



POLICY BRIEF

Pakistani and Bangladeshi heritage mothers' provision of primary education to their children in England during COVID-19: recommendations for involving mothers in policy decision-making processes [version 2; peer review: 2 approved]

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Abstract


During COVID-19, children have suffered learning losses across the world which will likely be carried forward to the future. In England, research and various reports were conducted to understand the extent of learning loss so policy could be improved for a more equitable educational provision. Two key areas were highlighted because of these investigations. Firstly, children in marginalised communities suffered the greatest share of educational disadvantages during COVID-19. Secondly, there is a scarcity of knowledge around the processes surrounding educational environments of learners. This study focused on mothers as partners and facilitators of education especially during COVID-19. Interviews were conducted with eight mothers in England with Pakistani and Bangladeshi heritage exploring their experiences of educating their primary school-aged children during COVID-19. The perspectives of mothers shared with the researchers were analysed by focusing on the physical spaces and the psychological aspects that were experienced since the inception of the pandemic. The findings reveal that mothers were working at multiple fronts to help their children transition smoothly to a new way of learning and living by making a series of contributions. Firstly, mothers adapted the physical spaces so they would suit their children's learning needs. Secondly, they structured time to bring some normalcy to the disrupted patterns of

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living. Thirdly, they drew on social relations to compensate for the socio-emotional gaps that lockdown situations were creating for children. Lastly, they redefined the meaning of education and its advantages and integrated the social and cultural with the formal aspect of education. The findings suggest that policy reform to rehabilitate an equitable education system will need to draw on these rich perspectives. It will be essential for policy discussions in the future to include the lived experiences of mothers in providing timely and tailored educational support to their children.

Keywords

Pakistani, Bangladeshi, mothers and education, England and ethnic diversity, mother-teachers, COVID and minority experiences, COVID and education.

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REVISED Amendments from Version 1

Conceptual description of mothers' philosophies: The work makes a case for a non-scholarly attention to the practice of philosophising in education. A brief explanation has been provided in the first paragraph of the introduction section. The unique experiences of supporting children's education during COVID-19 related lockdowns is theorised in terms of the 'home-school' space (a separate paragraph in the third paragraph of the introduction section).

Sample justification and description: the demographics of the participants have been discussed in detail. A description has been added under the section 'Participants' which provides details for the sample and justifies the selection challenging the prevalent deficit discourses around these communities. This also outlines details such as language and school experience.

Analysis and conclusion: In the previous version there was a brief statement on analysis. In this new version a separate section on analysis has been added to the new draft. The term conclusion has been retained because the brief, aims to propose policy actions. Social and cultural aspects of the findings have been integrated into the policy suggestions.

Any further responses from the reviewers can be found at the end of the article

Introduction

This study provides evidence and proposes policy recommendations through a deeper engagement with the complex learning environments surrounding young people in England during COVID-19. In this study, mothers are seen as a key partners and facilitators of education in the context of the ongoing pandemic. The policy brief makes the case for focusing on what we term mothers' practice of 'philosophising' in education. This term is inspired by hook's (1994) conception of theorising in which she legitimises the critical ability to think philosophically and analytically guided by real life experiences. She argues, 'the possession of a term does not bring a process or practice into being; concurrently one may practice theorizing without ever knowing/possessing the term, just as we can live and act in feminist resistance without ever using the word "feminism"' (p. 61). We argue that without having to claim a scholarly ground for theorising and philosophising mothers do engage deeply making the processes of learning accessible to their children thus showing the capacity to philosophise in a life experience sense if not in a scholarly one.

There is accepted recognition that since the inception of the pandemic, individual and group experiences of students were varied. There is little known about the period in the first half of the year 2021 (UK Office for National Statistics, 2021). From March 2020 till March 2021, England underwent three national lockdowns which were followed by phased school re-openings. Midway through the pandemic when there was some experience of learning during uncertainty, it was recognised that the worst affected students were the ones that were from marginalised communities (Blundell *et al.*, 2020). Since the beginning of the pandemic, it was clear that certain heritage communities (including Pakistani and Bangladeshi)

were affected the worst with considerably higher mortality rates and suffered learning provision gaps. Sibieta and Cottell (2020) in their report on education policy in the UK during COVID-19 note that the type and quality of education provided during lockdowns differed on an individual basis. For example, when blended learning methods were introduced, including recorded, real time and self-study approaches, the learning experience varied depending on the availability of digital resources as well as the outreach capacity of the schools. The authors also discuss how there were discrepancies between the level of home-learning during the pandemic. The overall amount of time spent on educational-activities declined in comparison with the pre-pandemic times.

The space of 'home' is a crucial aspect of education that was highlighted during the pandemic. There was a general consensus that with family members based at home during the multiple lockdowns increased caregiving responsibilities on women caregivers who were looking after the family at the expense of their own needs (Herten-Crabb & Wenham, 2022). Gender inequalities within the care economy were exacerbated urging the need to design policies target to gender, however this was largely ignored at the peak of the pandemic (Norman, 2020). Ethnically diverse communities in the UK suffered greater life losses than their racial counterparts (Moorthy & Sankar, 2020). During this time families with Pakistani and Bangladeshi heritage were highlighted based on higher mortality rates often associated with holding essential jobs (frontline) and overcrowded housing (Bhala *et al.*, 2020). Learning for youth was also greatly affected within these communities because of a lack of facilitation for distance learning (Bayrakdar & Guveli, 2020). The pandemic thus deepened the inequalities around educational provision and social support for these communities. To approach equitable flourishing through policy reform in pandemic futures it makes sense to focus on some of the worst affected without constructing deficit discourses around them. This policy brief takes a positive approach by understanding personal experiences of mothers from these communities educating their children during COVID-19 and using this information to make policy recommendations.

The evidence that has been used to inform policy since the time draws on descriptive evidence that notes trends and associations. There are two important areas highlighted in some policy reports (Gov.uk, 2021; Sibieta & Cottell, 2020). Firstly, a lack of knowledge of *why* and *how* the decline happened in terms of home learning. Secondly, how support was quantified in times of emergency. It is important to consider home-learning as a social interdependent process in which families were adapting to new forms of living. The families and key caregivers were trying to use the physical spaces available at home to their optimum capacity as well as to deal with a different family structure where everyone was at home all the time. In this situation a decline in home-learning is understandable. It is also important to consider that other processes impacting learning were happening alongside school directed learning. Khalid and Singal's (2022) interview-based research with parents (mostly mothers) from ethnically diverse communities in England shows that they were helping their

children adapt to the changing educational landscape through socio-emotional support. It is suggested that even if direct quantification of learning-at-home in terms of time and output had declined, secondary support through other means was happening, perhaps more than pre-pandemic times.

The aspect of social support and the gaps in information about the exact nature of learning during the period between the lockdowns and the re-opening of schools as normal have been documented. The report 'Learning during the pandemic: review of research from England' (Gov.UK, 2021) on 'effective policymaking' shows that the experiences were highly differential for students based on various factors. For example, students from lower socio-economic background, those with learning needs, and receiving state *versus* private schooling vastly varied in the level and quality of educational support that they received. This gap had adverse implications for students' future learning and occupational aspirations. The report acknowledges that 'there is much about learning during the pandemic that remains unknown and under-researched'. The report further states 'there are complex interactions between macro- and micro-level influences that give rise to complex and unique variations in experience'. Filling the informational gap requires a socially complex understanding of learning during COVID-19, one that involves the socio-emotional aspects of how learning goes on in the home generally and in times of emergencies. For this understanding to happen, key stakeholders would need to be brought in the folds of these knowledge creation exercises.

As the pandemic was unfolding, the government was trying to bring stakeholders into rehabilitation processes and decisions through educational policies. The Cambridge Assessment report, 'Covid-19 Curriculum Watch: Education Policy in the first three months of the pandemic' (2020) notes that access was one of the foci of the government whereby schools remained open for vulnerable children and those of key workers to bridge the gap of learning loss for the most affected. Schools were conceptualised as the main educational providers. The difficulties faced in providing education at the beginning of the pandemic show that global education systems are ill prepared for rapidly changing times. This inability was evident during and out of the lockdown periods when a vast majority of staff and students had to miss school because of COVID-19 related isolation requirements. Efforts were made to involve stakeholders, for example, union leaders, teachers' unions, and local authorities. However, in this precarious time the issue of home and parents were not thought of as partners of learning with little understanding of the social processes around learners. This research explores the perspectives of mothers to provide knowledge about how learning happens at home during COVID. For this project eight mothers of Pakistani and Bangladeshi heritage were interviewed in England exploring their experiences of educating their primary school-aged children during the pandemic. Interviews were conducted in the months of September and October of 2021. This was the time that England had resumed normal school activities after having gone through three national lockdowns.

Methodology

Project background

The data are from one of the case studies focused on education conducted for a bigger project entitled: [Bridging the Local and Global: Women's Spaces and Collectives](#). This project was a collaboration between the University of Oxford, Newcastle University, and Durham University. The education case study was entitled 'Diverse heritage mothers' provision of primary education to their children in England: Experiencing time and space during the COVID-19 pandemic'. The education case study was led by one of the authors (Aliya Khalid) and was independent of the other aspects (legal and archival) of the project. Aliya Khalid as the Principal Investigator was involved in the development and oversight (management, conceptualisation, analytical support, reviewing and writing) of the project. Kate Spencer-Bennett helped in the designing of research instruments, conceptual contributions, and data collection. Lavinia Kamphausen was involved in the data analysis and writing and presentation of research outputs.

Participants

The mothers included in the study are not characteristic of some of the discourses that define these communities as socio-economically and culturally disadvantaged. All the mothers were highly educated living in a mix of nuclear and multiple generation families, were fluent in English, had received some kind of education in England, and had the knowledge to help their children with technology. Some moved to their native countries during the pandemic to enrich their children's understanding of culture later using that as a resource for holistic learning. There were 9 participants from across England (North, South and East) in the sample. All were mothers of primary school age children studying in state schools. The age range was set to primary school children considering that care responsibilities are greater for mothers with younger children. All the mothers were below 45 years of age. The number of children ranged from 1 to 4. Their education also varied with a majority having received university education. The mothers were employed in various work activities, some were professionals, some had left their professions to look after family, some were students, others were full-time employed at home. Most of these mothers had immigrated since a long time with some born in England. Family type and professional characteristics are illustrated in [Table 1](#).

Participant selection and recruitment

Participants were identified from Aliya Khalid's previous work in the area and Kate Spencer-Bennett's PhD fieldwork at the University of Birmingham. The participants were identified using purposive snowball sampling using the criteria of having Pakistani or Bangladeshi heritage and primary school age children. The participants were approached through email and phone calls. A poster was created for this purpose which was disseminated in social media groups and shared with volunteer parents to share in their circles. The poster is attached as [Figure 1](#). The poster provided clickable links to the project page as well as researcher profiles including the Principal Investigator's.

Table 1. Family type and professional characteristics of mothers.

Mothers	Ethnic	Migration	Family type	Educational/professional background
M1	Bangladeshi British	Second generation	Patchwork family with step and own children	Teacher turned home maker
M2	Pakistani British	No information	Single parent family	Solicitor turned home maker
M3	Bangladeshi British	First generation	Multigenerational family	Pre-school educator
M4	Pakistani British	First generation	Nuclear family who moved to native country where they lived in a multigenerational house	MPhil
M5	Pakistani British	First generation	Single parent family	Dentist
M6	Pakistani British	First generation	Nuclear family	Going to university
M7	Pakistani British	First generation	Nuclear family	Pre-school educator
M8	Pakistani British	No information	Nuclear family	Going to university
M9	Pakistani British	No information	Nuclear	Going to university

**Figure 1. Participant recruitment poster.**

An information sheet was developed which contained detailed information about the project and the participants' rights. Many of these participants knew Aliya and/or Kate or knew of them through their family and friends. Before the start of each interview the positioning of the researcher was someone conducting a project to understand the experiences of mothers and a mother herself. The participants were also given the time to ask any clarification questions and to confirm that they were happy to take part in the project.

Data collection

This research draws on eight semi-structured interviews conducted with mothers of Pakistani and Bangladeshi heritage

in England educating their children as part of the education case study. The interviews were conducted online via [Zoom](#). Both audios and videos were recorded but only audios were saved and treated as data. The participants were also invited to share any images they wanted if they so wished to share. The interviews drew on a narrative approach involving questions related with the experience of physical and social space during the changing time of the pandemic since its inception (*Extended data: Interview schedule*, [Khalid et al., 2022](#)). The interviews were based on a conceptual framing drawing on the concept of aspirations from the capability literature ([Conradie & Robeyns, 2013](#)) seeking to understand how mothers worked towards their educational aspirations for their children. [Lefebvre's \(1991\)](#) idea

of rhythmanalysis was used to include question about mothers' experience of space, time and interaction. For this policy brief, we analysed the interview data by reading through the various reflections shared by mothers and relating them with current policy debates on inequality of learning experiences during COVID-19. The images shared with us were used as artifacts helping us to further understanding their experiences. A collage of some images is illustrated in Figure 2.

Data analysis

Since COVID is a unique period, in order to understand mothers' experiences, the research instruments needed to collect data about space, time and expenditure of energy/activities and the relationships between them. Although the design of the study was a collective process, the conceptual framing for data collection was developed by one of the authors of the paper (Kate Bennet). Lefebvre's concepts provided a strong base for collecting and narratively analysing this type of data. Narrative approach helped in analysing holistic life experiences during the time including the space, social interaction and time related changes during and after the onset of the pandemic (Clandinin & Connely, 2000). The key areas covered during data collection and analysis are illustrated in Table 2.

Findings

Research showed some insightful trends in the ways that mothers adopted various approaches so that their children could

have a smooth transition in their learning experiences. The mothers (like fathers) adapted their roles, being involved in more responsibilities than ever before. It is also noteworthy that the confined space of home where all the family members lived 24 hours a day had to be adapted so that some form of structure could be retained to be as close to normalcy as possible. There are four main findings from the study that have direct implications for policy. Mothers had to make (physical) space: making optimal use of what was available, make time: structuring during unpredictable times, make relations: drawing on family relations to revive social experiences, and redefine learning, supported by social and cultural interactions.

Making space: making optimal use of what was available

With the lockdown and the closing of physical schools in the UK in March 2020, one of the major public institutions is relocated home, *the private space per se*. One of the participants summarises: 'Our personal space is being invaded'. With this move of the school home, an extensive task moves home as well: Educating primary school children. Data shows that with this relocation of the school home, the private space does not simply change.

Rather, the impulse and the necessity to actively make space becomes salient for almost all the participating women in this case study. After the involuntary move of the school home,



Figure 2. Mothers' experiences of educating their children during COVID-19.

Table 2. Collecting and analysing information on space, time, and activity.

Theme	Questions
Place and Space	Where did home-schooling take place? What did the workspaces look like? Can you describe/draw the relevant spaces? (Photographs?) What resources did you use? (And questions below regarding links with other)
Time and temporality	Would you like to tell us about a typical day? Did you have a schedule from school? Did you have any routines? How did home-schooling fit around other commitments? What are the most memorable moments from home-schooling during the lockdown? Would you like to tell us about your best and worse experiences?
Energy and Action	Describe your approach to home schooling. Did you teach your children things? Did you follow the activities suggested by the school? How did you try to make the work accessible? What were your aims when home-schooling? What do you hope for, for your children? Did you feel linked to others during this time?/How did you make links with others during this time? Did the school plan virtual catch up or online lessons of any kind? Was social media important to you? School learning platforms?

*The table was developed by one of the authors.

it is women who then shape the specific arrangement of this change of the private space. A process characterised by their agency, ideas and concepts of education is initiated.

Making time: structuring during unpredictable times

With school moving to the private, new rhythms and routines come home too. Interviews show that these are both determined by external factors and freely decided upon by the families and mothers. Several participants' examples underline the simultaneity of adopting structure and routine brought into the family from the outside, for example, from school, and the mothers' active making of time, for example, time for outdoor exercise.

During the first lockdown in March 2020, a whole range of temporal dimensions come together and are consequently perceptible in the women's narratives. Two key layers of these are the question of how long this exceptional state will last – a question nobody can answer, particularly at the beginning of the first lockdown – and the question of how to organise daily life during that time.

Making relations: drawing on family relations to revive social experiences

The making of space and time during the pandemic leads to the formation, revival, change and recalibration of various communities, both in the family and beyond. Data reveals how communities of practice around home-schooling primary

school children and closer family communities lead to the re-emergence of connection – between parents and children, mothers and teachers, children, and their cousins as well as women among one another. It becomes obvious: Education is a collective endeavour. The formation of (new) communities goes hand in hand with the emergence, shifts and recalibration of relationships. Families grow closer together. Family Zoom calls and communication in WhatsApp groups are used to keep the family together. The relationship between parents and children in particular intensifies.

Reflecting on education: redefining learning, supported by social and cultural interactions

The making of space, time, and relationships as well as the mothers' home-schooling is accompanied by them intensively philosophising about their children's education. Philosophising, in this context, appears as an everyday activity. The major break which the start of the global pandemic constitutes as well as ample everyday moments in the women's interactions with their children, other family members and newly raised demands regarding education result in rich philosophical reflections. The start of the lockdown, it appears, is an impulse which induces the women to intensify, adapt and refine their philosophies around education.

Policy recommendations

The most important finding of this research suggests that to understand the intricate processes that surround students'

experiences of learning in England during the turbulent time of COVID-19, is that policy must view mothers as key stakeholders in educational policy decision-making processes. Several policy implications can be drawn from this key finding:

- **Conceptual shift of parents/mothers from diverse backgrounds as source of knowledge in policy narratives:** by conceptualising parents and mothers from underserved groups as providers of valuable knowledge to improve educational policy and practices. In this regard involving parents on educational policy is recommended.
- **Inclusion of parents/mothers' perspectives on high levels of policy reform efforts:** Policy reform around justice for ethnically diverse communities has focused on 'bridging achievement gaps for different ethnic groups' and school practices. It is essential for the policy focus to adopt nuanced ways of seeking information beyond the school space. Mothers within culturally diverse communities in England are experienced in developing enabling environments within the material and social means available to their families. It is therefore essential for present and future policy decision making to assess the needs of and improve equitable education provision, bringing mothers to the table during the discussions around child development and education.
- **Policies for schools to engage with parents for learning content and delivery related decisions:** During lockdown, mothers took the initiative of restructuring physical spaces and redesigning curriculum to suit the needs of their children. This skill and knowledge remain with the mothers who are now better equipped to support learning. Education policy would benefit from efforts to enhance home (mothers) and school knowledge exchanges focused on how to support children in learning, using the available resources in school and how to compliment them at home (a skill that many mothers have mastered during COVID).
- **Learning the role of play and culture from parents:** School policy narratives should expand the definition of formal education to include creative pursuits as non-outcome based essential support for a socio-emotionally healthy learning environment. Mothers were involved in playful activities to make learning seem enjoyable (Figure 2). Creative pursuits in conversation with mothers should be made an integral part of a wellbeing agenda that brings the home and school together.
- **Drawing on sociocultural diversity as a tool for inclusive and holistic education:** In gathering evidence to inform policy, recommendations should include analytical tools to account for socio-cultural aspects nested in a child's home learning environment. As noted in this study, culture was used by mothers as a resource for a

holistic education. Educational institutions and policies that draw on cultural understandings to inform educational provision are likely to progress equitable learning.

Conclusion/Discussion

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, educational policies in England have focused on the learning experiences of students across England. There is a growing recognition that the pandemic had differential impacts on students based on the level of disadvantage that they face in the education system and was highly gendered (Blundell *et al.*, 2020). The project sheds light on the interdependent relationship of mothers' responsibilities and work opportunities with them being at higher risk in time of precarity (Giovanis & Ozdamar, 2020). Research also shows that ethnically diverse communities were overwhelmingly impacted by the pandemic (Bhala *et al.*, 2020). Throughout the pandemic, ongoing reports have highlighted the types of impact and the nature of learning losses (Gov.uk, 2021). To bridge the access and provision gaps, the government devised policies to improve the situation, such as increasing access through school-based provision, providing digital devices for families and bringing stakeholders to the table to improve policies for the future. There were gaps in the information base required to understand the processes surrounding children's education in an unprecedented time of the pandemic. This study provides some insights into *how* learning was mediated by mothers during COVID-19, who were themselves worst affected socially and emotionally. The research shows that even when the pandemic posed challenges to these mothers, they it is unfair to only define them through the challenges. As noted in this policy brief mothers were involved very actively in facilitating education and making learning accessible by drawing on cultural and social resources. This work therefore urges for an active inclusion of the perspectives of these mothers as knowledge bearers for their children's equitable access to learning. Mothers and parents comprise an essential part of the learning environments within which children learn and grow. Their perspectives can help make great improvements while working towards rehabilitation for the educational system that was adversely impacted by COVID-19.

Ethical approval and consent

Official ethical approval was sought from and approved by the ethics committee at the University of Durham ethics policy review panel, with reference number (worktribe: LAW-2021-06-01T15_19_18-sqs17). The ethics review stated that written consent would be sought. Online interviews were conducted, and consent was sought in two ways, (i) an email confirmation of participation was considered as written consent. (ii) A form was sent out outlining the project information which included a project summary as well as ethics information (using BERA 2018 ethics framework), their rights as participants, and the responsibilities of the researcher towards them. The form included the statement: 'Many thanks for your interest in the project. If you are happy to take part or would like

more information, please email Kate Spencer-Bennett'. Only the participants who emailed the researcher to confirm that they were happy to take part were interviewed. Since mothers of young children who are employed in educational and care activities are extremely busy, we did not rely on one-off communicated consent. At the start of each interview, the information sheet was discussed giving them the opportunity to reconsider their participation. The participants were also assured that the raw data would be highly confidential. Verbal-consent is valued in academic literature while working with ethnically diverse communities (Southern contexts-the context of participants in this study) because of the complexities in the practical translation of tick-box approaches to ethics in Southern contexts (Robinson-Pant & Singal, 2013). Online documents would require digital signatures. Experience from previous research with similar communities in England (Khalid & Singal, 2023) showed that digital signatures required appropriate technology and added to the accessibility of the forms for parents, so we took a twin approach to seek informed consent. The participants gave written informed consent for sharing images, some of which have faces of their children visible.

Consent

We have obtained written informed consent from the legal guardian of the minors confirming that any accompanying images will be published for the purpose of the policy brief and any other academic publications.

Data availability

Underlying data

The participants were assured at the beginning of the project that their interview data will not be shared with a third party. The participants agreed to participate under this condition. The data contained some personal reflections about family roles and can be detrimental to the participants if shared widely. The data sharing agreement between the universities of Oxford (at the time Cambridge), Durham and Newcastle stated that the data will be shared between the parties with only the research team having access. The agreement states that in case

third party access is needed to the data, sufficient information will be needed for the data subject.

Please provide the following information for seeking access to the data:

- The name and designation of the applicant
- The purpose of the request
- How will the data be used?
- Will the data be published? Where? And why?
- The description of the project for which the data is requested
- The context of the use of the data

The information will be shared with all of the data subjects. Data will be released only when **all** of them have agreed for their data to be shared.

Extended data:

Zenodo: Interview schedule: Pakistani and Bangladeshi heritage mothers' provision of primary education to their children in England during COVID-19: recommendations for involving mothers in policy decision-making processes. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7415996> (Khalid *et al.*, 2022).

This project contains the following extended data:

- Interview schedule.pdf

Data are available under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license](#) (CC-BY 4.0).

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Reviewer Report 14 November 2023

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Ghazala Bhatti

School of Education, Bath Spa University, Bath, UK

Thank you for this the revision. I think this is much better now and can be indexed.

Competing Interests: No competing interests were disclosed.

I confirm that I have read this submission and believe that I have an appropriate level of expertise to confirm that it is of an acceptable scientific standard.

Reviewer Report 25 October 2023

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Hibah Aladsani 

Department of Curricula and Instruction "Education Technology", School of Education, King Faisal University, Al-Ahsa, Saudi Arabia

I have reviewed the second version of the article. I hereby grant my approval.

Competing Interests: No competing interests were disclosed.

I confirm that I have read this submission and believe that I have an appropriate level of expertise to confirm that it is of an acceptable scientific standard.

Version 1

Reviewer Report 26 April 2023

<https://doi.org/10.21956/routledgeopenres.18943.r27016>

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**Hibah Aladsani**

Department of Curricula and Instruction "Education Technology", School of Education, King Faisal University, Al-Ahsa, Saudi Arabia

In this article, the authors examine the role Pakistani and Bangladeshi mothers play during Covid-19 in the education of their children. The article focuses on marginalised communities during Covid-19 who are most at risk of educational disadvantage.

The manuscript is certainly well written and attractive, but I have a few comments.

1. In the introduction, "There are two important areas highlighted in the policy reports". Could you provide a reference for your statement?
2. I suggest moving the section of Ethical approval and consent to acknowledgment.
3. In the findings, there is no mention of the overload of responsibilities on mothers caused by distance learning during Covid-19, which the most relevant studies mentioned. (See Aladsani, H. K. (2022). The perceptions of female breadwinner parents regarding their children's distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Education and Information Technologies*, 27(4), 4817-4839.)
4. I have enjoyed reading Policy recommendations. Could you expand your recommendation in the area of social and cultural aspects?
5. How did the researchers analyse the data?
6. Add a section of the discussion. The finding should be connected and discussed on recent literature and theories.

References

1. Aladsani HK: The perceptions of female breadwinner parents regarding their children's distance learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. *Educ Inf Technol (Dordr)*. 2022; **27** (4): 4817-4839 [PubMed Abstract](#) | [Publisher Full Text](#)

Does the paper provide a comprehensive overview of the policy and the context of its implementation in a way which is accessible to a general reader?

Yes

Is the discussion on the implications clearly and accurately presented and does it cite the current literature?

Partly

Are the recommendations made clear, balanced, and justified on the basis of the presented arguments?

Yes

Competing Interests: No competing interests were disclosed.

Reviewer Expertise: Qualitative research - education technology

I confirm that I have read this submission and believe that I have an appropriate level of expertise to confirm that it is of an acceptable scientific standard, however I have significant reservations, as outlined above.

Author Response 01 May 2023

Aliya Khalid

Dear reviewer, We are grateful for your time and valuable comments. We have worked through the new draft to accommodate all the comments. Please find the responses noted below:

1. In the introduction, "There are two important areas highlighted in the policy reports". Could you provide a reference for your statement?

Response: This information has now been added to 'Introduction' paragraph No 4.

2. I suggest moving the section of Ethical approval and consent to acknowledgment.

Response: This has been done

3. In the findings, there is no mention of the overload of responsibilities on mothers caused by distance learning during Covid-19, which the most relevant studies mentioned. (See Aladsani, H. K. (2022). The perceptions of female breadwinner parents regarding their children's distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Education and Information Technologies*, 27(4), 4817-4839.)

Response: Studies relevant to these communities have been discussed and added to the work. See 'Introduction' paragraph No 3

4. I have enjoyed reading Policy recommendations. Could you expand your recommendation in the area of social and cultural aspects?

Response: Another recommendation has been added in line with the sociocultural

knowledge. See recommendation point 5

5. How did the researchers analyse the data?

Response: A separate section on 'Analysis' has been added

6. Add a section of the discussion. The finding should be connected and discussed on recent literature and theories.

Response: Literature has been added to the conclusion section. This section has intentionally been termed as conclusion/summary and not discussion due to the policy-oriented nature of the brief.

Competing Interests: there are no competing interests to report

Reviewer Report 20 February 2023

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Ghazala Bhatti

School of Education, Bath Spa University, Bath, UK

As a place of information to the academic / general community it is certainly a good idea to share what was researched and how data was gathered. I noted that there was no mention of theory as such. Maybe that is embedded in narrative i.e. as a feminist contribution perhaps? There are some questions.

1. Under the section 'Reflecting on education- redefining learning, supported by social and cultural interaction' - mothers' philosophies about education is mentioned. What is that exactly? The word 'perception' or 'understanding' might be more appropriate than 'philosophy'
2. The idea of school home has not been problematized. How many generations were living at home- grand parents/ parents/ etc? Were all families nuclear families? The reason for asking this question is that census information repeatedly shows over-crowding and comparative ill health within minority ethnic households, and particularly Pakistani and Bangladeshi homes. This includes mental health - and women/mothers are more at risk.
3. 'Certain' kinds of mothers took part in this research. Can the eight mothers be defined as second or third or fourth generation (children of migrants themselves)/ were they educated in UK? This is a significant omission about background information and it will help

the reader understand the context and research findings better.

4. Could all the mothers speak and write English fluently?
5. Could a case be made for teachers "including" the mothers when deciding the taught curriculum?
6. These are not 'typical' South Asian mothers or are they? Are these mothers born and educated in UK? They have access to technology and can help their children with homework. This is not the case in many Bangladeshi and Pakistani working class homes. Some cross-referencing with census data (if at all possible) will strengthen the 'context'

Does the paper provide a comprehensive overview of the policy and the context of its implementation in a way which is accessible to a general reader?

Yes

Is the discussion on the implications clearly and accurately presented and does it cite the current literature?

Yes

Are the recommendations made clear, balanced, and justified on the basis of the presented arguments?

Yes

Competing Interests: No competing interests were disclosed.

I confirm that I have read this submission and believe that I have an appropriate level of expertise to confirm that it is of an acceptable scientific standard, however I have significant reservations, as outlined above.
