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# **“Only the wind hears you...” The experiences of Pakistani girls in a primary school: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis**

## **Abstract**

The experiences of Pakistani pupils at school are little documented. This article introduced findings from an Interpretive Phenomenological Study that investigated the experiences of a group of Year 6 pupils from a Pakistani cultural background. It is recognised in research focused on ethnic minority children that there are significant differences between different ethnic groups in terms of attainment levels, social background and levels of special educational need (DFE, 2008). However, public and political rhetoric tends to speak of ethnic minorities as a homogeneous group. The lead author and researcher is from a Pakistani background and as such is particularly interested in the primary school experiences of Pakistani pupils, recognising the important part primary school plays in the life of all young children. There is a particular focus here on how experiences of school intersect and are interwoven with other areas of life such as peers relations, home environment and community culture, which are all important in shaping and developing children's sense of who they are. This interest in exploring the Pakistani experience is timely as there is a great deal of negative media attention surrounding Muslims characterised as “Islamophobia” (Ghaffar-Kucher, 2012). This negative media attention contributes to the context in which young Pakistani school children develop a sense of self and seek a sense of place in 21<sup>st</sup> century Britain.

Semi-structured interviews were carried out with four primary school pupils from Pakistani backgrounds from Year Six, aged between 10 to 11 years old from the same school. The narratives were analysed from these interviews using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). IPA is an interpretative, idiographic approach to methodology which is used to generate super-ordinate and sub-ordinate themes. The analysis found seven super-ordinate themes: the emotional experience of learning, the cultural impact of the school curriculum, the importance of enduring friendships, the impact of the segregation between communities, the impact of gendered power struggles, the impact of bullying and the impact of cultural identity. Implications for service planning and educational psychologists are discussed.

**Key words:** Pakistani, ethnicity, experiences, marginalisation, school, child voice

## **Introduction**

This research was developed from a feminist perspective with the specific aim of uncovering marginalized voices and hidden experiences. Incorporating a transformative paradigm which aims to view the meaning of knowledge through a cultural lens and examine the power relationships which determine legitimate knowledge (Mertens, 2010). Therefore, the relationship between the participant and researcher and the knowledge produced by their interaction is considered interactive and characterised by cultural complexities. Indeed Haraway (1988) argues that research should be empowering for the participants, and as such requires reflection regarding the power relationships inherent in the research process and the political dimension of all research. A continued consideration is required throughout the research process of whose interests such relationships serve.

## **Relevant literature informing the study**

Modood and Berthoud (1997) explained how ethnic minority's presence in Britain grew substantially through the importing of cheap labour from former British colonies in the 1960s and 70s. These immigrants produced their own communities who wished to retain a degree of autonomy from the mainstream society through the maintenance of their own cultural practices. Modood and Berthoud (1997) argue that such communities assert their identities by challenging existing power relations and demanding public acknowledgement, resources and representation.

Mirza (1992) conducted an ethnographic study of 62 Afro Caribbean girls aged between 15 and 19 years from two comprehensive schools. She found in her studies that teachers held negative stereotypes of black girls' educational achievement. For example, during interviews Mirza found that 75 percent of teachers reported at least one negative comment. One fifth year (Year 11) teacher stated: "Most of these girls will never succeed...they are unable to remember, the girls just can't make it at this level ("O" level and CSE), never mind what is demanded in higher education" (p53). Mirza (1992) found that girls did not internalise these negative views and were aware and keen to challenge such attitudes. Gillborn (1997) points to historical ethnographic studies in schools which revealed stereotypes held by teachers of Afro-Caribbean pupils as threatening and Asian pupils as conforming. Such stereotypes were

related to behaviour in school. Black pupils were seen as a threat to the order of the classroom even when there was none. Gillborn (1997) described South Asian young people also experiencing school as a racist institution but the stereotypes and consequences of interactions with teachers differ greatly from Afro-Caribbean pupils. Gillborn (1997) found qualitative studies have revealed ethnic stereotypes which have closed down educational opportunities for young Asian people. Teachers assume such communities are run by authoritarian, even violent males, who have no interest in the education of their children. These views lower the expectations of teachers particularly for young Asian women. Asian males in contrast to Afro-Caribbean's are perceived of as having better ability and behaviour with Asian females viewed as passive and therefore "invisible" or unimportant in relation to discourses around ethnic minorities.

Archer (2001) uses a feminist approach to examine the identity of British Muslim boys. Archer (2001) is critical of global preoccupations of "Muslim men", while noting men from Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi backgrounds are invisible in academic literature of "black masculinity". Archer (2001) conducted discussion groups with 24 British Muslims, aged 14-15 years from three schools in a medium sized town in the north-west of England. Of the young men, 16 came from Pakistani families, six from Bangladeshi families and two were identified from Pakistani-Kenyan backgrounds. Archer (white, British female) conducted half of the discussions and a British-Pakistani female (Tamar) conducted the other half. Archer (2001) found that the boys used black, Asian and Muslim masculine identities in differing ways including as a form of solidarity against racism and as resistance to whiteness but also as a way of differentiating themselves between black groups and to assert masculine power. By changing the interviewer, Archer attempted to illustrate the impact this has over the discourse. Archer found that the young men were more likely to share their more radical views with Tamar and were more guarded with Archer. The boys tried to assert their authority over Tamar as an Asian woman through criticism of her western identity (p90). Archer's study suggests that differences and contradictions in discussions between different interviewers highlight how knowledge is produced within and through racialized and gendered interactions between participants and researchers (2001, p99). Archer (2002) wished to investigate claims that Muslim girls' lack of participation in post-16 education was due to cultural constraints or low teacher expectations and racism. Archer (2002) conducted single sex discussion groups with 64 British Muslim males and females, aged 14-15. A mismatch was found between what the Muslim boys were saying influenced the post-16

choices of Muslim girls and the girls own motivations for their choices. The boys would reinforce stereotypical views of Asian girls being restricted culturally, by arguing that the parents would decide whether a girl would attend college. Whereas the girls reported that it was their choice to attend college and that their families encouraged post-16 education (2002, p.367). Archer interpreted the boys' constructions as a way of bonding the boys together as the dominating sex and attempting to maintain the females in a traditional feminine role as passive and without agency (2002, p.364).

Ghaffar-Kucher (2012) in her study of male and female Pakistani students in America, found that even though Muslim participants tried to challenge negative stereotypes of Muslims, they also played on terrorist stereotypes using humour to defy teachers and their non-Muslim peers. Ghaffar-Kucher (2012) found that the teachers in her study viewed current students' behaviour as more difficult than previous students. Thus, male students were viewed as *inflexible*, or *narrow-minded* (p45). Ghaffar-Kucher (2012) found that teachers viewed Pakistani boys as problematic and Pakistani girls as oppressed victims of Islam who would not be allowed to go to college and would be "married off". Such stereotypes limited the amount of careers guidance that these girls would receive. These domesticated and traditional stereotypes were in contrast to the actual experience of Muslims girls who reported no such restrictions in this study (2012, p.28). Only one of the 27 girls interviewed indicated that she could be "married off" instead of attending college (28).

## **Participants**

A purposive approach was used to recruit year pupils in the same primary school in order to increase the homogeneity of the sample. Four girls were recruited from the same year six class, aged between 10 and 11 years old. Although IPA requires a homogenous sample, this does not imply that they are identical rather it aids uniformity (for example age and social context) so that the researcher can analyse "the pattern of convergence and divergence which arises" (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009, p 50). All the participants were born in Britain, however, their parents (or one parent) and grandparents originated from Pakistan. All participants engaged in a single interview in May or June 2013. The interviews followed a semi-structured format lasting between 45-50 minutes.

## **Data Analysis**

Smith et al. (2009) describe IPA as embodying certain processes and an emphasis on understanding the participant's view with the focus on personal meaning in particular contexts. The analysis uses an inductive cycle through the following stages as described in the table below:

(Smith et al., 2009, p79)

- Transcription of taped interviews
- Line by line analysis of concerns and understandings of each participant
- Identifying emerging themes within thesedata highlighting commonality and difference for each case and then across multiple cases
- The researcher develops a “dialogue” between themselves, their themed data and psychological knowledge to ascertain the meaning behind these concerns within this particular context (Smith, 2004)
- A structure is developed which brings the relationships between these themes together or “gestalt”
- The organisation of this material is transparent because the analysed data can be traced back through the process of transcription and emerging themes
- The interpretation is supported through supervision or collaboration so that it is coherent and valid
- A visual guide such as a table or diagram to supplement the narrative of analyses theme by theme
- Reflection of the researcher of their own perceptions throughout this process (Smith, 2007)

**Table 1: Stages of Analysis**

The super-ordinate and sub-ordinate themes that were generated are displayed below:

The emotional experience of learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Passon for learning</li><li>•Diffiulties with learning</li></ul>
The cultural impact of the school curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Differentiation</li><li>•Cultural Capital</li></ul>
The importance of enduring friendships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Strength and Trust</li><li>•Lasting</li><li>•Unity</li></ul>
The impact of segregation between communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Turbulant Relations</li><li>•Marginalisation and Discrimination</li><li>•Impact of Langauge</li><li>•Adults being unfair</li><li>•Female Subregation and Bullying</li></ul>
The impact of gendered power struggles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Segregation</li><li>•Adult responses</li><li>•Gendered subjects</li></ul>
The impact of bullying	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Physical bullying</li><li>•Ritual humiliation</li><li>•Isolation</li></ul>
The impact of cultural identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Suppression of identity</li><li>•Resilience and strength from religion and culture</li><li>•Detachment and rejection of British mixed schools</li><li>•Religious beliefs and customs</li></ul>

**Table 2: Super-ordinate and sub-ordinate themes**

The super-ordinate themes are now discussed.

### **The emotional experience of learning**

Three of the participants expressed their passion for learning in and out of school:

*Like I just like writing stories, them play scripts even at home I've got a book and I write lots of play scripts and stories in it.* (Samina, 3.103-104)

*I've never gone to Mrs Slee all these years except for, for my gold chart to show her and get prizes* (Tanya, 12.432-433)

The enjoyment of subjects at school was very clear, particularly sports and cricket which brought the class together. However, Samina went further than just participating, she wanted to share her knowledge in Religious Education (RE), “*And when Miss Best comes in erm and she does RE and I like it cos like I get to learn different religions and I get to share things about Islam what I know about Islam*” (2.46-48). Samina points to her own particular interest in Islam and how she shares with the class, making the learning more personal and meaningful. She gives an example of child-centred learning where school is not just a place to disseminate knowledge but to gain knowledge from the pupils themselves.

### **The cultural impact of the school curriculum**

Cultural capital was a strong sub-ordinate theme for three participants. Trips provided value which included a range of diverse experiences adding to participants’ experience of school. For Ada, school trips represented the first experience of certain animals:

“*We went to I don't remember which trip, and we went to a farm or something and I liked it there because that was our first trip and I hadn't been to a different trip before, that was like the first time*” (Ada, 7.246-250). “*The first time*” signifies the beginning of the importance trips would have in their lives and how trips provided an added dimension to their school experience, generating the wonder, the thrill of new experiences which produced lasting memories.

### **The importance of enduring friendships**

The sub-ordinate theme of unity was strong amongst the four female participants and almost took on a political fervour. Here, Samina specifically singles out her religion and gender as the unifying factors of her friendships, “*Aaina and Zeba, Zoya, Zarina ...nearly all the Muslim girls*” (13.484). Ada describes how the Muslim girls became friends, “*Then gradually we all came together. And then we were all in one group*” (10.379-380). Ada appears to suggest that all the Muslim girls became one group as a response to the hostility and unfriendliness that was experienced from the other communities in school. Such unity also points to the problematic nature of excluding other communities from such strong

friendship circles, “*Us Pakistani girls like we don’t like being with goray<sup>1</sup> girls er we like to be with Pakistani girls*” (10, 380-381). Ada makes a very strong statement without self-consciousness or apology which suggests that such views are aired casually without consequence or could be common practice amongst her friendship group.

### ***The impact of the segregation between communities***

All the participants spoke strongly about the turbulent relations that existed between the communities at school. “*I like to get well on with the Lithuanians as well but then sometimes they don’t want to get on with me*” (Tanya, 15.571-572).

Samina provides a strong visual image of the division between the communities as reflected by the division in the playground, the other communities are on the “*other side of the playground*”. Divisions are created not only culturally and linguistically but also reflected by the environment at school. Samina also describes the unity between community members which serve to isolate her even when she is in the right. This unity amongst community members is consistent with Ada’s earlier proclamations of the unity amongst Muslim girls. However, the unity amongst the white communities to subjugate Samina is not recognised as the same unity amongst the Pakistani girls which excludes the white and other communities.

“*At first the classes used to be okay, used to be till Year Three. Year Two and Year Three and then all the Lithuanian start coming to England so...then it started going a little bit dirty and everything*” (Ada, 6.224-227). Ada provides her experience of the immigration of the Lithuanian community. “*The Lithuanians coming to England*” sounds like a headline of a tabloid paper, overheard from adults, a popular narrative in the community and the wider society. It is ironic that Ada’s parents or grandparents would have been immigrants and may have faced the same hostility and prejudice. It appears that Ada perceives the Lithuanians as the reason for altering her experience of school which may be a case of lying educational issues at the doors of another community. Or are the difficulties between communities so great that the whole experience of school can be changed?

### ***Segregation and Discrimination***

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<sup>1</sup>goray is “white” in Urdu

The sub-ordinate theme of segregation and discrimination provides an uncomfortable and emotive response from the participants and researcher. Prejudiced attitudes appeared somewhat normalised and the researcher was also struck by how easily the participants were able to vocalise these views, perhaps not understanding the significance or implications of what they were saying.

*“The others are friends like the Lithuanians with Lithuanians and Muslims with Muslims”* (Samina, 13.492-493). *Lithuanians with Lithuanians and Muslims with Muslims* remain steadfast in their groups, secure in their own knowledge of victimization and prejudice, each fearing the other group with similar issues.

*“Now the Lithuanians go past and all the roads streets be dirty, all have rubbish on the floor”* (Ada, 7.232-233). As Ada shares a narrative depicting prejudice, it is clear that the victims of prejudiced views of others can also mirror and perpetuate prejudice based on ethnicity and culture difference. During the interview the researcher attempted to elicit a positive or alternative view about other communities by asking Ada, “Has there been a time when you have worked with the other people?” (13, 474-475). However, Ada’s reply was in a similar vein as earlier comments, *“Sometimes we work with these Lithuanians. I try to get away from them, they nick stuff, that’s what I hate”* (13, 476-477). Ada appears so problem-saturated that she cannot envisage a different narrative about the Lithuanians. Now Lithuanians are not only dirty they are also thieves.

However, Ada and Tanya did provide positive examples of interaction between Lithuanians that were facilitated by the school. For example, *“do you know these other two Lithuanians they’re okay. Like sometimes when we work with them in a group, well they don’t have any body and they be okay”* (Ada, 13. 500-503). Tanya described when she worked with a Lithuanian, *“Then I went with her, I worked with her and then I got five effort points because I worked with her because no one wanted to work with her cos they were all started being nasty to her”* (16. 591-594). Tanya found that working with this girl produced a positive result, *“she just be’s kind to me now erm she says “thank you for helping me” and then I said “it’s alright”* (16. 608-609). However, although some barriers had been broken down, Tanya did not repeat this experience because *“she wanted to work with her friend instead”* (16. 604).

*“They’ll be tapping me every minute like (small voice) “hickory dickory dock.”* (Farah, 12.438-439) Farah provides a painful and uncomfortable description of Lithuanians repeating a nursery rhyme using her name. Nursery rhymes are supposed to offer comfort,

familiarity, a positive reminder of childhood and primary school but here it is used to cause discomfort.

### ***The impact of language***

The sub-ordinate theme of the impact of language reveals how the discrimination that these participants feel so strongly about and are threatened by is heightened by the Lithuanian community having their own language. Previously, it was the Pakistanis who were the only people who had a different, secret language as described by Ada. Lithuanians owning a different language is perceived by a number of participants as somehow devaluing and threatening the Pakistani pupils' position in school.

*“Some people you know like Lithuanians they, I don’t know whose learnt em but they like say swear words in our language”* (Samina, 6.213-214). Samina is outraged by someone from another community understanding and using her language. The fact that swear words are being used in her language reinforces her sense of moral outrage at this injustice. Samina cannot envisage another community understanding her language and even worse, swearing. Samina does not equate learning her language by someone from another community in the same vein that a person could be interested in for example, French and learning the language.

### ***The impact of gendered power struggles***

The girls spoke about the systematic undermining and bullying that the boys caused in class, *“I sit with a boy and he always says it and like whenever if I do something wrong or any time, he just starts saying “pancake face” or “burnt pancake” things like that”* (Samina, 5.185-187). The word “pancake face” produces a strong visual image, something which is overdone, damaged, marked, unappetising and inedible. The connotations of “pancake face” are deeply insulting with racist leanings which could be seemingly innocent for teachers but Samina is well aware of its origins and intentions to hurt, wound and damage her self-esteem and confidence.

Tanya pinpoints why she is being victimized, *“Then they still carry on, they think that like just because I’m quiet then I won’t say anything to them”* (13, 468-470). Tanya is quiet in class and proves an easy target because she will not retaliate or hit back. She believes it is

her quietness which turns her into a victim, the compliance with school rules and an emphasis on school achievement will not protect her from the constant attacks from her male peers.

Loud and rebellious versus quiet and compliant, the latter learning type appears to be valued in school but is helpless in the face of the harsher realities of bullying and sexism. Tanya believed that being loud would prevent the bullying.

### ***Gender Segregation***

Perhaps the most shocking and surprising finding in my analysis was the stark segregation between males and females which is counter parted by the segregation of the communities in school. “*I used to go to a different mosque but then my dad said it’s not good for me to get teached by a boy because I’m a bit old now so I should go to a girl mosque teacher*” (Tanya, 18.672-674). Tanya describes a gender distinction; which creates divisions and differences between sexes.

“*Girls like in different side and boys in different side*” (Samina, 10.364). Samina actively proposed a separation of boys and girls without understanding that this act itself could be the cause of her further subjugation which runs contra to the ethos of mixed, mainstream teaching in British schools. Such separations occur in single sex or faith schools but go against current, inclusive educational ethos. Samina in her statement describes the troubled relationships between genders, hinting at female subjugation and oppression by males.

Samina goes into great detail as to why she would like the separation of boys and girls, which does not appear to be limited to cultural or demands made from the family:

*Because boys are quite mean to girls and they just I don’t like boys anyway cos they’re just nasty they never listen to yer. Like Ali sits next to me and then he never listens like if I want to do something, you have to be partners, he never lets me do anything. Then I have to like move to like someone else’s group and it’s not fair for like the other girls cos they get like bullied and everything but the boys they’re just fine they don’t have any problems. It’s mostly girls who have the problems* (10, 367-374).

## The impact of cultural identity

Ada provided a highly charged and passionate account of a Muslim boy ripping the Pakistan flag, “*Bilal, he’s a Muslim as well, I don’t know why he ripped it but he ripped it, no, they ripped it the Pakistan flag and they punched the Saudi Arabia flag*” (4.132-134). It was a personal attack on Ada’s identity and the origins of Muslims (Saudi Arabia) which was deliberate and calculated. Ada found the ripping of the flags inexplicable because Bilal was also a Muslim. Ada repeats the ripping of the flags which reinforces the shock and outrage of this violent action. Ada cannot reconcile a Muslim committing this crime of destroying Islamic symbols. Ada’s response appears similar to the well-known cases of The Satanic Verses and the Dutch cartoon causing outrage amongst Muslims throughout the world for insulting the religion.

Farah positively explodes with emotion when describing her distaste of school uniforms, “*We’re supposed to express who we are, not blumin brown t shirt and things like that! I just don’t like it, I don’t like school uniforms*” (7.232-233). Farah shows awareness of the school uniform suppressing her self-expression –she is deeply resentful of the “*brown t shirt*”, uses “*blumen*” to further emphasise the point, freeing her from formal language and the formal uniform. The school uniform represents a stifling of personality, creativity and enjoyment, reflecting what the school represents. “*Like even if we go to my auntie’s house, they’ll be like wearing makeup and like rings and tiaras and everything. (Both laugh) We’d be wearing all that and I’m like proper girly girl (laughs)*” (7, 252-255). It is dramatic for Farah to wear all her jewellery. The feminine act of wearing jewellery evokes soft, gentle stereotypes but Farah does not appear to embody such stereotypes. “*I get to like let myself out, I don’t have to be trapped inside the body that looks like a school kid*” (7, 268-269). Being trapped is a very strong image representing her strong views about school uniform. Farah is trapped against her will, she cannot get out and she feels suppressed and oppressed. Farah appears to be struggling against more than just the uniform. Farah states she does not want to look like a school kid but she is attending school and is a primary aged pupil. Farah seems to be articulating the struggle of adolescence where she has the body of a school child but wants to be recognised as a young woman.

## **Discussion**

The data for the current study was taken from a small non-representative sample of Pakistani young people in the same school. Further exploration is required to validate the sub-ordinate and sub-ordinate themes that emerged from the analysis. However, the analysis revealed a rich, varied and complex picture of the experiences of young Pakistani girls in school. The study also demonstrates the validity of using primary aged pupils in research to explore the views of ethnic minorities and their ability to give voice to their experiences and cultural complexities.

The themes found in the research resonate with previous studies with older young people, such as Archer's studies (2001, 2002). The participants singled out the boys from their own ethnicity as subjugating them which suggests the tensions between genders are related to culture and the oppression of females of one's own community raises questions about the motivations of those Pakistani males. For Farah and Ada single sex and single faith schools are the answer. As mentioned earlier in the literature review Archer's (2002) study on British Muslim girls' and boys' discursive constructions of post-16 educational choices may shed light on perceived gender and ethnic difficulties.

The analysis revealed how the young girls tried to make sense of their everyday experiences through the intersectionality of gender and cultural influences. The key super-ordinate themes reflected the variety of ways the girls' viewed themselves and struggled to understand the complex world around them including; the emotional impact of learning; the difficulties with different communities; the strength of friendships; conflicting gender relations and pride in one's own culture. The multi-stranded narratives that the young girls produced provides a challenge to the stereotypes of Pakistani females as passive as reported by Gilborn, (1997), or the teachers perceptions of Pakistani females as being "married off" quickly instead of attending college in Ghaffar-Kucher's (2012) study or without agency as described by the boys in Archer's study (2002).

## **Implications for Educational Psychologists**

### **Awareness-Raising**

Educational Psychologists (EPs) have the potential to increase school staff's awareness of young people who have English as an additional language (EAL). English as an additional language (EAL) issues were touched on in this study. EPs have an important role to play in working with school staff to ensure the curriculum is accessible to ethnic minority students with literacy difficulties. The work of Cummins (1986) and Baker (2001), on the importance to English language acquisition of continuing with first language speaking and learning could be incorporated in literacy interventions. It is also important to find out if young people have difficulties with their first language which may be impacting upon their learning and understanding of English and literacy. Even if young people from different ethnic groups have been attending British schools for a long time, EAL issues can still remain.

Encouragement of first language use and empowerment in cultural identity can have an impact upon school learning as well as greater engagement with school (Fredricks, Blumenfeld and Paris, 2004). My study illustrated the social impact of the accepted first language use by Lithuanians and not by Pakistanis as a way of further dividing the communities.

Greater awareness of school engagement could be promoted and the potential of schools to increase social and cultural capital particularly in areas of high deprivation as discussed by Towery (2007). Towery (2007) also points to the transformative powers of education to break down racial and gendered practices, which highlights how schools can create change and emancipation for teachers and pupils. Consultations, planning meetings and training events with school staff could be potential spaces within which to transmit these messages. A multi-agency approach could also be used with the links that EPs have to other services such as the Learning Support Service and Educational Welfare. Increased engagement is also linked to lower dropout rates and school absences which would prove invaluable for young people and their education (Wehlage, Rutter, Smith, Lesko and Fernandez, 1989). The present research could also be added to the research already carried out on parent and child voice with the added dimension of considering ethnicity and gender when hearing voice.

## **Implications**

The analysis revealed the variability of the experiences and views of these four girls which is a powerful reply to the stereotyped images of Pakistani people that may exist (Gillborn, 1997 and Ghaffar-Kucher, 2012). The participants provided different ways of thinking about

school and how they relate or do not relate to the practices in school. The Pakistani young people viewed themselves as different and took pride in their autonomy from school which was particularly evident in the super ordinate theme of the impact of cultural identity. Therefore, it may be helpful for practitioners to consider and include the feelings of Pakistani young people regarding the mosque, religion and culture as part of their everyday experience and not just educational achievement in school.

My research has raised the question of the researcher's ethnicity in my own Educational Psychology Service (EPS) and that if another EP from a different ethnicity would have produced as a rich narrative. A co-researcher from the same background as the participants is a very useful tool because they will have access to "insider knowledge" of any language differences and subtle cultural nuances and traditions that people from other backgrounds may not share and so provides a reflective and reflexive counterpart. The challenge for EPs is how the findings of this study can be translated to practice, particularly when interpreting or assessing a young person from ethnic minorities. It is important for EPs to reflect on any assessments or narratives around ethnic minorities with sensitivity to their particular culture which may be more pertinent to them, may not be an issue or take a more nuanced position. It may be necessary to ensure that the structures and systems are in place in the EPS to ensure such reflection can take place. For example, are there members of the same community the EP can check out certain findings with or reflect on certain narratives about the young person or their family within their particular cultural and linguistic context? Having a co-researcher or person with insider knowledge presents a shift towards a more post-modern view of the child as an active agent rather than a passive object. Young people will adopt positions with different people but may not disclose certain issues with other people.

The relevance of the positionality and appearance of the researcher impacts on the engagement and the type of relationship that emerges which has important implications for EPs at a service level.

EPs may be able to promote the systems in school which promote transparency around decisions regarding disputes amongst young people which include checking out with pupils in order to ensure they are appreciated and have understood the messages.

EPs can be involved with illuminating the gender bias that may exist between boys, girls and the teachers. EPs can deliver interventions which promote the self-esteem of young girls from ethnic minorities who may feel subjugated by the boys as evidenced from the current

research. The participants were assertive about the inequalities that they felt existed, does this position continue through secondary school and beyond?

Finally, what emerged from this study is the importance of listening to girls from Pakistani backgrounds in order to gain a better understanding of the impact of their gender and ethnicity on their experience of school.

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