switch to part-time employment and move down the occupational ladder into "lower-skilled and lower-paid jobs" (Alakeson, 2012, p.1).

Furthermore, similar to Habtay and Helen, most of my participants believe that one way to cultivate multiple identities within the children is to teach them Eritrean and British values and traditions. To do so, they first strive to understand both cultures with an emphasis on their positive and negative sides. In addition, my participants reported that the connection and interaction between children and their parents are significant for the development of the children's cultural identities or sense of belonging to Eritrean culture. They further explained that child-family connections should include extended family members to show the social solidarity of Eritreans to the children. However, as noted above, my participants could not bring their family to the UK due to visa issues. Besides, many of my participants cannot visit Eritrea due to their refugee status, political activism against the government of Eritrea or other personal reasons. Hence, some were able to visit Eritrea, while others arranged short family reunions outside the country.

For instance, Michael explained that his daughter was complaining about not meeting her close relatives such as grandparents, aunts and uncles in person. Therefore, he arranged a family reunion in another African country where she was able to see her grandparents and other close family members. In contrast, Wolday managed to send his family to Eritrea. Both Michael and Wolday felt that the experience enabled the children to re/connect with their country of origin, develop their language capacity and build a strong family bond. Another way to nurture Eritrean culture and way of life among my participants is to take children to Eritrean community church services and other social activities. However, most of the highly educated Eritrean migrants who participated in this research were not content with the social

and cultural activities conducted by Eritrean communities in the UK. They noted that the communities are not well organised and they usually lack activities targeted towards children.

Conclusion

This article discussed the connection between migration and child-raising. It analysed these concepts with regard to the educational qualifications of the participants, all of whom are Eritrean migrants. The findings indicate that migrant parents play a significant role in the socio-cultural and emotional development of their children. This is mostly based on the parents' concern about their children's socio-cultural integration, academic performance, and health and wellbeing. In particular, the parents are afraid that their children might eventually struggle to understand UK and Eritrea cultures and, thus, face identity crisis. The evidence presented in this article indicates that migrant parents encourage their children to learn the host society's culture. Nonetheless, children, like their parents, tend to experience more bullying and other peer victimisation than their White UK-born counterparts (see also Maynard et al., 2016; Pottie et al., 2015). These experiences can make the children feel rejected, leading to social exclusion and loneliness.

Despite various challenges, my participants used different strategies to guide the life course and shape the experience of their children. The migrant parents mainly lack family support and parental experience. Nonetheless, they teach their children Eritrean language, values and traditions to balance Eritrean and UK cultures. They broaden the children's cultural understanding, develop multiple identities and shape their actions. It is important to note that these aspects are vital to live in a multicultural society in peace and solidarity (Torres, 1998). The findings also corroborate the significant role of parents in the process of integration and identity formation of children (Aslund et al., 2009).

Moreover, the article indicates that my participants challenge some aspects of Eritrean traditional culture that they view as harmful to children. They strive to change the use of authoritarian parenting style in general and corporal punishment, in particular, as they can negatively affect the confidence, attitude and self-efficacy of children (Ang & Goh, 2006; Thompson, Hollis, & Richards, 2003). This fosters a positive child-parent relationship and further helps in setting a common agenda towards the child's development.

The findings of this article also illustrate the significance of higher education qualification of my participants in supporting socio-cultural and academic development of their children. The migrant parents' educational qualification is important for cultural understanding and transformation, which in turn is significant in shaping the identities of their children. Hence, with the support of their educational qualification, migrant parents help their children to gain essential services and minimise experiences of rejection in both their host and origin countries. In so doing, they contribute to the socio-cultural integration of the children.

This article provides new insights regarding parenting in exile in which highly educated migrants support their children in improving their educational achievements, cultivating multiple coping skills, and preventing identity crisis. It, therefore, offers a better understanding of the challenges of parenting in exile and the strategies used to raise confident and responsible children. However, the research article is not without its limitations. It is a qualitative study confined to a particular sample or interviews, which makes it hard for generalisation (Luttrell, 2010). In addition, as data for this article were collected from migrants, similar research that captures the view of other stakeholders including schools and other public and community organisations is necessary to develop a more robust understanding of migration processes and parenting (Creswell, 2013).

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