

Somali Parents' Experiences of Bringing up Children in Finland: Exploring Social-Cultural Change within Migrant Households

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Abstract: Approximately 5,000 to 6,000 Somalis arrived in Finland between 1990 and 1995 through Russia. Currently, 8,096 have settled permanently in the country. The data reported here is from a 1998-1999 research survey carried out in the Finish cities of Helsinki and Turku. The survey of 117 married Somalis explored the social-cultural determinants of contraception use. The paper presented here focuses upon one particular aspect of the survey. We selected 21 Somali parents (11 women and 10 men) to look in-depth at the experiences of Somali migrants raising children in Finland. All of the respondents selected have more than 5 children in their family and all were asked to describe their experiences of raising children in Finland and, more generally, in establishing and maintaining family structures. Unlike their experiences in Somali, bringing up large families (by Western standards) is not a collective matter in Finland where biological parents are left to manage the family for themselves. A number of challenges also accompany this shift in family norms: first, and most notably, there is the need to re-establish control over one's life in an alien environment; second, intergenerational conflict between adult migrants and their adolescent children is often heightened. The findings indicate that Somalis' experiences of raising children in Finland raise important parenting challenges associated with changing generational, gender and family relations within the migrant household. Importantly, this case study of large Somali families shows how migrants' lives are intricately linked to the household dynamic between home and host country.

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1. Introduction

Somalis were the first large group of African refugees to settle in Finland. In the early 1990s although refugee flows mainly consisted of young men, there were also some women and families. From 1993 onwards, a second group of Somali refugees arrived through the Finnish State's programme of refugee family reunification. This group was made up mainly of women and children and was generally less educated than the first group. [1]

Approximately 5,000 to 6,000 Somalis arrived in Finland between 1990 and 1995. According to ALITOLPPA-NIITAMO (2000), Somalis represent the first sizeable group of asylum seekers to have migrated from Africa to Finland. Today, 8,096 Somalis live in Finland and they are considered to be one of the most important foreign populations in the country alongside the 24,830 Russians, 13,905 Estonians and 8,233 Swedish (MINISTRY OF LABOUR, 2005). [2]

Somali experiences of parenting are clearly affected by social, cultural and environmental circumstance. Migration, for example, can often lead to intergenerational conflicts as children and adolescents negotiate two sets of home and host country cultural norms. Although the experience of immigrants' begins as a cultural mismatch between them and their new host society, the effects of this mismatch are often more acute for children and adolescents. Differences in family cohesion, adaptability, and the social environment all combine following migration to impact upon adaptation to the new society and particularly childrearing experiences (MIRANDA, ESTRADA & FIRPO-JIMENEZ, 2000). [3]

One of the essential features of Somali families is the dominant position of the father, which gives the public impression that the mother is marginally present or completely absent from the family scene. In Somali family tradition, the husband, the wife and the extended family members share the responsibilities of raising children. Having moved to Finland, Somali families undergo significant changes in family structure, gender dynamics and the parent-child relationship. The stress experienced in migrating, and the adaptation strategies needed upon arrival in a new society, particularly when parents and children are involved, is not a new phenomenon. Literature on the collision of norms, values, and cultures during the process of migration and resettlement is extensive (DEGNI, 2004; MIRANDA, ESTRADA & FIRPO-JIMENEZ, 2000; ALITOLPPA-NIITAMO, 2000; ROIZBLATT & PILOWSKI, 1996; WEAVER, 1993; OPOKU-DAPAAH, 1995). This said, the Somalis in Finland represent a fascinating case study. Not only are they the first major African immigrant group to settle in the country, their parenting practices are shaped by the codes of the Islamic family and family sizes are generally large. Consequently there is a tension between Finnish and Somali parenting norms related, in particular, to the role of Islam and gender-household dynamics. The aim of this paper is to explore the Somali parents' experiences in bringing up children in Finland and identify the social-cultural changes that have and are continuing to take place within the migrant-household. [4]

2. Fieldwork

The data for this paper is based upon a survey sample, carried out in 1998-1999, of Somali parents with more than 5 children. The 21 respondents chosen from this survey for the study investigation lived in the cities of Helsinki and Turku. The women in the sample (11) were between 31 and 45 years old and the men (10) between 36 and 54 years old; the majority of them arrived in Finland in the 1990s. Community and religious leaders were used as gatekeepers to select and arrange the interviews. One interview was conducted with each respondent and each interview lasted between one to two hours, depending on the respondent's availability. A female Somali community leader organised meetings with the female respondents and the interviews were carried out by a Somali female assistant at the request of the interviewees. They were interviewed in their homes in the absence of their husbands as their presence could have impacted upon the data being collected. The majority of the women were interviewed in Somali as they felt more comfortable communicating in their native language. The interviews were then translated into English for analysis. [5]

The meetings with male respondents were also arranged by community (clan) and religious leaders. These leaders helped to ensure that all the respondents reported their experiences in Finland in as much depth as they could. The leaders' involvement in the data collection was felt to be essential because of their authority and influence over the wider male Somali community. Their contribution, we believe, adds credibility to the data and the findings of the study. [6]

The interviews with the men were carried out by the principal investigator in English: either in mosques; in coffee bars; during community meetings; or, in respondents' home. Each interview was tape recorded, and the interviewer began by explaining the aims of the study, assuring the rights to confidentiality, anonymity, and withdrawal at any time. The respondents were asked the following two questions:

- What are your experiences of bringing up children in Somalia and Finland?
- And, what social and cultural changes have you experienced in your family? [7]

The researchers sought, and received, approval from the Imams and other religious members of Muslim associations in Turku and Helsinki. Following each interview, the principal investigator completed field notes and subsequently transcribed the interview session verbatim. Analysis of the transcripts and field notes included identification and coding of relevant content in each interview and comparison across interviews in order to identify common and unique findings. From both the women's and men's responses, the similarities and differences in views, opinions and experiences were grouped as "categories" and used to confirm or challenge emerging insights. Periodically we discussed the findings with one of the co-writers who is Somali-born and therefore has a detailed knowledge of the Somali culture, Somali family structures, and understands the challenges Somalis' face in raising a family in Finland. [8]

3. Findings

3.1 Somalis' parenting experiences in Somalia

The Somali parents tended to contrast parenting practices in Finland with the Somali cultural traditions of parenting. According to them, in Somalia fatherhood was a simple task. The wife and the children knew that the father was the head of the family and had the authority, and everybody had natural respect for him and his role. His duty was to go to work and bring money home to feed the family; it was not to take care of or bring up the children as this was perceived as the woman's role. In a similar way, in Somali culture, motherhood was associated with childbirth, childcare and upbringing. With these well-defined gender roles, childcare and upbringing were women's collective duty, where closely-related women helped each other in bringing up the children. Children also had a well-defined natural duty and obligation to the family. Their natural duty was to respect their parents, and their obligations started at a young age with helping the parents at home or outside the house. These obligations were particularly evident amongst those families from an agricultural setting. Daughters helped their mothers with domestic chores and other tasks, whilst sons helped their father on the farm and in taking care of the cattle. In adulthood, children are then supposed to take care of their parents when they reach old age. [9]

The Somali parents, particularly the men, said that the use of corporal punishment in parenting practices was an accepted part of Somali culture and a valid parenting practice. Though all the women respondents noted that corporal punishment is used in Somalia, they disapproved of using this to discipline children and thought it harmful to a child's and particularly a daughter's self-esteem. They also felt that the use of corporal punishment on boys can potentially increase aggression. For example, one of the female respondents said:

"I don't agree that my husband is hitting or beating our children. A little spank is okay. But no hitting or beating in any form. There can be other ways to punish a child for his or her misbehaviour and not by using physical discipline to achieve correction" (female, 33 years). [10]

Although the women said they understood their husbands' culturally based parenting practices, they felt that there were alternative means to achieve the desired result than the use of corporal punishment. However, there was a general view among respondents that the use of physical discipline was appropriate in Finland because of the different parenting traditions between their country of origin (Somalia) and their host country (Finland). [11]

3.2 Somalis' parenting experiences in Finland

Somalis were asked to comment upon parenting experiences in Finland. They told us that the changes in parental practices were heavy and stressful. The women explained that childcare had become an individual matter and that they had to manage by themselves; a contrast to Somalia where they had help from

female relatives and extended family members. For the large majority of Somalis, the changes in parenthood were difficult to cope with. According to some, their children did not listen to them at home any more because they had apparently been told in the schools, and by other government agencies, that they have rights and freedoms and that it is the state that supports them and not their parents. Several parents complained about schoolteachers' and social workers' interference in their children's upbringing. In the interview, two men said this:

"The teachers and the social workers should understand that the Somali cultural model of children's upbringing differs from the Finnish cultural model of children's upbringing in the Finnish culture. Let me tell you that, there are many social norms in the Western lifestyle that are conflicting with the Islamic values and are not acceptable by Somalis. In any society it is the parents' responsibility to educate their children and make them understand what is acceptable and what is not. In this logic it is Somali parents to bring up their children and not schoolteachers' and social workers' to do in their behaviour" (males, 48, 52 years). [12]

Somali parents had different experiences of raising their sons and daughters in Finland. Fathers in particular expressed their happiness about their daughter's social behaviour, ability to adhere to Islamic values and traditions, and ability to listen to and obey their parents. About schooling, one father pointed out that, "boys are dropping out from school and girls are educating themselves, they are taking the "chance" they could not get if they were in Somalia". Somali parents had high expectations for their daughters' achievement in school. Another respondent said:

"It is the daughters that will support the parents in the future in their old age and not the sons. Boys do not want to study because they have not realised that education is highly valued in all societies. As they do not want to study, there will be a lack of social opportunities in Finland, but also elsewhere" (male, 54 years). [13]

One of the female respondents also commented:

"The birth of a son was considered in Somali culture as economic and social influence associated with the honour of the parents in village or in the town. In Finland, many Somali parents think, like me, that the birth of a baby girl is considered as a source of social-economic support for the parents in the future, because they will have equal social and economic opportunities with men after they have completed their school" (female, 45 years). [14]

In terms of the Finnish authorities' reactions to Somali parenting practices, some respondents reported that the authorities had reacted negatively and believed that Somali parents were mistreating their children, using physical discipline against them, beating or hitting them and taking daughters to Somalia or to Kenya to circumcise them. For example, one male respondent said:

"Social workers and police are controlling and dictating Somali parents how to bring up their children, and when the children do the bad things in the streets, the same

authorities are accusing Somali parents for neglecting and give bad social education to their children. When we are hard with our children, they said we are bad parents and when we are soft as they want us to be; they said we are also bad parents. How they really want us to do with our children or how we should bring them up? I think that they want our children to be criminals" (male, 54 years). [15]

Focus group discussion generated various opinions about what was considered to be appropriate parenting. Respondents felt that parents had the option to use a number of approaches to regulate the behaviour of their children without using physical discipline. Even though respondents considered that it was perhaps necessary to sometimes be harsh, the need to be flexible was also stressed. For example, respondents generally felt that Somali parents needed be flexible around routines such as bedtimes and special occasions Respondents commented, however, that they were strict about religious routines and prayer and worship times and did not allow flexibility unless their child was ill. Three respondents we spoke to shared the same view, they all said:

"We tell our children to worship Allah, to pray five times a day and when it is time for prayer, there is no excuse unless the one is really sick and cannot move. Religious education is very important factor in children's upbringing in the Islamic family" (males, 37, 47 and 39). [16]

What was perceived as appropriate and inappropriate parenting by Somalis was broadly consistent between all interviewees. There were, however, notable gender differences between men and women over the use of physical discipline with women more likely to reject its use as a means of correcting their children's behaviour. [17]

3.3 Changing relations between husband-wife following migration

The Somali families' life in Finland was filled with changes both in relation to family structure and gender dynamics. These changes were linked by respondents to a lack of options. For example, one of the men said that:

"In Finland, it has become a constraint for many of us to be involved in practical things in the household including child upbringing because the women do not have their mothers, sisters or female relatives in Finland to give them helping hands with the children and cooking or cleaning" (male, 36 years). [18]

The women said they were broadly pleased about changes in family life. For many, their husband's increasing responsibilities, including participation in childbirth, represented a great change in household gender roles. This change was compared to the situation in Somalia where, according to the women, inequalities in gender relations, particularly related to women's child bearing and rearing roles, are reproduced at a very early age. One woman said this:

"Somali men's social situation has changed in Finland because the majority of them are unemployed, so they are not anymore the breadwinners they used to be in the

house in Somalia. This situation has brought changes in the gender relationship as both are receiving unemployment and other social benefits, so men cannot claim to breadwinners, so the power and authority they used to have in the household in Somalia are shared with the women here in Finland. For many of the men, this new situation is unbearable and in some cases, domestic conflicts, intergenerational conflicts and even divorces have been reported. Many men have realised that there is nothing they can do about the situation so to avoid the conflicts and divorces; they have to accept the changes in the family" (female, 33 years). [19]

Women reported that because of the difficulties of bringing up several children in Finland they have needed more help from their husbands leading to a kind of power sharing within the family that would not have occurred in Somalia. Three women discussed this shift in gender-household roles:

"In Somali society, a man's place is not in the kitchen, and not involved with domestic chores. He is the head of the family, he decides about every matter in the house and the wife listens and obeys. A Somali woman is taught to believe in her position in the house and not complain about the load of domestic work and childcare as do Finnish women. In Finland, Somali couples' life has changed so that men and women share the responsibility in their home including children upbringing" (females, 33, 35 and 42 years). [20]

Men expressed their opposition to this transition towards more even gender-household relations. One man expressed this by saying that:

"I could not imagine that my wife could ask me to help her cooking, washing or cleaning and taking care of the children if we were in Somalia. All those tasks are women's. In Finland, our women are feeling lonely and miss her relatives and other members of the extended family who could help them doing all those things, so we men must help them" (male, 39 years). [21]

Referring to husband and wife decision-making in Somali society, one of the male respondents explained:

"In Somali culture, although decisions on family and other matters are discussed between the husband and wife, according to Islamic marriage tradition it is the husband that has decision power, therefore he is the one who decides" (male, 47 years). [22]

The Somali women also admitted how in Somalia the husband decided everything, but noted how in Finland Somalis' lives have changed so that men had to share their power with woman. One young woman said this:

"In Somali society, it is the men who decide and we women obey and cannot sometimes say our opinions. We have been taught to believe in our fathers, brothers and husbands and obey them. We are not supposed to complain about the load of childbirth and child care but just to be pleased about everything including the men's decisions and actions in the households. In Finland, the social and economic

situations are different and many Somali women are autonomous and free to decide about basic things that concern their life. Among the Somalis in Finland, the young women are now able to give their own views and opinions about family matters, including child social education, childbirth and contraceptive use" (female, 33 years). [23]

3.4 Changes in the family structure

All respondents experienced changes in parenting practices, family structures and gender-household relations because of the cultural differences between Finland and Somalia. They described the changes as difficult to cope with. Several Somalis, men and women, discussed changes in family size and complained that apartments were designed for family sizes of 1 to 2 children and were not suitable for Somali families which often had between 5-10 children. A woman living in an apartment of three bedrooms with her husband and five children said:

"Seven persons living in an apartment of three small bedrooms and sitting room is like being in prison, there is no space for everybody. Especially, in the winter time, when it is very cold and the children cannot go outside to play, they are shouting and crying inside; everybody gets crazy. In this country, they do not build big house with several rooms because families are small. In Finland, couples have often only 1 or 2 children or one dog. In Somalia, in our houses, there are always enough rooms for several children and the relatives who stay with us. We Somalis, it is very hard to bring up several children in the Finnish small houses" (female, 38 years). [24]

The Finnish climate and the cost of having several children in Finland influenced family size and children's upbringing. All respondents pointed out that every winter and summer children needed new clothes and shoes. Their children also had hobbies like their Finnish friends and these types of pressures made it financially very difficult to have large families in Finland. As one woman admitted:

"Bringing up several children in Somalia is a pride and respect for the parents compared with Finland. Finns are irritated to see Somalis with their several children, they think that Somalis are bringing up their children with the Finnish's tax payers money but they do not know that in Somalia we do not have social welfare system but we still bring up several children" (female, 38 years). [25]

3.5 Somalis' use of contraception and the difficulties of raising large families in Finland

According to the respondents, discussion of family planning and the small family norm was seldom evident in Somalia. Three factors help explain this: religious beliefs; social-cultural norms; and, economic context. Giving birth to several children in Somalia is an honour with familial practices and marriage systems rooted in the Islamic law (*sharia*). One of the male respondents, for example, told us:

"Somali culture is based on Islamic traditions and although decisions about family and other matters are discussed between the husband and wife, according to Islamic

family and marriage law, it is the husband that has decision power and therefore he is the one who finally decides" (male, 50 years). [26]

The above respondent, whilst talking with a fellow Somali, went on to explain:

"In conformity with traditional beliefs, family planning is not widely practised in Somalia. Only traditional methods of birth spacing which include a long period of breast feeding of up to two years are used. The use of contraception is very limited in Somalia. Consequently, its use is going to be a new notion for several of those women living in Finland and might be regarded with suspicion because women might fear that it will lead to childlessness, but because it is difficult to bring up many children in Finland, and because several women have already a lot of children, they might not care using contraception" (males, 50, 54 years). [27]

Respondents, particularly women, reported that they had decided to use contraception because they did not want more children. They revealed that, contrary to what many Finns think of Somalis, many couples do not want large families and use contraception to prevent unwanted pregnancies. Whilst the Islamic family must take decisions according to Islamic jurisprudence in order to justify their act to *Allah*, respondents justified their decision with regard to: the changes in family structures; the difficulties of bringing up to several children in Finland; and the social-cultural changes that followed migration. Most Somalis who used contraception felt they had good justifications according to the *Qu'ran*. Referring to his experience, one man said:

"I am using condoms because it is our responsibility my wife and I to bring up our six children, we do not have any help as we should have got from our parents and relatives if we were in Somalia. Whatever assistance we may receive from the social assistance in Finland, it is our responsibility to bring up our children, feed them, and guarantee their health and wellbeing in the family, according to *Allah*" (male, 37 years). [28]

The women revealed that, in general, Somali men do not use condoms. Two female respondents said:

"In the Somali culture and religious teaching, we have been educated to believe that the purpose of marriage is to have several children and the wife should view her role in the household in relation to childbearing and childrearing. These beliefs are defined by the men and imbedded in the Somali culture. Women's sexuality and reproductive decision-making rests upon men. In Finland, those beliefs are changing little by little because of social-cultural differences and difficulties to bring up several children" (females 33, 35 years). [29]

All women we talked to reported that because of the difficulties of bringing up several children in Finland, they were forced to consider family planning. The men we talked to admitted that bringing up children in Finland gave rise to a lot of contradictory feelings about the use of contraception because of the social-cultural differences between Somalia and Finland. One young father said:

"The decision to use contraception has become very important in the husband-wife communication, because it is very difficult to bring up several children in different culture. In Somalia, it is easier to be a father or mother of several children because there is always a relative to help you" (male, 37 years). [30]

3.6 Somali parents' views of the Finnish family model

Every respondent agreed that the problems surrounding large families in Finland were related to a complex interplay of social, cultural and economic differences between Finland and Somalia. The transitions associated with these differences changed the household-gender dynamic and family norms. As one woman said:

"In Somalia, bringing up several children is a respect for the woman. In Finland, it is shameful to have several children and I found it humiliating when Finns are looking at me or other Somali parents in the bus or in the metro, because they are irritated to see Somali women with several children. Finns are shocked when they see Somali parents shutting on the children who are misbehaving. Our cultural traditions to bring up children are very different to that of Finns" (female, 39 years). [31]

The men and women described parenting roles in Finland as an enormous responsibility and felt it would be much easier with two to three children. Several also felt that the Islamic way of bringing up children was in conflict with the Finnish way. One of female respondents said:

"In the Finnish schools, our children and particularly the boys are forced to adopt the Finnish youth life in order to be accepted in this society, their Finnish counterparts and their teachers. In one hand, it is a good thing but on other hand it is bad because we are Muslims and our way to bring up to children is different from the Finnish or Western way" (female, 45 years). [32]

One of the male respondents disapproved of the Somali teenager boys' Western life-styles:

"The way the Finnish authorities want us to bring up our children in Finland is not conform to our religious traditions, cultural norms and values. Particularly, the boys cannot be educated according to our religious traditions. Based on the Finnish cultural education, one can see how Somali teenager boys are behaving in the streets. They are drinking alcohol that is forbidden in our religion. Several of them do not want to go to school and have become their parents' humiliation as well as that of the Somali community. Many of the Somali mothers and fathers have already lost their authority over their children" (male, 50 years). [33]

According to the above respondent, the Christian or Western way of bringing up children goes against the Islamic way. He told us that: "the way children are educated in the Finnish family was the consequences of their 'sinful' behaviours (using drug, alcohol and kissing in the street, having sex and children before marriage) in the streets". Comparing the Islamic traditions of bringing up children with the Finnish traditions, several Somali parents questioned what kind of social

education Finnish parents were giving their children at home. They could not understand why Finnish parents allowed their adolescent boys and girls to "hang around" town after school or late at night:

"It is shocking to see Finnish boys and girls drinking, smoking and kissing in the streets. The immigrant adolescents (Somali, Iranian, Iraqi and Bosnian) boys and girls also have started to behave exactly like Finnish adolescents. It is difficult for us Muslim parents to bringing up our children in society like Finland, because we cannot control them. They are taught other social values and lifestyle in the schools" (male, 48 years). [34]

Related to this, some male respondents said they were perplexed about Finnish children's social education and according to them "the so-called children's rights in the Western societies". Two men said:

"Look! There is a growing concern in the Somali community about children's free way of doing things which is considered as a non respect to the Islamic family law. We believe that our children are getting lost in this culture. All these have to do with the changes in our cultural and religious traditions in Finland and the way the Finnish institutions want us to live and how to bring up our children in their society. Our children have right to drink, to have sex before marriage and disobey their parents at home. Children's opinions and wills before those of their parents. The way our boys are educated in the schools in Finland and the way the teachers and social workers want us to bring up them at home is like to educate them to be criminals in the future" (males, 50, 54 years). [35]

4. Discussion and Interpretation

The findings of our case-study are clearly not representative of all the Somali families in Finland. Nevertheless, the sample provided concrete evidence of the parenting practices and social-cultural changes shaping many Somali parents' experiences of family life in Finland. [36]

PELS (2000, p.75) states that: "[g]ender roles and parenting are situated social phenomena and thus they are best understood from a cultural-ecological perspective". [37]

With this in mind it is easy to understand how migrants find themselves confronted with dominant ideals that are often divergent from those of their country of origin. This study has taken this idea forward empirically to show how, after migration to Finland, Somali parents' ideals of child upbringing and parenting roles do not correspond to those hegemonic in the host country. Some parents face quite significant difficulties in this process of transition to a new socio-cultural and economic context, whilst those who find transition easier tend to value the Finnish (Western) familial model relatively highly from the outset. [38]

The social roles and gender-household relations that structure this process of adaptation by migrant families have been remarked upon in relation to Somali

families elsewhere and in this sense our study findings add to a growing evidence base (see BRUNOD & COOK-DARZENS, 2002; WIKLUND, WIKMAN, HÖGBERG & ABDULAZIZ, 2000). In the Somali family, the main responsibility for women is parenting, while men are regarded as the head of the family and the authority in any decision-making. Men and women effectively belong to two different gender spheres, with specific social roles and familial responsibilities. A man's duty is to work and support the family and the woman is to stay at home; cooking, cleaning and taking care of the children (LEWIS, 1993; MAYMUNA, 1994). These patriarchal patterns are unsettled by the migration of Somalis to a socio-cultural and economic context that contains different and arguably more ambiguous, and less patriarchal, household-gender roles and responsibilities. [39]

Men's involvement in domestic chores in Finland was seen as crossing a significant socio-cultural border. For several Somali couples, changes in family life and gender roles sharpened awareness of parental responsibilities towards dependents. The change was in some ways greater for Somali men, however, who harboured cultural traditions that were very different to those of the average Finnish male. In contrast, Somali women's beliefs around marital life and parental roles and responsibilities were quite similar to those held by their Finnish counterparts. Not only is migration gendered, the household experiences of migrants are heavily gendered as well. [40]

Migration is one of the major means by which parents obtain better conditions for their children (TAPIA URIBE, LEVINE & LEVINE, 1993). On moving to Finland, the parameters of parenting and childrearing changed and the potential experiences and opportunities available to Somali children expanded. Many found it difficult to break away from traditional parenting practices and household-gender roles, but because of events and exposure outside the household, often had no option but to adapt. [41]

One aspect of change that was particularly interesting was Somali men's greater propensity to take women's opinions and decisions into account regarding family matters in Finland. Traditional Islamic perspectives of a husband's and wife's role were frequently questioned in the new surroundings, and Somali women became more aware of the contrast between their traditional cultural and religious rules, on the one hand, and the new cultural values and norms of Finnish society on the other. This ongoing process of adjustment was particularly evident in connection with bringing up children. [42]

Somalis come from a collective culture where support from the immediate and extended family system is central (MAITER & TROCMÈ NICO, 2004; PETTYS & BALGOPAL, 1998). The findings of our study show how Somalis' parenting in Finland has changed to become a matter for both parents. The mother and the father, much more than in Somalia under the collective-maternal system, share responsibility for parenting and this shifts the balance of power within the family so that the somewhat distant authoritarian male-breadwinner role declines. PELS' (2000, p.82) research supports this assertion, and it is a transition that is also linked to employment position: "within families of the older and less educated

generation, fathers face a corrosion of their authority. Many of them are unemployed and fail in their role as breadwinner". [43]

Loss of status also results from the fact the children often gain responsibilities as interpreters and advocates for their parents in formal contexts, acting as mediators between the family and outside institutions (PELS, 2000). Somali parents realise that if the needs of their children are not met then the family is at risk. Related to this, the feminine and masculine norms, as Somali culture defines them, are less clearly demarked in children educated in Finland. Marriage as an ideal life-goal, for instance, is less evident, as is the socialisation of Somali girls for a life of domesticity and motherhood. At the same time, the Somali role set out for boys, as breadwinner, is less obtainable within Finish socio-cultural structures. [44]

Looking at the husband-wife dynamic, it is clear that the traditional female role has been much changed by migration (ANDIZIAN & STREIFF, 1982; KUDAT, 1982). Somali women in Finland have moved to a country where historically women have been depicted as strong, independent, active and not dominated by men. The Somali women have experimented with the new values and norms they have encountered and some men have as a response strengthened their authority and adherence to traditional gender roles. For many Somali men changes in gender-household relations are seen as a violation of the Muslim marriage contract. They believe in a negative way that the Somali women have become "Westernised" and that this represents a threat to the cohesion of the Islamic family. [45]

Referring to concerns over Somali adolescents' (boys' and girls') cross-cultural adaptation, our findings support EISIKOVITS' (2000, p.310) study: gender differences in cross-cultural adaptation by adolescents are indications of behavioural shifts. For Somali parents, the boys' adaptation to the Western lifestyles represented a conflict between Islamic values and identity and Western culture. Consequently, this conflict helps explain drug and alcohol misuse, delinquency, non-respect for parents, and other antisocial behaviour. [46]

In contrast, the girls had a more important role in the family than the boys. Parents saw that girls knew their position, respected them, and accepted their social education derived from Somali/Islamic cultural norms. The Somali boys and girls express varying degrees of ambivalence regarding cross-cultural adaptation style and parental education. Boys seemed to have chosen a freedom that conflicted with Islamic values, whereas girls seemed to exhibit more of transitional identity. This later type of transition is exemplified in the following: *"I'm here, but I'm there"*, told to us by a young Somali girl. While they live in Finland, they remain Somalis in many respects. In such a cross-cultural childhood, children are brought up with two sets of cultural norms and expectations. [47]

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, our study has highlighted the difficulties faced by Somali parents in adapting to new parenting practices, husband-wife relations and other changes in migrant family life. Such inevitability in household-gender adaptation after migration has been documented elsewhere (see BERRY, 1980; PADILLA, 1980). [48]

Somali parents face more difficulties with their sons than with their daughters and that this relates to the changes in husband-wife relations after migration. They face also considerable cultural shock upon what they considered as an abnormal behaviour of Finnish adolescents and their parents' relative passivity. [49]

The Finnish authorities, teachers and social workers are also shocked and frustrated by the continuation of Somalis' cultural traditions. These two issues make policies to support migrant families difficult. [50]

In terms of recommendations, we suggest that

1. Immigrant parents receive support upon arrival to combat culture shock, and then continued parenting support if necessary;
2. Authorities, teachers and social workers are made culturally aware of immigrants' traditions, norms and values. [51]

Any interventions would then take place in a more mutually compatible climate of understanding. Future comparative research should support these recommendations. Specifically, we suggest collecting more detailed information on the migrant-family issues raised in the paper, but from different cultural communities in Finland that may well have different gender-household norms and different experiences of transition. [52]

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