

Chapter 7

“Lived Lives” of South Asian Parents in the UK: Thematic Analysis of the Parenting Interviews

ABSTRACT

Chapters 5 and 6 captured the interviews and “Lived Lives” of parenting from different parents. After individual informed consent from each of the interviewees (Appendix 1) in line with BERA, the semi-structured interviews were conducted. The semi-structured interviews that were conducted to gain in-depth understanding of parenting of South Asian parents had some overarching themes. These themes were strongly rooted in their circumstances, social and cultural factors. Most parents shared that they had to quickly adapt, change, and adjust to the new environment in a new country (UK). The reasons for moving to the UK were varied including job opportunities, war-torn regions, better lifestyle, and education for children. All parents overwhelmingly admitted that they had to struggle at an individual family and other levels to shape their parenting styles. Values of life, importance of education, and cultural knowledge were the key themes that were stressed in all interviews

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INTRODUCTION

In chapters 5 and 6 of this book, the author has captured some powerful narratives of some parents who have shared their styles of parenting, circumstances, their adaptations, struggles and their “lived lives” here in the UK. It is useful to note that most family structures were nuclear families – with some families supported by their extended families here in the UK and other parents all by themselves in the family unit. Some families had mothers as the primary care giver, where the parents had separated due to divorce and a new relationship with another partner was ongoing. Some intercultural marriages/relationships, stepchildren and blended families were also participants in the interviews. This gave a very comprehensive perspective to the evolving and changing family structures in the present times and added deeper understanding of another important aspect of South Asian parenting. The diversity of religion, region, cultures, parenting style, struggles, emotional and psychological factors for each family was unique and set them apart from the others. The interviews shared their hugely emotional journeys of missing their own country, family, and culture. The majority of the interviewees shared how they compensated this by various other means to give their children a flavour of what their cultural, country, and regional roots are.

The semi-structured interviews conducted with South Asian parents in the UK reveal a rich tapestry of experiences and values that inform their parenting styles. Despite the wide diversity in religious, social, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds, common themes emerged, highlighting the universal aspects of parenting while also underscoring the unique challenges faced by immigrant families. The process of adaptation was a recurrent topic, as parents spoke of the need to quickly adjust to a new environment and society. This adjustment was not merely a matter of personal change but a complex negotiation of values, where the importance of education, the preservation of cultural knowledge, and the instillation of life values played pivotal roles.

The reasons for migrating to the UK were as varied as the individuals themselves, ranging from seeking job opportunities to escaping conflict-ridden regions, all in pursuit of a better lifestyle and education for their children. This diversity of motivations underscores the multifaceted nature of immigration and its impact on family dynamics. The interviews painted a picture of resilience, as parents recounted their struggles to maintain their cultural identity while also integrating into British society. They spoke of the

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