

Lived experiences of children from
Pakistani backgrounds with Child
Protection Services in Norway: An
interpretative phenomenological analysis
study

By

Samita Wilson

Thesis submitted in fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of
PHILOSOPHIAE DOCTOR



(PhD)

PhD Program in Social Sciences
Department for Social Studies
2022

University of Stavanger

NO-4036 Stavanger

NORWAY

www.uis.no

©Click to enter year. Click to enter author.

ISBN: Click to enter ISBN.

ISSN: Click to enter ISSN.

PhD: Thesis UiS No. Click to enter PhD No.

Summary of the thesis

The repositioning of children as citizens and independent right-bearing individuals, as defined by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), has changed the previous bipartite relationship between state and family to a more complex triangular relationship among the state, parents and children. The state, as the duty bearer, is obliged to protect, respect and fulfil children's rights and ensure their development in a safe environment so that they can reach their full potential. Across countries, Child Protection Services (CPS) is one of the main welfare institutions mandated to support children's rights to protection when their families fail to provide it. Recently, concerns have increased regarding the lack of culturally competent and equitable CPS in growing multicultural societies. Culture is not static and uniform, nor does it uniformly affect people. Therefore, we need to gain knowledge and understanding about children's complex realities and how they make sense of their experiences in the context of CPS.

Growing from the concern regarding the lack of research on children from immigrant backgrounds in CPS despite being overrepresented in the system, this study explores the lived experiences of children from Pakistani backgrounds with CPS in Norway. This study has two main aims: first, to gain an understanding of how children perceive and experience CPS internationally, and second, to explore the lived experiences of children from immigrant backgrounds with CPS in Norway.

This study is based on both secondary and primary data. The secondary data comprise 39 articles, which were collected systematically from previously published research related to children's experiences with CPS. The primary study used the qualitative methodology of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) to explore children's lived experiences of their social relations (power relations) and emotions

in the context of CPS. Eleven children (aged 13–19 years) from Pakistani backgrounds were recruited purposively, as they were receiving or had received services from CPS in the recent past due to neglect and/or abuse. Data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews.

The study revealed that children experienced power struggles in relation to both family and CPS. Power relations were revealed as a complex phenomenon on a continuum ranging from dominance to empowerment. The children's position on the continuum was influenced by factors such as their age, gender, family norms, how they viewed themselves in relation to others (Norwegian majority) and how they perceived others viewed them. This study also revealed children's complex emotions experienced in relation to their families, CPS and self. These emotions were revealed as embodied, spatial and relational experiences. The congregation of emergent themes revealed the emotions, such as guilt and regret, evoked by their contact with CPS, which affected their actions and inactions. This study contributes new insights and awareness about the variations in children's understandings of realities and how their sociocultural factors and interdependent positions impact their experiences with CPS. This has implications for how child protection is understood in a multicultural context, how CPS interventions and programmes are designed and implemented and how social workers' education is addressed to create equitable social services. Child protection is not just about creating safe nuclear families for children to grow up; it is equally important to develop communities, societies and cultures in which every child receives equitable opportunities and protection of rights.

Acknowledgements

My PhD journey has been most incredible – full of ups and downs and important learning that I believe has helped me grow as both a researcher and a person. Fortunately, I did not have to take this journey alone and had many people help me along the way in accomplishing this. Thus, I would like to acknowledge the contributions of several people who have kindly offered me their support, encouragement, guidance and time throughout this doctoral process and who believed as much as I do in the importance of giving voice to children.

First, I am most indebted to the children who participated in this study; without their contributions, there would be no thesis. I am humbled by the trust they placed in me by giving me their time, sharing their personal stories and teaching me some important life lessons. I would also like to express my gratitude to the parents, teachers and youth workers who helped me gain access to these children.

Words do little justice in conveying my appreciation to my team of PhD supervisors: Sarah Hean, Tatek Abebe and Vanessa Heaslip. It has been a privilege to work under your mentorship throughout my research project. Thank you for challenging my thinking on many occasions and bringing different perspectives to our discussions. Most importantly, thank you for your patience and moral support during the writing process, for reading through numerous drafts and for critical feedback. I am grateful for your encouragement and strategies for overcoming ‘writer’s block’ when I felt stuck. I could not have wished for a better team. I also wish to extend my gratitude to Jonathan Smith for helping me appreciate the wonders of IPA and apply it to my research analysis.

I would like to send special thanks to Wenche Hovland, Hulda Mjøll Gunnarsdottir and Susan Crowther, the discussants at my 50- and 90-percent seminars, and Alistair Roy, my opponent at the kappa seminar organised by PROFRES. Your thoughtful and constructive feedback,

comments and suggestions have been valuable to the completion of my work.

During the duration of my PhD period, I was privileged to be part of several research communities who influenced the development of my work in different ways. These include the Norwegian Social Research Institute (NOVA) at OsloMet, the IPA research group at Birkbeck University and the child protection services research group at Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU). These groups provided me with intellectually stimulating environments and brought an interdisciplinary perspective to my research, which made this thesis richer than it otherwise would have been. My appreciation also goes to my colleagues and PhD community at University of Stavanger and NTNU for their interest in my research study, generosity, tea breaks and poignant discussions. This all made my PhD an enjoyable experience that I will always remember.

Now, most importantly, I am grateful to all my friends and family, who have patiently waited for me to finish my thesis and kindly accepted my absence from social activities when I was drowned in deadlines. Here is to you for never giving up on me and for accompanying me on my PhD journey. I would never have been able to make it without the unwavering support of my parents. Thank you for always being there for me, no matter what I do. I feel immensely blessed to have compassionate and generous parents, especially as my research made me realise that, unfortunately, this is not something that everyone has.

Finally, to my husband, we started this journey together from the very first stage of writing the research proposal to the final thesis write-up. Thank you for your care, steadfast belief in my abilities and helping me carry on when I was in doubt. For this, I am truly fortunate.

Preface

‘Samita, you should do something about it’, my friend’s mom said to me when I was visiting them in Prague back in 2015. She knew about my work as a developmental and humanitarian professional, with a specialisation in the area of children’s rights. What she wanted me to do something about was Child Protection Services (CPS) in Norway, which was a target of many protests internationally at the time. The institution was blamed styles in media reports for the ‘legal kidnapping of children’ from their families and not respecting other cultures and parenting. But one thing that I noticed about these protests was that only adults’ opinions were voiced. Children were nowhere to be seen and heard.

I am a strong advocate of children’s rights, especially their rights to protection and participation. My advocacy journey started as a teenager, and being a children’s rights activist provided me with an opportunity to meet and work with children from different geographical areas, backgrounds and socioeconomic classes. It provided me with the opportunity to learn about the problems and views of young people living in other countries and how they are working to raise awareness about children’s rights. This has helped me realise that, despite different circumstances and borders, all children want the same things: to be heard and participate in decisions concerning them, the opportunities to assert their rights so they can have a good life and to reach their full potential. Before meeting children from different backgrounds and sociocultural groups, I had only heard about how various social issues, such as child labour, trafficking and HIV/AIDS, can affect people, but through meeting with other children, I developed an understanding about how they actually deal with these challenges in their everyday lives. This early experience instilled in me the urge and feeling of responsibility to raise the issues of my peers on various platforms and raise the voices of those unheard.

I was so inspired by the children that I met as a volunteer that I decided to shift my line of education from the natural sciences to social sciences. I earned a degree in social and cultural anthropology and then joined the development and humanitarian sector for work. With the transition from child activist to young professional in the nongovernmental sector, I was perhaps naïve at the outset. Sometimes, my work felt like filling a bottomless pit; no matter how many development projects were done, things did not seem to change much (relative to the work and resources). Nevertheless, the stories of struggles, courage and successes of the children that I met through my work always inspired me and renewed my hope in the world. By that time, I had not connected the dots between the wider global political, economic and sociocultural context that impacted children's everyday lives. Later, during my MPhil in childhood studies, I was introduced to the theoretical knowledge about childhoods, different perspectives on children's rights and complex debates linked to understanding children's lives in diverse social, economic, cultural and political contexts and the ways of undertaking ethical and participatory research with children. This helped me see, for example, how children's vulnerabilities in the Global South are often romanticised and their agency is celebrated, both in academia and development work.

I still think that children's rights are important and provide a useful baseline for countries to create child-friendly policies and practices. In my experience of working with children, they want adults to listen, and like everyone else, they want to have a good life. It is the adults' responsibility to provide a safe and healthy environment for children, where they can reach their full potential. Therefore, when I began my doctorate, it felt natural to continue working with children and do research with them. During that period, Norwegian CPS was receiving much attention in the media regarding immigrants and taking children away from families. Since I did not hear the voices of immigrant children in CPS represented on any platform, this motivated me to write my PhD research project to address this gap. I decided to conduct my research

with children from Pakistani backgrounds, thinking that, at some level, we have a shared culture (a mix of Norwegian, Pakistani and global immigrant culture) and perhaps language, too.

My prior knowledge of the Pakistani diaspora in Norway and Europe was based mainly on my experience as a research assistant for a project on forced marriages among dual Pakistani nationals in Pakistan, media reports about honour killings in the United Kingdom (Europe) and more recently, the Norwegian film *Hva vil folk si? (What Will People Say?)*. During my research on forced marriages, I interviewed people in cities of Pakistan with high concentrations of emigrants to Europe (Kharian, Gujrat, Mirpur, etc.) about the issue of forced marriages. The prevalence of forced marriages was surprising to me, as I expected these emigrants, especially women, to be more empowered. The reports of honour killings of people from Pakistani backgrounds in Europe made me question the effectiveness of the social services systems in these countries. The aforementioned film especially had an impact on me, as the director, Iram Haq (Norwegian-Pakistani), presented her own story: how her family treated her, how she had to live a dual life and how CPS failed her. That film came out while I was working on my PhD project proposal, and the impressions from it planted the seed for this present research. At the same time, I was aware that the media representation did not depict the whole picture of people's complex lives, but only a part.

Hence, I embarked on my PhD research journey with an open mind and a broad research question: What are the lived experiences of children from Pakistani backgrounds with Child Protection Services in Norway? Over the years, through my professional and academic experiences, I have learned that listening to children's views and how they experience and understand their everyday challenges within their broader sociocultural context is pertinent to ensure that their rights to protection, support and participation are fully realised. Thus, as one of the main stakeholders in CPS, it is important to research the perspectives and experiences of children themselves. This knowledge can contribute to

achieve better access to and quality of services and support provided for children

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1 Introduction

This thesis explores the lived experiences of children from Pakistani backgrounds in contact with Child Protection Services (CPS) in Norway. It offers new knowledge on how these children interpret, experience and use the protection rights ascribed to them in the national law and policies of Norway. Previous evidence suggests that, in multicultural societies, ethnic minority children need protection not only from abusive families but also from prejudiced and oppressive social work practices (Sawrikar, 2016). A need exists to create culturally safe social services for children that address power in interpersonal relationships and enhance their empowerment. This highlights the need to develop a more comprehensive understanding of ethnic minority and immigrant children's lived experiences of CPS. These experiences should be incorporated into the plans, policies and actions devised for improving their lives and the conditions of the societies in which they live.

This chapter commences by presenting the situation and challenges related to CPS in Western countries, which are increasingly becoming multicultural, especially with reference to Norway. Following this, the research questions and aims of this study are presented. Within interdisciplinary research, different terms can have different meanings, depending on the professional backgrounds. Therefore, the last section clarifies a few terms used throughout the thesis to create a common understanding.

1.1 *Child Protection Services in welfare states – A complicated arena*

Today, the position of children as citizens and independent right-bearing individuals has changed the previous bipartite relation between state and family to a more complex triangular relationship between the state, parents and children, thus impacting welfare policies and laws (D. W.

Archard, 2018; Thomas, 2002). Traditionally, children have been conceptualised as belonging to a family with parents representing their interests (J. Lewis, 2006). A long cultural, ideological and political view has placed the family within the private realm, which is considered a retreat and haven, compared to the public realm of the interventionist state (Wyness, 2014). However, this association of the private realm, family and sanctuary has been criticised as ‘overly romanticised’, as dysfunctional families and homes can be a space from which children need to escape rather than a place to take refuge (Hancock & Gillen, 2007). The state, as the duty bearer, is obliged to protect, respect and fulfil children’s rights and ensure their development in a safe environment so that they can reach their full potential.

Across countries, CPS is one of the main welfare institutions mandated to support children’s rights to protection in cases where their families fail to provide it. These agencies are responsible for investigating reports of child maltreatment, determining whether child abuse or neglect has occurred and collaborating with families/care providers to ensure a safe environment for children and to maximise children’s welfare and well-being (Featherstone et al., 2014). The state’s interest in children’s welfare is due to both their status as human beings who deserve care and as future citizens (becomings) who must be shaped for their eventual roles in society (D. Archard, 1993). Thus, the role of CPS is twofold: acting as both caregiver and ‘judges of normality’ (Foucault, 1977, p. 304). CPS policies aspire to protect all children from harm regardless of their ethnic and cultural backgrounds, ideally where their cultural needs are neither overstated nor overlooked (Sawrikar, 2016).

Increasing globalisation and transnational mobility from the Global South to the Global North have led to concerns about the integration of cultural and ethnic minorities in mainstream Western societies (Barn, 2007). CPS creates a complicated arena in which the clashes of majority and minority cultural views and practices of child rearing and child development can often be seen (Johansson, 2013). In Scandinavian

countries, one reason for this conflict is the child-focused orientation in CPS. This approach views the child as an individual with independent rights and a relationship with the state; moreover, parents are obliged to follow the parenting rules set by the state (Cameron & Freymond, 2006; Johansson, 2013). However, family dynamics are also influenced by migration, which leads to intergenerational conflicts between parents and children due to the disparity in their acculturation (Westby, 2007, p. 142). Chand (2005) found that parents who feel their children may become influenced by the value system of the dominant (Western) culture may become stricter and more inflexible than usual (p. 73). It should be noted that children are not passive recipients of socialisation in their culture. They shape and reinterpret it. Moreover, culture is experienced variably by different members of the group, and interpretation and interaction are fluid (Korbin, 2002, p. 638). The variability within groups can occur due to different factors, such as age, gender and socioeconomic status. This highlights that culture is neither uniformly distributed nor does it have a uniform impact on its members (J. E. Korbin, 2002).

1.2 Challenges to Norwegian Child Protection Services in a multicultural society

Norway has been a relatively homogeneous country with liberal values and universal welfare policies. The majority of people trust the state and its policies (Martela et al., 2020), with the latter seen as representative of the majority's values and norms. Norway has a long tradition of prioritising child welfare as a central component in nation building and is one of the first countries to ratify the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which was incorporated into the national Children Welfare Act in 2003 (Hennum, 2017). In 2009, the Norwegian children's ombudsman proclaimed that Norway was the best place for children to grow up because 'it is a place where we have developed care and protection of children to the highest standard'

(Hjermann, 2009, p.14). A report by the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF, 2019) also ranked Norway as one of the top countries for children due to its family-friendly policies. The society has a collectivist approach to the development of children, where their well-being is recognised as a societal matter in a country that legitimises public interest and intervention in families (Björk Eydal & Satka, 2006; Leira, 2008).

The demography of Norway is changing, with significant minority groups now making up part of Norwegian society (see more detail in Chapter 2). Internationally, as well as in Norway, children from ethnic and immigrant backgrounds are at a greater risk of being involved with CPS (Dyrhaug & Sky, 2015; Sawrikar, 2016). Conversely, social and welfare policies, such as child protection, may be viewed differently by stakeholders and may differentially impact separate cultural groups (Katz, 2019). In the past few years, Norwegian CPS has been criticised by both the national and international media for not respecting ethnic minority parents' culture and for taking children away from families (Vassenden & Vedøy, 2019).

Bø (2014) argues that social work in a multicultural society requires more cultural competence, knowledge and skills in intercultural understanding compared to social work in a homogeneous cultural society. The general idea of social policies and services that are 'one size fits all' can be challenging in multicultural and multiethnic societies. While such social policies promote equality by providing everyone the same services, they do not necessarily address the issue of equity or fairness so that everyone achieves equal outcomes. For example, research related to health inequity shows that neglecting the impact of cultural factors on health behaviours by policymakers and practitioners is one of the largest barriers to improving people's health and well-being (Napier et al., 2014; D. Wilson et al., 2018). Challenges, such as cultural gaps, language barriers, and distrust in state institutions and bureaucratic structures can hinder the provision of social services to ethnic minority

populations (Bø, 2014; Kriz & Skivenes, 2010). Studies related to CPS share similar results, as issues regarding language and culture present some of the main obstacles for children and parents from minority backgrounds in CPS (Chand, 2000; Rugkåsa et al., 2017a; Sawrikar, 2016). For example, Chand and Thoburn (2006) found that children from South Asian backgrounds may not be able to seek help from CPS in cases of sexual abuse due to sex and sexuality being a taboo issue in their culture.

Wilson et al. (2018) argue that delivering equity-oriented and culturally responsive social services requires practitioners to critically reflect on the challenges and barriers faced by service users. They describe culturally responsive practice as one where practitioners are not only culturally competent, inclusive and respectful but also make people feel culturally safe (D. Wilson et al., 2018). Culturally safe practice involves understanding people's lived experiences, power imbalances and the impact of social workers' values and beliefs on service delivery (Singer et al., 2021). This highlights the importance of culture and culturally responsive CPS policies and practices in providing inclusive, equitable, just and quality services to children. However, one needs to be wary of treating culture as static and uniform. As previously mentioned, culture is dynamic and varies not only between groups but also within groups. Moreover, culture is not neutral, and certain cultural practices are harmful to children. Ennew (1998) argues that 'while cultural context must be respected, it is important to note that culture is not a trump card in international human rights' (p. 8).

1.3 *Exploring immigrant children's lived experiences of Child Protection Services*

Children are increasingly recognised as knowledgeable social actors who actively influence their own and other people's lives, with a voice and right to express their views, and their opinions and experiences are equally important as those of adults (Prout & James, 2015). During the

last 30 years, a considerable increase in research has been conducted with children about various topics across a wide range of contexts, especially in childhood studies. Childhood researchers, by actively engaging with children in their research, have demonstrated the diverse ways in which children become social actors, make meaning of their lived experiences and negotiating their role and status in their families and communities (see for instance Abebe, 2013; Montgomery, 2001; Punch, 2005).

Since children are one of the key stakeholders in CPS, a need exists to investigate their concerns, priorities and perspectives about the services provided to them in order to improve the quality of these of services. The existing research with children related to CPS in Norway has mainly focused on topics of participation in the CPS process and decision making (Bakke & Holmberg, 2014; Fylkesnes et al., 2018; Husby et al., 2018; Paulsen, 2016; Tunestveit et al., 2021), experiences of collaboration with professionals and social workers in CPS (Husby et al., 2019; Sæbjørnsen & Willumsen, 2017), the importance of trusting and caring relationships with social workers (Paulsen et al., 2017; Thrana, 2016), children's everyday lives in care institution (Ulset, 2018) and children's social relationship with peers (Negård et al., 2020). Given the strong commitment to the voice of the child and child-centred practice in Norway, it is not surprising that most of the published research has focused on children's participation. However, participation represents only one aspect of children's experiences with CPS. A need exists for explorative research with children that focuses on their overall lived experiences of CPS and how they make meaning of their lives in this context (S. Wilson et al., 2020).

While children from immigrant backgrounds are overrepresented in CPS, they are underrepresented in related research (D. Wilson et al., 2018). I found only one study that explicitly included children from minority backgrounds in Norwegian CPS (Fylkesnes et al., 2018) during the last 10 years. This study included children from African backgrounds who came to Norway at a young age, either on their own or with their

families, and investigated children's experiences of participation in out-of-home placements. However, immigrant children are not a homogeneous group; while they share certain basic universal needs, the expression and understanding of those needs is affected by a wide range of factors, such as their physical health, culture, social relationships and status in families, communities and society. Therefore, I argue that, to provide quality CPS services to different groups of immigrant children and their families, more attention must be placed on these children's first-hand experiences and accounts of these services, especially through studies which consider the nuances of their multicultural identities and understanding of children's rights. Furthermore, the reasons behind the family's immigration and the period of stay in Norway are also important factors that can affect the children's experiences with CPS. For example, Berg et al. (2017) state that families from refugee backgrounds may face extra challenges, in addition to the minority status, when meeting with CPS.

This dissertation focuses on exploring and understanding the lived experiences of children from Pakistani backgrounds with CPS in Norway. It extends the contextual and thematic research, specifically research with children from immigrant backgrounds in CPS. I acknowledge that children of immigrants are a heterogeneous group with different sociocultural and migration experiences. Children from Pakistani backgrounds were selected as research participants for a few reasons. First, among Norwegian-born children with immigrant parents, children from Pakistani backgrounds make up one of the largest groups receiving services from CPS (Dyrhaug & Sky, 2015). Second, these children make up the largest second-generation immigrant groups from a non-Western/Global South background in Norway (Vassenden & Vedøy, 2019). Third, people from Pakistan came to Norway mainly through labour immigration and family reunion. Although this group shows functional integration (education, employment, etc.), their sociocultural integration remains in question (e.g. due to issues like

forced marriage, negative social control, etc.), which can be challenging for some children as they navigate two contrasting identities and cultures (Aarset, 2016; Bredal, 2011; Østberg, 2003; Phelps & Nadim, 2010). Pakistani parents are often afraid that their children will become ‘too Norwegian’ (Odden et al., 2015, p. 38).

Findings from my project are based on an analysis of in-depth interviews with 11 children and young people from Pakistani backgrounds. The qualitative methodology of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) was considered suitable due to the sensitive nature of the topic and because it makes it possible to privilege the voices of children (idiographic focus) and elicit their lived experiences (hermeneutic phenomenology) (Smith et al., 2009). The findings highlight how children’s experiences with CPS are affected by their relational and emotional experiences, as well as the varied understandings and experiences of and affiliations with Pakistani and Norwegian culture. This knowledge can benefit CPS policymakers and professionals to provide equitable, inclusive and culturally responsive services to children.

1.4 Research aims, questions and contributions

The overall aim of this dissertation is to explore the experiences of children from Pakistani backgrounds who received services from CPS. The purpose of the primary study is to investigate children’s lived experiences with CPS using IPA, letting the voices of these children be heard. This research project also aimed to contribute to the social work research literature by providing a comprehensive and holistic view of children’s experiences with CPS and identifying gaps in previous studies to warrant future empirical research. In line with this aim, a systematic qualitative evidence synthesis design was used to bring together the findings from studies conducted with children by focusing on different aspects of children’s experiences with and perspectives of CPS since the declaration of the UNCRC.

Based on the findings of the research, this thesis will demonstrate how the project has contributed to existing knowledge in the following ways:

- Creating an understanding of relational and emotional experiences of children from minority and immigrant backgrounds in the context of CPS in Norway, which can contribute to providing them with appropriate and quality services.
- Promoting more democratic research in the area of CPS by bringing forth the voices of minority children, which are underrepresented in existing research.
- Consolidating the research conducted with children about their experiences with CPS since 1990 (after the UNCRC declaration) to provide comprehensive knowledge, identify gaps in the research and recommend areas for future studies.
- Contributing to the conceptualisation of children's agency. Based on the empirical data, I argue that children's power relations and emotions impact their actions and in(actions).

The main research question for this thesis is as follows: What are the lived experiences of children from Pakistani backgrounds with Norwegian CPS?

During the data analysis and presentation of the findings, four secondary questions were developed (cf. Larkin & Thompson, 2012). These provided a useful way to engage with the theoretical concepts and wider debates related to the analytic outcomes at the discussion stage of the research papers and subsequently this thesis.

- i. What are children's experiences with CPS internationally, as reported in previous research? (Paper 1)
- ii. How do children from Pakistani backgrounds experience their relationships with parents/family and CPS? (Paper 2)

- iii. What are the emotional experiences of children from Pakistani backgrounds in the context of CPS? (Paper 3)
- iv. How do children's relational and emotional experiences affect their actions and in-actions in their everyday lives? (Papers 2 and 3)

These secondary questions in this dissertation have been pursued through three research papers. Paper 1 presents qualitative synthesis and systematic literature review of previous studies on children's experiences with and perspectives of CPS. This was chosen to position this research in the international literature through state-of-the-art research into children's perspectives of CPS and to identify the gap which my project aims to fill. Papers 2 and 3 present the findings based on the analysis of the primary data gathered through interviews with children. Table 1 provides an overview of the research papers and their publication status.

Table 1 Overview of the research papers

	Paper 1	Paper 2	Paper 3
Title	'Children's Experiences with Child Protection Services: A Synthesis of Qualitative Evidence'	'Pakistani Children's Lived Experiences of Relationships in the Context of Child Protection Services in Norway: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis'	'The War Within: Emotional Experiences of Children in Norwegian Child Protection Services'
Authors	Samita Wilson, Sarah Hean, Tatek Abebe, Vanessa Heaslip	Samita Wilson, Sarah Hean, Tatek Abebe, Vanessa Heaslip	Samita Wilson, Tatek Abebe, Sarah Hean, Vanessa Heaslip, Jonathan Smith
Methodology	Systematic literature review and qualitative evidence synthesis	Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA)	IPA
Status	Published 2020	Under review	Under review
Journal	Children and Youth Services Review	Children & Society	Children's geographies

1.5 Clarification of the terms

Before proceeding to subsequent chapters, it is important to clarify terms which are used throughout this thesis.

Children: The research participants in my study were aged 13–19 years. This age group is also known as ‘adolescents’ and ‘young people’. However, the term adolescent is mostly used in health research to refer to the biological changes that come with puberty (ages 10–19 years). Similarly, the term ‘young people’ refers to a much wider age group, from 10 to 25 years (World Health Organization, 2022). In this study, I have chosen to use the term ‘children’ to refer to all individuals under 18 years of age, using the UNCRC as the reference point. However, I acknowledge the limitations of using chronological age for labelling individuals.

Child Protection Services: I use CPS to refer to Norwegian Barnevern – the statutory services that aim to find, investigate and protect children at risk of being abused or neglected through specific interventions with or without children’s and/or their families’ consent (Pösö et al., 2014). Some researchers use the term Child Welfare Services to allude to Norway being a welfare state that provides both support and controlling services to families in need. However, I use CPS as, despite the theoretical differences between the two models of service (Gilbert et al., 2011), the services are risk- and needs-based, helping children who require safety and protection (Spratt et al., 2015).

Global North/Global South: The terms Global North and Global South are used to refer to what has otherwise been known as developed and developing countries, First World and Second World or majority and minority world. Global North and Global South describe the geographical division between countries that are mostly found in the southern hemisphere and in the northern hemisphere but also refer to factors such as differential social and economic levels, living standards, life expectancy and access to resources (Dados & Connell, 2012). Therefore, countries like Australia, New Zealand, China and Japan are considered part of the Global North despite their geographical location. This also highlights how these terms are used differently. I have used the terms Global South and Global North in reference to Pakistan and

Norway, respectively, in this study, while acknowledging their limitations – ‘there are Souths in geographic North and Norths in geographic South’ (Mahler, 2018, p. 32).

Lived experience: Since the starting point of phenomenology is lived experiences, it is useful to briefly elaborate on what this entails. The term experience remains somewhat elusive despite being widely used in research (Crotty, 1996). The English word ‘experience’ holds a different meaning that might not be shared in other languages (Wierzbicka, 2010). In the German language, there are three different words that describe different forms and levels of experiences. *Erleben* refers to experience as a verb meaning undergoing an event or occurrence. *Das Erlebte* refers to the experienced as a noun, referring to what lasts when the experiencing is done. Gadamer (2004, p. 53) explains this content as ‘a yield or result that achieves permanence, weight, and significance from out of the transience of experiencing’. The term *Erlebnis* refers to lived experience and fuses the previous two meanings: ‘it’s being experienced makes a special impression that gives its lasting importance’ (H. Gadamer, 2004, p. 53). This hermeneutic conceptualisation of lived experience highlights the centrality of meaning attributed to the experience through interpretation, reinterpretation and communication (Gadamer, 2004). In IPA research, lived experiences are a representation and understanding of an individual’s human experiences, choices, options and how subjective factors, such as identity, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality and religion, shape their awareness of experiences and perceptions of knowledge at a given time in a particular context (Larkin et al., 2011).

1.6 Outline of the thesis

This doctoral dissertation comprises six chapters.

Chapter 2 briefly introduces and contextualises the geographical and demographic dimensions of Norway and its welfare services, especially the institution of CPS, which is relevant to this study. This chapter also

includes an account of the Pakistani diaspora in Norway to help the reader understand the broad context in which these children lived and/or grew up.

Childhood studies have made a significant contribution to theorising childhood as a socially and culturally constructed phenomenon. This paves the way for conceptualising different ‘childhoods’ rather than a singular and universal one. Chapter 3 presents two of the main tenets of childhood studies: socially constructed childhood and positioning children as social actors. Furthermore, a brief overview of children’s rights and child-centred services is provided. These theoretical concepts have provided the motivation and justification for this research with children.

In Chapter 4, provides an account of the methodologies and method used during this research project. I start with the philosophical foundations of IPA, the methodology that was used for the primary study. This is followed by an account of the method used for data collection and analysis as well as my reflections from the fieldwork. Moreover, the ethical issues related to doing research with children such as informed consent, power relations, and confidentiality are discussed. My role and positionality as the researcher is also addressed. The last part presents the methodology used for the systematic literature review and qualitative data synthesis.

Chapter 5 provides a summary of the findings, which are expected to be published in the form of three articles (see Appendix 1-3).

Finally, Chapter 6 discusses the findings in relation to previous research and recommends a future course for CPS practice and research with children in this area.

2 Context for the research

This chapter introduces and contextualises CPS and the Pakistani diaspora in Norway, where I conducted my research. First, I present a geographic and demographic overview of Norway and its family orientations and welfare services. Next, I describe CPS in Norway and outline the previous research with children receiving services from CPS and immigrant parents' perspectives of and experiences with CPS. Finally, I provide a brief overview of the Pakistani diaspora in Norway and the experiences that children from Pakistani backgrounds have of growing up in bicultural families and society. This knowledge provides a useful context for understanding the experiences of Norwegian CPS among children from Pakistani backgrounds in my study.

2.1 Norway – Geographical, historical and demographic overview

Norway is a long and narrow country located at the northern end of Europe. It shares a border with Finland, Russia and Sweden along its eastern, southern and northern regions. The North Sea borders its western region. It gained independence from Sweden in 1905. It is one of the richest countries in Europe, mainly due to its natural resources (oil, fish, timber, etc.), and has a highly skilled population (Norwegian Ministry of Finance, 2021).

About 5 million people inhabit the country, with 14.8% immigrants and 3.7% Norwegians born to immigrant parents. The immigrant population, while relatively small, is increasing steadily; it has changed from 1.47% in 1970 to 14.8% in 2021 (Statistics Norway, 2021). Eriksen (2012) argues that the fast growth in the number of immigrants in Norway is mainly due to the country's stability, safety and welfare system rather than its promotion of immigration by state policy. Norway stopped its labour immigration in 1975, which has mainly affected non-European

countries. Currently, the largest national groups of immigrants are from Sweden, Poland and Lithuania, followed by Syria and Somalia. However, among Norwegians born to immigrant parents, children from Pakistani backgrounds make up the largest group, followed by children from Somali, Polish and Iraqi backgrounds (Statistics Norway, 2021).

Norway is a welfare state with a comprehensive and universal public welfare policy that benefits all Norwegian citizens and residents. The policy covers social security schemes, social services, healthcare subsidies, free education through the university level, labour support services, child allowance and more. The welfare policy, which was introduced after the Second World War in 1945, was considered a means to modernise society and stimulate economic growth (Lange & Rothe, 2019). Gender equality is a fundamental principle in the Nordic welfare model in which employment among women is relatively high (Sten, 2017). In 2019, Norway ranked at the top of both the Human Development Index (HDI) and the Inequality-Adjusted Human Development Index (IHDI). The HDI measures average achievement in three key dimensions of human development, such as life expectancy, education and standard of living. However, the IHDI provides a more realistic picture of a country's development by considering achievements in the areas of health, education and income among its population by discounting average values according to the levels of inequality for each dimension (United Nations Development Programme, 2021).

2.2 Norwegian family model and welfare services

The conceptualisation of family has evolved over time in Norway. Previously, family was considered people living in the same household and related through marriage or a parent–child relationship (Statistics Norway, 2012). However, this structure is changing due to factors such as the increasing number of cohabitations or divorces. Since parental responsibility for children is shared equally by both parents, parental

presence in children's lives remains high, despite new family structures and forms (Barn et al., 2014).

The predominant family structure in Norway is that of a married couple with children (70%), followed by cohabiting couples with children (30%) and then a single parent with children (Statistics Norway, 2018). The social phenomenon of cohabitation as a form of marital relationship has gained acceptance in society as a new family type. In 2014, 22% of all couples were cohabiting couples in Norway, and many had children together (Baran et al., 2014). These behaviours are considered progressive independence of individuals and emphasise the importance of their self-realisation, psychological well-being and personal freedom of expression (Van de Kaa, 1987). Cohabiting partners have almost the same rights as married couples in Norwegian law. For example, one difference between married and cohabiting couples is that cohabiting couples have no right to inheritance under the law if they have no children together (Marriage Act (Norway), 2007). Furthermore, Norway was the second country (after Denmark) to legalise same-sex partnerships in 1993 and gender-neutral marriages in 2009. These couples have the same parental rights as heterosexual couples.

While public welfare initiatives have a long history in Norway, it was after the Second World War that family welfare policies, such as child welfare benefits, were initiated; these were further developed in the 1960s and 1970s as a response to changing family and societal dynamics (Barn et al., 2014). The country has maintained high reproduction rates relative to other northern European countries, despite high employment rates among females, pointing to the success of family welfare policies in supporting the combination of employment and family reproduction through benefits such as generous maternal and paternal leave (Rønsen & Skrede, 2006).

Child welfare and family policies' main focus is to ensure that all children are brought up in safe, secure and healthy environments and that

everyone in the family receives equal opportunities. The latter is related to both gender and generational equality. Children and their families have the right to appropriate and timely services of substantial quality provided to them by the state. Norway was one of the first countries to codify children's rights (Therborn, 1993). The country has included explicit legal formulations of equal parental obligations and of the child's best interests as the paramount principle, for example, in custody cases related to divorce, domestic violence and so on. Furthermore, all forms of corporal punishment for children are illegal in Norway and are considered violence against them (Child Welfare Act (Norway), 1992). The Ombudsman for Children was introduced in 1990 and oversees children's rights (Hennum, 2017).

2.3 *Discourses on childhood and parenthood in Norway*

Children are closely associated with Norway's national self-image; thus, they have special moral and legal status in Norway (Hennum, 2014). They are considered vulnerable citizens who need to be protected as well as holders of individual rights and agency (Hollekim et al., 2016). The goal of families is to raise children that are assertive, self-sufficient and independent so that they can fit into the modern and liberal society (Gillies, 2005; Hennem, 2010). Thus, families should be democratic and have space for mutual dialogue, while authoritative and hierarchical families are considered counterproductive (Gullestad, 1997; Hennem, 2011). The ideal child-rearing goals in Norway, as in other Nordic countries, are guided by the ethics of autonomy that complement the idea of an individual rights-based society (Morelli & Rothbaum, 2007). Attributes such as individuality, independence, self-maximisation and happiness are among the most valued in Norwegian society, and parents are expected to support their children in developing qualities that help them adapt well to their societies (Doepke & Zilibotti, 2002; Hennem,

2002). Parental practices that imply violence are unacceptable, both in the law and in normative social discourse (Hollekim et al., 2016).

A recent study on discourses of parents and parenting in Norway found that parenting quality is viewed as the main condition for children to develop the skills needed to fit into society and to deal with the changing world (Hollekim et al., 2016). Emphasis is placed on communication, dialogue and feelings in assessing the quality of parental relationships with children (Hennum, 2002). A general consensus has been made that parents should be supported, educated, trained and/or disciplined into adopting appropriate and high-quality parenting practices (Hollekim et al., 2016). This discourse is evident in the use of individualistic and pedagogical approaches of CPS towards family difficulties, to a large degree (Hennum & Aamodt, 2021). Some scholars have argued that this represents a narrow and restrictive view on parenting capacities and does not take into account other social factors, such as class and structural barriers (Kriz & Skivenes, 2010).

Norwegian society and laws expect all children to have equal rights and opportunities, which makes the state in general and CPS in particular child oriented and child centred (Gilbert et al., 2011; Pösö et al., 2014). Therefore, to a large degree, CPS practices such as early intervention in the families, surveillance in instances of contact with children (in cases of neglect and abuse, whether proved or suspected), interference in what is generally/internationally considered family privacy and standardisation of family practices are legitimised and supported in society (Hennum & Aamodt, 2021; Hollekim et al., 2016).

2.4 Norwegian Child Protection Services

Norwegian CPS has a long history of development, from 1896, with the first child protection act, to 2003, when the UNCRC was incorporated into the act. CPS in Norway is often characterised as being child centred and family oriented (Clifford et al., 2015; Skivenes, 2011). At the same

time, some scholars label CPS policies and practices as de-familialised, which means that it reduces the individual's dependency on the family and has higher legitimacy of state intervention in the family compared to familialised welfare services like those in Chile (Ellingsen et al., 2017).

Norway passed its first child protection legislation in 1896, called the Guardianship Act, which entailed the establishment of provincial child protection institutions responsible for supervising children and reprimanding parents who failed to fulfil their parental duties (Dahl, 1978). This act underlined the importance of the positive upbringing of children rather than punishment to fight child delinquency/criminality (Fauske et al., 2018). Child protection boards were composed of judges, doctors and nonprofessionals and were granted institutional power, such as placing children in out-of-home care (Picot, 2014). Later, in 1915, a few new laws, known as Castberg Child Protection Laws, were added to the Guardianship Act. The legislation ensured the rights of children born out of wedlock, such as equal share in inheritance, taking the father's surname and providing child allowance to single mothers, which consequently improved children's living conditions (Picot, 2014). These laws contributed to the protection of children as well as women, increasing their social utility and balancing the social and moral order (Picot, 2014). The next revision of the law occurred in 1953, resulting in the Child Welfare Act (the name changed from the previous one). It focused on CPS's obligation to improve children's living conditions, support their development and provide a wide range of assistance to families through counselling, economic support, kindergarten placement and so on (Larsen, 2002). In 1992, the act was further developed, then known as the Child Welfare Services Act, to include children as individuals with rights, especially the right to participate. Children under the age of 12 years were thus given the right to information and to state their opinions, while the voice of children over the age of 12 years must be given due weight in decisions related to them (Nylund, 2020). The

position of children in the act was further strengthened in 2003 through the incorporation of the UNCRC into the law.

The purpose of CPS in Norway is to ensure that children and young people living in conditions that can harm their health and development receive necessary and timely help and care and that they are ensured safe conditions for growing up (Child Welfare Act (Norway), 1992). In 2018, the law was amended to include that the child must be met with protection, love and understanding when in contact with CPS. However, these notions are open to interpretation. Furthermore, the law has three main principles: the biological principle, the best interests of the child and the child's right to participation (Child Welfare Act (Norway), 1992). The biological principle emphasises that it is best for children to be raised by their biological parents and families. This entails trying in-home services and interventions before taking custody of the child. How much value is appropriate to give to the biological principle when deciding on the best interests of the child in practice is debatable (Bunkholdt, 2006). For example, some researchers have argued for placing greater importance on the psychological relationships of children with their guardians, based on the postulate that the 'real' parents are the parents who satisfy a child's daily and emotional needs (Tefre, 2015, p. 92). While the law states that the child's best interests should be given precedence in all cases, in practice, this is negotiated along with different interests (Follesø & Mevik, 2010).

CPS's responsibilities and tasks are distributed among three governmental levels: 1) the municipality, 2) the County Social Welfare Board and 3) the Ministry of Child and Families and the Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (BUFDIR) (Heberling & Soltvedt, 2019). The role of municipalities as the primary organiser and provider of CPS is a unique feature of the Nordic welfare system (Blomberg & Burrell, 2009). CPS provides support to children and their parents who are experiencing challenges within the family. These challenges can be due to the parents' behaviour, for example, the use of physical violence

against children and/or the child's own behaviour (e.g. the use of drugs, being part of gangs, etc.). It provides a wide range of economic and social services to children and their parents, including both in-home services and out-of-home care. The County Social Welfare Board is a special tribunal which makes decisions in cases of mandatory out-of-home care for children (Nylund, 2020).

Various child welfare institutions, such as kindergartens, schools, health services and CPS, are mandated to collaborate with each other to ensure the child's best interests. Thus, children come in contact with CPS in various ways. This can be through the children themselves, parents, community/neighbours or professionals, such as teachers, school nurses, police or social workers. The professionals, in both the public and private sectors, are legally obliged to report any suspicion of neglect and abuse to CPS. This entails that the welfare and protection of children are a collective social responsibility, where anyone can report a concern to CPS.

2.4.1 Discourses and ideologies influencing Norwegian CPS

CPS policies and practices need to be understood within the social context in which they operate. The child protection system manifests a combination of various influences, such as state mandates, the sociopolitical and cultural context, professional ideologies, dominant discourses and normative views in society (Hetherington, 2002). Some of these factors are elaborated on in this section.

International ideologies, such as neoliberalism and New Public Management, have impacted the way CPS and interventions are designed and executed. These ideologies have transformed the understanding of social problems into structural and institutional to overemphasis individual's responsibilities for their own problems (Kamali & Jönsson, 2018). This has led to an increasingly hierarchical

and administrative relationship between social workers and service users and the implementation of one-dimensional solutions to people's problems (Rugkåsa & Ylvisaker, 2018). Furthermore, Hennem and Aamodt (2021) argue that neoliberalism has induced a new investment logic in Norwegian welfare policies in which early intervention is valued. Since children are considered a social investment, there is an increased interest in them and their life situation (Kjørholt, 2013).

CPS has been criticised for being dominated by the disciplines of developmental psychology and neuroscience. This entails a focus on a universal child and allows harmonising childhood and parenting practices without taking into account the sociocultural, economic and relational contexts of children (Hennem & Aamodt, 2021; Kjørholt, 2010; Ulvik, 2009). For example, contemporary CPS assessments and interventions are heavily influenced by attachment theory (Samsonsen & Willumsen, 2015). This theory postulates that children have an innate need for parental (mainly maternal) love, care and a high sensitivity towards their emotional needs; this is supposed to provide children with a secure base, which is crucial for developing personal autonomy (Bowlby, 1969). Morelli and Rothbaum (2007) criticise Western attachment theories for assuming that only one pathway exists for achieving a valued form of security and self-regulation. These theories highlight the 'ethics of autonomy', which place great value on independence and competence and are valued in the Global North; however, countries in the Global South live by the 'ethics of community', which entails valuing virtues such as respect, duty, obligation and interdependence (Morelli & Rothbaum, 2007, p. 519). In the latter context, researchers found that children's resistance to adult's orders was not seen as establishing personal boundaries or developing autonomy, but as selfishness or immaturity (Chapin, 2013; Yamada, 2004). However, this is not a simple dichotomy, as people differ in their expression and experiences of these ethics in their everyday lives (Morelli & Rothbaum, 2007).

Key words such as child participation, child rights and the best interests of the child play a significant role in regulating and executing CPS in Norway (Hennum & Aamodt, 2021). The UNCRC is used as the framework for CPS law and policies. Some researchers view it as the state's attempt to compensate for differences in children's socioeconomic backgrounds and provide them with equal opportunities so that they can make healthy life choices for themselves (Kriz & Skivenes, 2010; Pösö et al., 2014). Simultaneously, it is also considered a way for the state to legitimise interference in the family and shape parenting practices (Kriz & Skivenes, 2010). Children's participation is one of the rights that receives the most attention in Norway. While children are given strong participation rights formally and legally, this is challenging to fully achieve in practice. One of the challenges is that participation, as documented in the UNCRC and CPS policies, assumes that children are independent and autonomous beings who can express their will freely. Abebe (2019) argues that this assumption privileges individuals' capacity to resist unequal relations and sociocultural expectations. Furthermore, it is vested in a certain neoliberal ideology of personhood and a portrait of the family (p. 5).

2.4.2 Challenges and dilemmas in CPS

Social work practice happens in a social context that can raise different challenges and dilemmas for practitioners who have to maintain a balance between providing care and implementing policies. Here, I will focus on three such dilemmas and challenges.

First, CPS is mandated to provide help to vulnerable families and children, acting simultaneously as a tool of control that represents the state and the normative view. The normative view in CPS has been criticised for implementing an individualistic and developmental psychological perspective on children and their families (Kojan, 2011a; Vagli, 2009). Many researchers have argued that social workers in CPS use middle-class values to evaluate parents' parenting skills and present

them as a standard (Eide et al., 2009; Rugkåsa, 2008; Skivenes, 2015). They question this normative basis for child welfare decisions that leaves little room for cultural diversity when it comes to caring for children in Norway. At the same time, others express concern about whether ethnic minority children receive the right help at the right time (Hofman, 2010).

Second, the status of children as citizens and right bearers obliges the state/CPS to address their needs directly and not only indirectly through the parents. This often leads to tensions between addressing the family as an entity (e.g. using the principles of the least intrusive interventions and the significance of the biological principle) and supporting the rights and best interests of the individual child (Follesø & Mevik, 2010). Pösö et al. (2014) explain this tension through the example of the right of access when children are placed in care. They highlight that, seen from the child's perspective, a child only has a right to access if it is in their own best interests; 'parents cannot require access in their own right' (p.486). There has also been a view in Norwegian political discourses about replacing the biological principle with the psychological parent principle (Hagen & Rønbeck, 2011). This entails that children's psychological bonding and stability should be given as much importance as their biological bonds, which may result in long-term foster care and adoption as options for children and their foster parents.

Third, there is a dilemma and challenge related to respecting a family's right to privacy and the state's/CPS's duty to protect children. One of the consequences of the development of a child-centred orientation in CPS is the number of cases (n = 35) raised by parents between 2015 and 2019 to the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), contending that CPS violated Article 8 (right to privacy and family life) of ECtHR (Hennum & Aamodt, 2021). In seven out of nine cases (until January 2021), the European Court found that Norway violated the parents' and child's right to family and that the child's best interests was not balanced against the rights of the parents (Melinder et al., 2021, p. 211).

2.5 Norwegian CPS and immigrants

In this section, I present previous research focusing on the relationship between immigrant communities and CPS in Norway. This provides a useful context for understanding the wider discourses that influence the perspectives and experiences of children from immigrant backgrounds in contact with Norwegian CPS.

Most of the research reviewed here investigated the experiences and perceptions of non-Western immigrant parents, including both refugees and economic migrants. Many countries in the Global South do not have well-developed child protection policies and services as Norway does. Furthermore, the understanding and implications of the UNCRC are also different in different countries. For example, in Norway, the UNCRC is incorporated into the national constitution, and children's rights, such as universal access to education, health, equality, protection and participation, are ensured by the government and widely accepted in society. Conversely, Pakistan ratified the UNCRC in 1990 with the reservation that the provisions of the UNCRC would be interpreted according to Islamic laws and values (International Commission of Jurists, 1994). While this reservation was removed in 1997, the situation of children and their rights is still bleak; Pakistan ranks 148 (out of 182) on the children's rights index (Arts et al., 2021). Given this context, it is not surprising that some immigrants become perplexed or angry over the state/CPS intervening in children's and parents' lives and changing the family dynamics.

Lack of information

Information is a central theme that comes forth in research with immigrant parents related to CPS and the work of social workers with immigrant parents (Berg & Paulsen, 2021a; Fylkesnes et al., 2015; Tembo et al., 2021). Parents lack information not only about CPS but also regarding the general knowledge about the workings of Norwegian society, such as the social structures, welfare system, civil rights and

obligations (Berg & Paulsen, 2021b). This lack of knowledge about CPS, how social workers work with families and what happens in a CPS case creates unbalanced power relations between the parents and CPS (Marthinsen & Lichtwarck, 2013). Slettebø (2008) argues that service users' knowledge about the services, legislations and guidelines is a key for their meaningful participation.

However, it is not only a lack of information which presents a challenge for parents' and social workers' cooperation in CPS; it is also the source of information and rumours about CPS in the immigrant communities. For example, Fylkesnes et al. (2015) share a mother's experience of stress and emotional pain when she was misinformed that CPS would never return her children. A common misconception among immigrant communities is that CPS is out to take children away from them (Berg & Paulsen, 2021b).

Challenges in communication

Communication between social workers and service users is another key element that determines the trustful relations between the different stakeholders and the quality of the outcomes for all parties involved in a CPS case. Fylkesnes et al. (2013) showed that services for immigrant parents require the allocation of more time (compared to the majority population), accessible social workers and an exploratory and culturally sensitive communication strategy. They also found that parents were happy when social workers took their needs and wishes seriously and provided information in an understandable manner. However, too much focus on parents' needs and wishes is in danger of making children and their needs invisible (Ferguson, 2017).

Language is an important component of successful communication and was reported as the biggest barrier by social workers in their work with immigrant parents (Kriz & Skivenes, 2010). Studies have shown that many immigrant parents do not have enough Norwegian skills to discuss complex issues that take place in the CPS context (Buzungu, 2021).

Thus, using an interpreter is important to ensure the proper flow of information and to mitigate the chance of creating misunderstandings (Berg & Paulsen, 2021b). Some immigrant parents complained about the lack of dialogue between social workers and parents, which hindered their participation in the decision-making process and made them feel invisible (Fylkesnes et al., 2015).

While the requirement of using interpreters is considered a beneficial legal requirement, it also has its challenges. Kriz and Skivenes (2010) found that social workers did not trust the information that interpreters communicated to the immigrant parents and thus considered them a hindrance rather than a help in building positive relationships and trust. Conversely, many social workers shared that immigrant parents can be afraid of using interpreters, especially in cases of violence. Parents suspected that the interpreters would spread the information in their communities, despite their confidentiality agreement (Haugen et al., 2017). This highlights the importance of trustful relationships among interpreters, social workers and parents.

Fear and distrust of CPS

The perceptions of fear and lack of trust in CPS among immigrant parents come up frequently in research and media reports (Berg et al., 2017; Fylkesnes et al., 2015; Vassenden & Vedøy, 2019). This feeling of fear is not necessarily based on people's own direct experiences of social services but is due to the information received from their social network and the media in general (Berg et al., 2017; Haugen et al., 2017). Fylkesnes et al. (2015) found that immigrant parents were afraid of losing custody of their children, which was related to the belief that CPS only helps so that they can take children away from their parents and place them with Norwegian families. Furthermore, parents feared being discriminated against and unable to participate in CPS decisions. However, parents claimed that the discriminatory practices in CPS were not individual actions but were structural – for example, a lack of training

for new immigrant families arriving in Norway; placing children in Norwegian homes, thus weakening their connection to their own and their parents' culture; and presenting countries from the Global South in a negative light, which influences the foster parents against safeguarding their children's ethnic identities (Fylkesnes et al., 2015). These perceptions of fear and distrust hinder immigrant parents from seeking support from CPS, even when it is needed (Paulsen & Mohammad-Roe, 2021).

Berg et al. (2017) state that one reason for the low levels of trust in CPS can be immigrants' negative experiences with public authorities and institutions in their home countries, which contributes to the anxiety and fears they have regarding the welfare system and institutions in Norway (p. 68). Even though distrust and fear of CPS can also be present in the majority group, it is much stronger among the minority groups, as shown by a recent survey conducted in Norway (Ipsos, 2017). However, immigrants are not homogeneous and have varied levels of trust in the system, which was also reflected in the survey. For example, immigrants from Bosnia-Herzegovina had higher levels of trust and positive perceptions of CPS compared to immigrants from Poland and Pakistan, who had the lowest level of trust in CPS. This finding is interesting, as people from Pakistan are one of the first immigrant groups from the Global South to arrive in Norway. Thus, this distrust might not be related to a lack of information about welfare laws, rights and parenting practices. It could be about safeguarding their cultural identity and practices; thus, CPS is seen more as an intrusion in family life rather than as a help.

2.5.4 Cultural dimensions

Debates about culture and cultural differences are a central theme in CPS's work with immigrant and minority families. Researchers warn against understanding and explaining people's problems and needs primarily as something 'cultural' (Rugkåsa & Ylvisaker, 2018, p. 180).

It has been argued that an excessive focus on culture can obscure important social factors which affect people's situations, such as socioeconomic conditions and gender and ethnic discrimination. Conversely, not paying enough attention to cultures of different immigrant groups can exclude important factors, such as their views about children, gender equality and the minimum age of marriage, which can be the key to providing appropriate support to children and their families (H. Jørgensen & van der Weele, 2009). This highlights the need to avoid extreme positions on the cultural continuum, where at one end, you totally ignore culture, and at the other end, all problems are understood as cultural issues.

A report shows that representatives of several ethnic communities in Norway have emphasised that many parents experience not being met with an understanding of the value differences in children's upbringing (Salimi & MIRA senteret, 2012). Research with immigrant parents confirms this view (Fylkesnes et al., 2015; Tembo, 2020). Similarly, research with social workers shows that they find working with immigrant families to be most challenging due to social workers' lack of cultural knowledge and immigrants' lack of Norwegian language skills (Fylkesnes & Netland, 2013). While there has been research focusing on the perspectives of immigrant parents and social workers, the voices of immigrant children are missing.

2.6 *Pakistani diaspora in Norway*

Pakistani immigrant communities can be described as belonging to a diaspora community that maintains transnational economic, political, social and emotional ties to their country of origin. This population is ethnically diverse (Punjabis, Pathans, Sindhi, etc.), and linguistically speaking, they are, for example, Urdu, Punjabi, Pashto and so on. Although Islam remains the main religion of this group, there are some differences between sects. There is substantial literature focusing on Pakistani immigrants and their descendants (second and third

generations) in Europe showing the dynamics of migration and changes and continuities in practices of kinship, marriage and family life. A few general patterns can be seen in the literature, which include the centrality of religion, kinship and traditional gender roles and the importance of families and changes within and between generations, mainly due to the improvements in education level and social mobility (Bredal, 2006; Charsley & Shaw, 2006; Erdal, 2021; Østberg, 2009; Rysst, 2017; Rytter, 2013; A. Shaw, 2014).

History of immigration to Norway

The first immigrants from Pakistan arrived as labourers in Norway towards the end of the 1960s, leading to a chain of immigration, mostly originating from the rural districts of Punjab (Vassenden & Vedøy, 2019). Similar to other European countries, such as the United Kingdom and Denmark, their migration process to Norway started with male labour migration (Charsley, 2013; Rytter, 2013). Over the years, these communities have increased in number, to a large extent due to family reunification, birth of children and transnational marriages (Erdal, 2017). They make up the largest second-generation non-European immigrant group in Norway (Vassenden & Vedøy, 2019).

Transnational relationships

The transnational ties between Pakistani immigrant communities and their country of origin have been greatly facilitated through the development of internet and communication technology. One example of this is the use of Skype classes where religious teachers from Pakistan teach children the Quran in Norway (Aarset, 2016). These ties are also sustained through remittances which are sent from Norway to individuals, families and collectives beyond the households in Pakistan (Erdal, 2012). Another important area in this regard is transnational marriages, which have considerably spurred the population of the Pakistani diaspora in Norway over the last 50 years (Nadim, 2014). Maintenance of religion, the caste system and emotional ties with kin in

Pakistan are some of the main reasons for such marriages (Charsley, 2013; Rytter, 2013). However, there is a gendered dimension to this. The narrative among the Pakistani community is changing regarding the transnational marriages of young women. Some parents think that women born in Norway might be better off on all counts with a husband from the Norwegian-Pakistani diaspora than from Pakistan or any other country (Erdal, 2017). In contrast, for men, there is a strong narrative that transnational marriages are more successful, as women from Pakistan are more willing to make traditional choices, such as living with parents-in-law, taking on major responsibilities related to child care and staying at home instead of working outside the home (Aarset, 2020; Erdal, 2017; Nadim, 2014).

Importance of religion and family

Pakistani culture places a strong emphasis on religion and family. Religion is highly valued, which largely influences life decisions, such as how to live, gender roles, sexuality, what to wear and who to marry. As previously mentioned, transnational ties are an important part of sustaining religious education and movements. Minhaj-ul-Quran is a transnational religious and political movement which is active among the Pakistani community and allows the dual flow of people, materials, ideas and practices between Pakistan and Norway (Borchgrevink & Erdal, 2017).

Gender & integration

The integration of immigrants into host countries, especially those coming from non-European backgrounds, is the focus of both social and political debates. In the case of the Pakistani diaspora in Norway, one can say that they are well integrated structurally through learning the language, gaining education and being employed. While first-generation Pakistani immigrants might have had lower education levels, Norwegian-Pakistanis tend to have about the same level of education as the majority population. However, women tend to have higher education

levels than men among second generation Pakistanis, a trend found among the majority group as well (Daugstad & Sandnes, 2008). Although people from Pakistan are well integrated in terms of employment, the difference between men and women is quite noticeable. A report by Statistics Norway (2017) shows that, while 69.5% of men were employed as per data from last quarter of 2016, only 38.3% of women were in paid work. The employment percentage among the non-immigrant population during the same time period was 68.5% for men and 64.9% for women. However, it is hard to say whether the unemployment among women is voluntary or involuntary. Nadim (2014) found that participation in working life was higher among the second generation.

2.6.5 Multiple identities of children

Research with Norwegian-Pakistani children and young people shows their agency and creativity in how they adapt to their different social contexts in order to experience belonging and well-being in their ethnic identity construction and everyday life integration (Rysst, 2017). Østberg (2009) found that children in her study adhered to multiple identities rather than choosing one over the other. They were socialised at home into becoming or being Pakistani and Muslims; the two identities were not distinguishable for them. At the same time, they were socialised into being Norwegian through formal schooling, media influences and interaction with non-Muslims (e.g. friends, classmates and teachers). However, these multiple identities and cultures can be challenging without adequate support from family and the larger society. Rysst (2017) highlights two such challenges. First, the relationship between these children's religion, gender, sexuality and ethnic identity is complex. Second, the minority youth experience is perceived as a stigma in the Norwegian public debate, and their integration into the local sociocultural milieu is problematised. Prieur (2004) gives an example of these challenges: when Norwegian-Pakistani children and young people (especially girls) act and dress like

other ethnic Norwegians, they risk being labelled by their families and community members as ‘Norwegianised’ (a negative term), but if they act or dress as Pakistanis, they might be ‘othered’ in the mainstream society and stereotyped as belonging to the patriarchal culture of Pakistan (p. 23).

2.7 Relevance to my study

Overall, the research with children from Pakistani backgrounds in Norway highlights the importance of identity, culture and religion in their lives. Simultaneously, it shows the complexity of their lives as they navigate between two different and, at times, opposing cultures. One of the consequences of the clash between the majority and minority cultural values can result in children seeking help from CPS, for example, in cases of violence, abuse, neglect and negative social control. No studies were found about these children’s views of and experiences with CPS (S. Wilson et al., 2020, Paper 1). This highlights the need to conduct research with children from different ethnic backgrounds about their experiences with CPS in order to provide them with better access and culturally responsive services.

3 Theoretical underpinnings

In this chapter, I elaborate on the theoretical and conceptual frameworks that have been vital to designing this research and that influenced my position as a researcher. This knowledge is important, as the way researchers think about and understand childhood and children impacts how they engage with children in the research process and consequently influences the children's experiences and representation in the analysis. My theoretical perspectives are primarily anchored in childhood studies and children's rights, which are presented in the following sections.

The first section introduces the conceptualisation of children and childhood in childhood studies. This is followed by a brief discussion of the two basic premises of contemporary childhood studies that are relevant to this study. The first is that childhood is socially and culturally constructed, and the second is that children are competent social actors who have particular perspectives and experiences of their social world that should be heard. The final section presents a critical view of children's rights and the role of these rights in social work. Together, these concepts not only contributed to my research design and engagement with the research participants but also provided a supporting lens to discuss my overall findings in Chapter 6.

3.1 *Conceptualisation of children and childhood*

The concept of childhood is a complex phenomenon, and defining children is not a straightforward endeavour. In many societies in Global North, chronological age is widely used to define childhood. According to Laz (2003), this way of understanding age is linked to the naturalistic and universal view of childhood, where age is essentially considered a biological and developmental phenomenon that is universal to all. The UNCRC defines anyone below the age of 18 years as a child, unless the age of majority is attained earlier under the law applicable to the child

(United Nations, 1989). Thus, in countries where marriage indicates the age of majority, adulthood is technically attained when a person marries. This age can vary for girls and boys. For example, in Pakistan, the legal age of marriage is 18 years for boys and 16 years for girls (Sabreen, 2017). However, Pakistan has a parallel enactment of Hudood Ordinance 1979 (based on Shariah/religious law) alongside the Pakistan Penal Code, which makes no distinction on the basis of age and treats everyone reaching puberty as an adult, whether in terms of marriage or criminal responsibility (Hashemi, 2017). This highlights that childhood is not a single universal phenomenon, nor is it experienced in the same way by all children; thus, the 'idealised' notions of childhood may be inappropriate and/or unrealistic (Morrow, 2011, p. 3).

Childhood studies is an interdisciplinary field that emerged in the 1990s as a reaction to the dominant perspective of childhood, mainly shaped by developmental psychology, which was characterised by the concepts of naturalness, universalism and competence (Prout & James, 2015). The first critique is that childhood can no longer be seen only as a common biological phase in people's lives in which they go through a set of universal stages of development (James & James, 2001). Many scholars argue that children's development is dependent on their cultural, social and relational contexts in addition to their genetic heritage and varies across time and space (Prout & James, 2015; Wells, 2021). Second, the practices, beliefs and expectations about children and their needs are neither timeless nor universal (same for all children). This has implications for social welfare programmes and international developmental programmes, as the notion of childhood as a universal category does not match the actual experiences of children across the globe (Jenks, 2004). For example, Western ideas about what children should or should not do, where they are at risk and where they are safe might not apply to children working and/or living on the streets in the Global South. In such cases, developmental programmes promoting the global standards without taking into account the local realities might end

up doing more damage than good (see e.g. (Ennew, 2002). Morrow (2011) suggests shifting the focus in research and social policies from ‘the child’, which proposes a universal category, to ‘children’, as it emphasises the idea of children as a social group and the existence of differing childhoods structured by social factors, such as gender, socioeconomic class, ethnicity and geographical location. The third criticism concerns the competence of children. Morrow (2011) postulates that, in the majority world, children’s competence (their capacity to do something) is generally measured through their education and is based on adult criteria. Thus, children are often viewed as non-competent and as ‘becomings’ – focusing on what they will become in the future rather than seeing them as beings. This perspective of competence is narrow and does not take into account the difference in roles that children fulfil in the majority and minority worlds. For example, many children in the majority world might not have the opportunity to obtain a formal education, but they play a central role in domestic labour and economic activities (Abebe, 2007; Beazley, 2015; Klocker, 2007). Thus, measuring their competence in terms of educational attainment is not appropriate.

The field of childhood studies promotes a view of children as social actors who are worthy subjects of study in their own right and should be given a voice in research (James & Prout, 1997). This implies exploring children’s perspectives and how they make sense of their own experiences, everyday lives and social relationships. While childhood is a universal structural and social category, it is experienced differently by children based on cultural, temporal and spatial factors. This idea of the plurality of childhoods is a useful aspect of children’s positioning in this research. In the following sections, I present the two basic premises that make up the core of contemporary childhood studies and are relevant to my research design.

3.1.1 Children and childhood as socially constructed

One of the main tenets in childhood studies is the understanding of childhood as a social construction, that is, viewing childhood as an interpretative frame for understanding the early years of human life (Prout & James, 2015). La Fontaine (1986) posits, while the physical and cognitive immaturity of children is biological, the ways in which this immaturity is understood and given meaning is cultural. This emphasises the social, cultural and historical variability of childhood and its irreducibility to a given biological reality (James, Jenks and Prout, 1998).

Aries (1962) first drew attention to the idea that childhood is socially and historically constructed based on his research into children's lives from the Middle Ages onwards. He asserted that 'in mediaeval society childhood did not exist' (p. 125) and children entered the world of adults as soon as they could walk and talk. Children were valued more for their economic utility than for being emotionally rewarding. He claimed that this was due to the high infant mortality rate at that time and that parents did not invest emotionally in children until their chances of survival were higher, at about the age of seven years. The concept of childhood started to change around the end of the 15th century, which provided the basis for the modern conceptualisation of children and childhood as a distinct phase of life (Aries, 1962). According to Aries (1962), this coincided with two other social developments. One was the separation of public life from the private realm of the family and the sentimentalisation of bonding between parents and children. There was recognition that the child was not ready for life and had to be subjected to special treatment, such as schooling, before they could join the adults (Aries, 1962, p. 412). The other social development was the rise in affluent families who propagated the idea of the modern child-centred family, as they had the resources and means to do so.

While Aries (1962) was the first historian to suggest that childhood is a social and historical construction which changes over time and context, his work has been criticised over the limitations of using European visual sources (paintings) and his interpretations of these (Pollock, 1983; Retford, 2016). Heywood (2001) argues that, despite criticism, Aries' notions provide scholars of childhood studies with a base from which to 'mount a radical critique of thinking about children in their own society' (p. 12) and they acknowledge the diverse cultural understandings of childhood rather than a universal conception. The different social and cultural constructs of children highlight the 'profound questions of moral judgement that rest on implicit ideas of children's place in social order' (Wrigley, 2003, p. 693). Sorin and Galloway (2006, p. 13) present 10 different cultural constructions of children and childhood based on their review of literature in the field of childhood studies: the innocent child, the evil child, the snowballing child, the out-of-control child, the child as saviour, the child as miniature adult, the child as becoming/adult-in-training, the child as commodity, the child as victim and the agentic child. This is not an exhaustive list, nor is it mutually exclusive. For example, children under CPS policies are constructed mainly as innocent, in need of adult protection; however, children who behave aggressively as a result of maltreatment and other related problems are constructed as evil, needing to be controlled and disciplined (Sorin & Galloway, 2006).

The above presentation of the historical and cultural aspects of children's constructions highlights two main points. First, our present understanding of children and childhood is a relatively recent construction, and there are multiple childhoods. Second, the way we see and treat children shape their experiences of being a child and consequently impact their responses to and engagement with the social world. Since there is no one universal childhood, but rather many childhoods that depend on children's experiences of their lived realities in the given political and sociocultural context, there is a need to conduct

research with different groups of children and explore their experiences with CPS. This provides a strong argument for my research project, as it investigates the experiences of children from Pakistani backgrounds with Norwegian CPS from their own perspectives. Furthermore, I view children as right-bearing individuals who have the right to be researched properly and given a voice in research. This influenced my research design and ethical considerations of conducting research with children, something which I discuss further in Chapter 4 (methodology).

3.1.2 Recognising children as social actors

Over the past four decades, the conceptualisation of children and childhood has changed from being dominated by developmental and socialisation theories. These theoretical traditions assumed that children are blank slates and unfinished, ready to be packed with the ideas of the society and culture into which they were born and develop into rational human beings (Kehily, 2004). Thus, children were conceptualised as incompetent, immature, humans-in-making and passive objects of a one-way socialisation process (James & James, 2001; James & Prout, 1997). The discussion of these concepts has been particularly important in childhood studies because they deal with the core tenets of this interdisciplinary field. This paradigm, based on social constructionism and developments in the children's rights agenda, reframed the social status and position of children as social actors (James et al., 1998; James & James, 2001). This calls for children to be understood as human beings who possess different experiences and knowledge than adults and as competent social actors who are not only shaped by but also shape their circumstances (James et al., 1998).

This paradigm shift has impacted the trends in children and childhood research. While there has been long-lasting interest in research related to matters concerning children, most of this research has been about children's lives from adult's perspectives rather than directly from children's own perspectives (P. Christensen & James, 2017; Sommer et

al., 2013). A literature review of qualitative research with children highlighted two reasons for not involving children directly in research (Kirk, 2007). The first was related to beliefs about children's competence and their ability to provide reliable data, and the second was that children are considered vulnerable and susceptible to exploitation in research (Kirk, 2007). Conversely, scholars in childhood studies argue for regarding children as social actors, which entails treating them as active participants in 'contexts where, traditionally, they have been denied those rights of participation and their voices have remained unheard' (P. Christensen & James, 2017, p. 2). MacNaughton et al. (2007, p. 458) present three research-based ideas embodying the new model: 1) young people can construct valid meanings about the world and their place in it, 2) children's knowledge of the world is different and equally significant to adults' knowledge and 3) children's perspectives on their lived worlds can improve adults' understandings of their experiences (p. 458). This model has encouraged researchers to recognise the value of children's experiences as worthy of study in their own right, which can provide important knowledge for developing meaningful child-centred policies. Some examples of such research are related to topics such as child work and child labour (Abebe, 2009a; Klocker, 2007; Solberg, 2015; Woodhead, 1998), child prostitution (Montgomery, 2001) and family mediation (Haugen, 2010). In a policy context dominated by protectionist and paternalistic views about children's needs and vulnerabilities, these studies have elicited the experiences and perspectives of those most affected by policies and interventions designed to promote their best interests. Based on his research, Woodhead (1998) argues that conventional research on the harmful effects of children's work is of limited value unless children's own accounts and active role in shaping their working lives are taken into consideration. He contends that, 'with the possible exception of extreme cases of forced and bonded labour, children are not simply passive victims adversely affected by their work. They are social actors trying to make sense of their physical and social world, negotiating with parents

and peers, employers and customers, and making the best of the difficult and oppressive circumstances in which they find themselves' (Woodhead, 1998, p. 19). This highlights that children are not passive subjects of structural and social determinations but are social and cultural actors. They not only contribute to the construction of their own social lives but also of those around them and the societies in which they live.

While acknowledging children's active role in the social world has opened new lines of research with children, many childhood scholars also emphasise the need to critically analyse these postulates (Prout, 2011; Spyrou, 2011; Tisdall & Punch, 2012). There is a need to move beyond the binaries, such as active/passive and being/becoming. Uprichard (2008) argues that children are simultaneously 'beings' and 'becomings', something which children are very much aware of themselves. Furthermore, the image of the child as a social actor and active participant should not neglect the differences between younger and older human beings and how they might express themselves (S. Punch, 2002; Woodhead & Faulkner, 2008). In doing my research, this theoretical perspective supports children's participation by seeing them as social actors who are competent individuals who can express their perspectives and feelings. This study is about children's lived experiences with CPS; thus, I consider them to be the best informants who can provide valuable knowledge to broaden adults' perspectives in this field.

3.2 Children's rights

In addition to childhood studies, a rights-based approach also informs this study. This entails seeing children as subjects of rights, which also includes participating in child-centred research (Ennew et al., 2009). The UNCRC is the most widely ratified international document on the rights of children. It is not only a legal instrument that focuses on children's individual rights, but it also provides a general policy framework outlining the duties and responsibilities of the state and, consequently,

towards children (Roose & De Bie, 2008). The rights-based approach towards children asserts that they are neither a property of parents nor an object of the state's intervention but are legal citizens who are entitled to many of the same rights as adults (Peterson-Badali & Ruck, 2008). The UNCRC recognises children as citizens who can assert rights to the state, who has the responsibility to ensure children's rights and protect their interests by incorporating the document into national laws and policies.

During the past three decades, this convention has gained substantial acceptance as a standard of human rights for children (Tisdall & Punch, 2012). The rights stipulated in the UNCRC are unique to the particular needs of individuals in the childhood phase of their life course, which is until 18 years of age. The 54 articles in the document describe children's civil, political, social and cultural rights. These are often categorised into three main groups: provision, protection and participation (James & James, 2014). Provision rights supply children with resources, such as education, health and an adequate standard of living. Protection rights safeguard children against all kinds of maltreatment, such as violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation. Participation rights allow children to take part in activities, express their views and opinions freely and influence decisions in all matters concerning them. The convention is also underpinned by four cross-cutting principles: nondiscrimination, participation, survival and development, and the best interest of the child. However, children's rights are not just about laws and rules; they are also about structures, relations and processes (Morrow & Pells, 2012). Hence, the implementation of these principles and the convention in general depends to a large extent on the level of legitimacy accorded to children's rights in a given sociocultural context.

The question of whether children have rights has not been answered unanimously with a yes. On one hand, some scholars believe that denying rights to children is analogous to the oppression of other vulnerable groups in society, such as women and minorities (Cohen, 1980; Holt, 1974). On the other hand, the position of children as bearers

of moral rights is denied on the basis of their lack of competence and capacity to understand their own best interests and autonomy (Macleod, 2018). Based on the latter criteria, even some adults would not be deemed rights holders. Archard (2004) argues that children should be regarded as human rights holders, as they have moral value equal to that of adults, simply by virtue of being human beings. Children's and adults' human rights should not be in opposition and binary terms; rather, human rights should be considered a part of children's rights. Everyone has rights, for example, the right to be protected from all kinds of violence, regardless of their capacity and competency. Children's right to participation has a protective aspect, as Lansdown (2006) highlights that 'adults cannot protect children without understanding their experiences' (p. 149).

There is an increasing interest in conducting research with children in various fields, such as education, health and social work (Kirk, 2007). This trend is mainly influenced by the recognition of children's rights and the reconceptualisation of children within childhood studies as a social construction and their status as social actors rather than objects or subjects of research (Woodhead & Faulkner, 2008). These approaches 'advance a view of children as competent and both willing and able to make decisions about matters such as participation in research' (Munford & Sanders, 2004, p. 472).

In this study, I take a rights-informed approach to this research with children. Children's participation in research is considered an important tool to promote their entitlement to have a voice about matters that impact their lives and have their rights acknowledged as citizens. Articles 12 and 13 of the UNCRC are generally referred to as guiding principles in relation to children's participation in research (Ennew et al., 2009). These articles state the following:

State parties shall assure to the child, who is capable of forming his or her own views, the right to express those views freely in all matters

affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child. (United Nations, 1989, Article 12)

The child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any media of the child's choice. (United Nations, 1989, Article 13)

While these articles promote children's rights to have a voice and freedom of expression, stipulations about children's capability and maturity have been used as reasons for not involving children in research. The risk model treats children as minors if they lack the maturity to decide whether or not to participate, as their maturity is generally interpreted in light of legal factors, such as age (Graham & Fitzgerald, 2010). As discussed in the previous sections, the measurement of children's capacity in terms of age and education attainment does not fully depict children's capacity and maturity. Thus, making decisions about children's right to participation based on these measurements can cause more harm to children than good. Lansdown (2005) proposes a concept of children's evolving capacities, where they are seen both as beings and becomings (developing). This entails allowing children to make informed decisions about participation in research while acknowledging that, since their capacities are developing, the researcher is responsible for their protection throughout the research process. My research aligns with this concept of evolving capacities, as it shifts focus away from the deficit model of capacity that views children as immature and lacking the ability to consent to participate in research to a strengths-based conceptualisation of children as competent and looks for opportunities to help and support their participation in this study.

4 Methodology

The purpose of this study is to explore and understand children's lived experiences with CPS in Norway. This chapter focuses on the theoretical discussions and underpinnings that informed the selection of IPA for exploring the research question and the way in which the methodology was employed in the field. The chapter also includes the research design and ethical considerations.

4.1 *Situating the scientific position*

According to (Beck, 1979, p. 141), 'the purpose of social sciences is to understand the social reality as different people see it and to demonstrate how their views shape the action which they take within that reality' (p. 141). The ontological (nature of being) and epistemological (nature of knowledge) distinction involves the critical aspect of the research process, as it affects the research approach and methodology selected to uncover social truths (David & Sutton, 2004).

My research approach is based on the postulation that children are meaning-making beings and experts in their own lives who have the right to express their views and be heard (Prout & James, 2015; Unicef, 1989). Since I was interested in exploring the lived experiences of children receiving services from CPS, this study is framed in the interpretivist paradigm or worldview. Paradigms are human constructions which deal with principles indicating the researcher's standpoint so as to construct the meaning embedded in the data (Lincoln & Denzin, 2000).

The interpretivist paradigm attempts to understand the subjective world of human experiences and is often associated with phenomenology (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). This research is based on the ontological assumption that social reality is subjective and co-constructed by individuals who interact and make their own meaning of the events in

their lives in an active way (Cuthbertson et al., 2020). This aligns with the epistemological assumption that knowledge is individually and/or socially constructed and gained through personal experiences and perceptions.

As an interpretivist researcher, I recognised my part in the research process of data collection, analysis and interpretation in relation to my participants. Punch (2013) argues that researchers construct knowledge socially as a result of their personal experiences of real life and cognitive processing within the natural settings investigated. This highlights that my position as a researcher is not impartial, which means that the data collection and, consequently, analysis (broadly speaking) are influenced by factors such as my own history, values and predispositions. I have attempted to make my positionality, beliefs and political values explicit throughout the thesis. Furthermore, I used reflexivity, that is, an attitude and a deliberate effort to become aware of one's presence in relation to the research participants and practice, by noting my reflections during and after the fieldwork.

4.2 Selection of the methodology

The aforementioned ontological assumptions, combined with the epistemological stance, guided the methodological choices taken in this thesis to find a suitable approach to answer the main research question:

What are the lived experiences of children from Pakistani backgrounds in the context of Norwegian CPS?

This research question aims to explore and understand the personal lived experiences of a designated group of people who have received services from CPS in Norway. Nevertheless, the aforementioned question remains open to the participants' perceptions and understandings of what those experiences mean to them. This type of research question is well situated within the interpretivist paradigm (Creswell, 2013). Keeping

this in view, I selected phenomenology as a suitable approach for this research.

According to Finlay (2008), a distinction exists between engagement in phenomenological philosophy and applied phenomenological research. It should be noted that phenomenology did not start as a research methodology but as a philosophy that has evolved over the years. Scholars assert that it is important to engage intellectually with the foundations of the philosophical tradition in order to translate this into research practice (Finlay, 2011; Langdrige, 2007). Finlay (2009) states that a phenomenological methodology has six crucial facets: a focus on lived experiences, a phenomenological attitude, the aim for rich descriptions, concerns with existential issues, the assumption that the self and the world are an intertwined and potentially transformative relational process (p. 15). My research aims to explore and understand the 'emic' meanings and experiences of children from Pakistani backgrounds of being with CPS and what it feels like for them. I tried to practise an open attitude towards the research topic and the narratives of research participants and view these in a new light, as much as possible. Dahlberg et al. (2008) recommend that researchers adopt an 'open discovering way of being' and develop a 'capacity to be surprised and sensitive to the unpredicted and unexpected' (p. 98). For example, while I was surprised that not all children viewed physical punishment as violence and bad for children, at the same time, I kept an open attitude towards it, for example, by trying to understand children's reasoning for it. During the course of my research, I was able to develop a more complex and nuanced understanding of violence, protection and rights based on children's descriptions of their lived experiences. I was concerned with the existential issues of significance for children in the context of CPS. These are the concerns related to the human condition and experiences of being in the world (Finlay, 2011). Furthermore, I agree with Finlay (2009) that phenomenological research can be transformative for both the researcher and the participants. My research provided me with an

opportunity to be ‘a witness’ of my participants’ lived experiences and social realities, which impacted not only the creation of a new self-awareness but also my ethical considerations. Together, my participants and I co-constructed the experiences under investigation and created new possibilities for making sense of those experiences (Finlay, 2011).

Danaher and Briod (2005) argue that phenomenology enables researchers to capture the unique voices of children and elicit a sense of what it means to be a child and experience a phenomenon. However, choosing the appropriate phenomenological methodological approach can be challenging. The aim of exploring and understanding the lived experiences of children, as mentioned in the research question, remained central in finding an approach that was intellectually accessible and inviting but also fitted the nature of the purpose of the research.

Since the purpose of this research was not only to describe but also to understand (through interpretation) children’s lived experiences with CPS, IPA (Smith et al., 2009) was selected as the appropriate methodology. IPA stands out among interpretative phenomenological methodologies due to its commitment to the idiographic focus on the individual (discussed below).

4.3 Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA)

IPA was introduced by Jonathan Smith (1996) in an attempt to establish an alternate approach to previous quantitative and qualitative methodologies in psychology that would focus on the need for a deep interpretation of participants’ accounts. Since then, IPA has developed and is becoming a widely accepted method of research within the fields of psychology and health and social care (Eatough & Smith, 2008; Smith et al., 2009). IPA is committed to exploring how people make sense of their major life experiences in their social and personal worlds (Smith et al., 2009). It is an inductive methodology and a particular way of

analysing data (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008). The philosophical and theoretical basis of IPA comprises phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography, which together create interpretative understanding (Eatough & Smith, 2008).

4.3.1 Phenomenology

As previously mentioned, the primary aim of IPA is to explore how people make sense of their lived experiences in their social and personal worlds. As such, the aim of exploring lived experiences and the investigation of making sense of such experiences relates IPA to phenomenology (Eatough & Smith, 2008). Seminal phenomenologists Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Gadamer and Sartre influenced the development of IPA (Smith et al., 2009). However, Husserlian phenomenology provided IPA with ideas about how to examine and comprehend lived experiences (Shinebourne, 2011). Two of these main ideas are ‘phenomenological attitude’ and ‘phenomenological reduction’. Phenomenological attitude requires the researcher to take a step back from the ‘natural attitude’, that is, become unreflectively immersed in the taken-for-granted world. It invites the researcher to practise ‘bracketing’, which means temporarily suspending their habitual ways of perceiving the world, assumptions and theories. However, scholars differ regarding exactly what is put in those brackets (Finlay, 2011). Adopting the ‘phenomenological attitude’ involves turning one’s gaze towards how the object appears to the consciousness:

Focusing our experiencing gaze on our own psychic life necessarily takes place as reflection ... Every experience can be subject to such reflection... when we are fully engaged in conscious activity, we focus exclusively on the specific thing, thoughts, values, goals or means involved, but not on the psychical experience as such, in which these things are known as such. Only reflection reveals this to us. Through reflection ... we grasp the corresponding subjective experiences in which we become ‘conscious’ of them, in which (in the broadest sense) they

‘appear’. For this reason, they are called ‘phenomena’ and their most general essential character is to exist as the ‘consciousness of’, ‘appearance of’ the specific things thoughts (judged states of affairs, grounds, conclusions), plans, decisions, hopes, and so forth. (Husserl, 1927)

This process requires deep reflection and critical concentration to view the phenomenon under exploration with an open mind, curiosity and disciplined naivety (Giorgi, 1985). Finlay (2011) warns that bracketing should not be misunderstood with an exercise in objectivity and highlights the need for the researcher to engage with their own subjectivity through reflexivity. Husserl devised ‘phenomenological reduction’, or bracketing, to hold subjective perspectives and theoretical constructs in suspension and to facilitate the essence of the phenomena to emerge (Racher & Robinson, 2003). It is explained by Moran (2002, p. 4) as ‘explanations are not to be imposed before the phenomena have been understood from within’ (p. 4). This view requires that we extract the description of the experience before interpreting it (Caelli, 2000). This is an important aspect of IPA. It should be noted that this attitude also expects researchers to accept participants’ narratives of their experiences as their ‘truth’ and refrain from moral judgement (Finlay, 2011).

4.3.2 Hermeneutics

The second underpinning of IPA is based on hermeneutics, which refers to the process of interpretation (Finlay, 2011). The underpinnings for this facet are provided by theorists Schleiermacher, Heidegger and Gadamer (Smith et al., 2009). Although phenomenology and hermeneutics developed as two separate philosophical schools, they are interconnected and complementary. Smith et al. (2009) note that ‘without phenomenology, there would be nothing to interpret, without the hermeneutics, the phenomenon would not be seen’ (p. 37). This is, in a

way, aligned with the view of Heidegger (1962), who considered hermeneutics a prerequisite to phenomenology, connecting the interpretation of lived experiences with the attempt to make meaning from these experiences. While hermeneutics is based in language, the ‘being’ of language is different from the phenomenon it aims to describe and understand. Therefore, it is important to have a method of analysing language which is both systematic and reflexive enough to ‘get closer’ to the truth of the experience (Larkin et al., 2006). IPA researchers explicitly engage in this process by considering the person in the context and attempting to understand their experience with the particular phenomenon in a given culture, location, time and social relationships (Larkin et al., 2006). Furthermore, the researchers also take into account their own history and cultural location and how the intersubjectivity both opens and closes evolving understandings of an individual’s experiences (Finlay, 2014).

The analytical process in IPA can be described in terms of a ‘double hermeneutics’ process in which participants make meaning of their lived experiences; then, the researcher tries to decode that meaning to make sense of participants’ meaning making (Smith et al., 2009). The researcher and the participants enter an ever-expanding hermeneutic circle, which is described as ‘the dynamic relationship between the part and the whole, at a series of levels, and moving between understanding and interpretation’ (Smith et al., 2009, p. 28). The circle refers to the process as being nonlinear, moving between different levels and creating a new ‘fusion of horizons’ through conversation – asking questions in a way that maintains a stance of openness to the topic (H.-G. Gadamer, 1975). The aim of such dialogue is to understand what the participants are talking about, allowing oneself to be influenced and re-examining one’s (pre)understandings in light of the newly gained knowledge (Wilcke, 2002).

Hermeneutic circling requires the researcher to move between parts and the whole, for example, moving from ‘words’ to ‘sentences’ and from ‘sentences’ to ‘words’ (Smith et al., 2009, p. 28). It also includes movement from the participant’s description of their experiences to the researcher’s own reflections and interpretations of those experiences (to spiral – gaining deeper understanding).

4.3.3 *Idiography*

IPA is strongly influenced by idiography and is thus concerned with the particular nature of an experience in a specific context and temporal frame (Eatough & Smith, 2008). According to Smith et al. (2009), the concern for the particular nature of experience operates at two levels in IPA. The first is the thorough and systematic in-depth analysis of the particular case, for example, a participant’s interview. The second is the commitment of IPA to the understanding of ‘how particular experiential phenomena have been understood from the perspective of particular people, in particular context’ (p. 29). Since participants are viewed as experts with regard to their own experiences, this approach is compatible with the view of children as social actors and competent research participants who are able to express their perspectives about their life situations (P. Christensen & James, 2017). However, it needs to be noted that, while people (e.g. children in my research) are able to share their own personally unique lived experiences of the phenomenon of interest (CPS in this case), their perspectives and the meanings ascribed to their experiences are a product of their interactions with the lived world (Smith et al., 2009).

4.4 *Justification for choosing IPA*

This research uses IPA, as put forth by Smith et al. (2009), to explore the lived experiences with CPS of children from Pakistani backgrounds. This involves systematically collecting rich and detailed accounts of first-hand experiences about the phenomenon under investigation,

organising and interpreting textual material derived from empirical data and through the researcher's personal reflexivity. My research is evidently phenomenological, as it is about how individuals interpret events and objects to make sense of their experiences rather than creating objective understanding of external reality (R. Shaw, 2010). Furthermore, IPA explicitly recognises the role of the researcher in the co-construction of the phenomena under exploration (Smith et al., 2009), which is important, as it has provided me with the space to acknowledge my pre-understandings and positionality as a researcher. This position is presented and discussed throughout the thesis.

4.5 Methodology in action

This section presents and elaborates on the application of the methodology used in this study. This first section presents a brief account of the process for selecting the field, sampling and accessing the participants and the methods for collecting empirical data. The second section presents the data analysis process, followed by the quality assessment of the IPA. Afterwards, I share my reflections and the different ethical challenges and dilemmas that emerged during the course of the fieldwork.

Research design

4.5.1 Location

This study was conducted in Oslo, the capital of Norway. Oslo has 15 boroughs, each of which has its own administration and CPS office. The city has the largest concentration of immigrants from Pakistani backgrounds (Statistics Norway, 2021), which was the key reason for selecting this location as the main case in this study.

4.5.2 Negotiating access to the participants

Considering the sensitivity of the research topic, the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD) recommended recruiting children through gatekeepers for this study (see appendix 4). Gatekeepers play a key role in facilitating the researcher's access to potential participants. Their positive influences can help complete the research process smoothly; however, they also have the ability to limit or deny any access (McFadyen & Rankin, 2016).

In my case, I received help from professional gatekeepers working at institutions such as schools, a cultural consulting organisation, youth clubs and an organisation for foster parents to gain access to potential research participants. First, these gatekeepers were sent an information letter about the research project (Appendix 5) to share with children and/or their parents who met the inclusion criteria (see section on research participants). Participation in the research was voluntary. Upon consent to participate, the gatekeepers shared with me the contact information for children. Once I received the children's contact information, I sent them a Short Message Service (SMS) to arrange the interview meeting so I could answer any questions that they may have. Similar to other researchers, I also experienced that negotiating access with gatekeepers first gave me credibility among the research participants and their families/foster families (where relevant), as they guaranteed my legitimacy (De Laine, 2000). However, this arm's-length recruitment approach had its downsides as well; gatekeepers could decide who was fit for participation in research without even consulting with the children or providing any reason.

Parents and children were also able to contact me directly through the contact information provided on the information sheet. The invitation to participate in the study was also shared through Facebook, which was edited to warn the children not to share any personal information with

the researcher via Facebook Messenger. However, no child or parent contacted me directly.

Using multiple gatekeepers proved to be useful, and by the end of eight months, 14 children had agreed to participate in the research. However, two of them did not show up for the interviews and later declined to participate, while one 18-year-old young person was not deemed fit to be interviewed by her social worker. Balancing children's rights to participation and protection in research can be challenging, especially in situations where the researcher is unfamiliar with the field or participants. Therefore, I trusted the social worker's judgement in this case. However, it did raise an ethical dilemma for me, which is discussed later in the ethics section.

4.5.3 Research participants

In the end, 11 children (aged 13–19 years) participated in the study. They were all born in Norway and, in most cases, had at least one parent born in Pakistan. A brief description of the participants is shown in Table 3-1. In IPA studies, Smith et al. (2009) and Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014) recommend selecting a small and homogeneous (as much as possible) sample size ranging from 3 to 15 participants. This is because the aim is 'not to maximize variation in the hope of uncovering the invariant structural properties of the phenomenon but instead to develop detailed descriptions of the experiences of a small number of people who all share that experience' (Langdrige, 2007, p. 58). While homogeneity of the sample is recommended to ensure that the research question and phenomenon under investigation is relevant to the participants, the definition of homogeneity depends on the study (Smith et al., 2009).

In my study, the homogeneity of the sample meant that all participants were from a Pakistani background (born in Norway), were either receiving or had received services from CPS in the last 18 months at the time of interview and were from the same municipality, as different

municipalities can have different systems. Since the main purpose of my research was to explore the lived experience of being in contact with CPS, the kind of service received was flexible (see Table 3-1). Although there is no consensus about the appropriate time for investigating an experience, one and a half years was considered an appropriate time, as the child was still close enough to the experience to remember the details but not too close to be stressed.

Table 2 Description of participants

Pseudonyms (gender)	Age	Reason for contact with CPS	How their case was referred to CPS	Status at time of interview
Alice (F)	17	Violence	Self-reported	In kinship foster care
Haley (F)	16	Neglect	Self-reported/ educational institute	At home (case open)
Jane (F)	16	Suspected neglect	Educational institute	At home (case closed)
Julia (F)	19	Violence	Self-reported	At home (case closed)
Monica (F)	17	Suspected neglect	Not clear	At home (case closed)
Rachel (F)	17	Violence	Self-reported/youth worker	In foster care

Methodology

Pseudonyms (gender)	Age	Reason for contact with CPS	How their case was referred to CPS	Status at time of interview
Summer (F)	12 (soon 13)	Violence	Educational institute (self-reported not clear)	In kinship foster care
Zoe (F)	17	Violence	Self-reported/ educational institute	In foster care
Luke (M)	15	Neglect	Because sibling reported to CPS	At home (case open)
John (M)	17	Not known	Police	At home (case open)
Martin (M)	15	Violence	Because sibling reported to CPS	In kinship foster care

4.5.4 Obtaining consent

Informed consent is considered ideal for qualitative research, which entails research participants having clear information and understanding of the research projects, including the purpose of the research, who the researcher is and what they are doing in the field (Klykken, 2021). Children have the right to participate freely and safely in the research, and at the same time, they also have a right to care and protection by adults, such as the researcher, parents and legal guardians (Eriksson & Näsman, 2010). Thus, consent becomes a central concept when

conducting research in the context of CPS, as parental protection and concern can be lacking (Morris et al., 2012).

I was required by the NSD to obtain parental/legal guardian consent on behalf of the children for participation. Powell and Smith (2009) argue that obtaining parental consent without children's consent may make children feel powerless and without a voice in the process. I did not expect children to participate against their will. Thus, the child participants were asked for consent, even if their parents/guardians had provided it. They were assured that there would not be any consequences for them and/or their parents/guardians, for example, repercussions from gatekeepers or lack of confidentiality (more information under the confidentiality section later). Similarly, parents who provided consent on behalf of their children were told that all information provided by their children would remain confidential and would not be disclosed to anyone, including them. This was respected by the parents, as none of them asked for any information and/or wished to be present with their children during the interview.

The consent form was read together with the children and was signed by them. Young people aged 16 and above could provide consent on their own (Backe-Hansen & Frønes, 2012). I assume this is one of the reasons that most of the participants in this research were aged 16 years and above.

4.5.5 Interviews

Qualitative research methods, such as interviews, are widely used in empirical studies, including those with children as participants (Øverlien & Holt, 2021). Mishler (2004) defines qualitative interviews as a co-constructed dialogue between the interviewer and interviewee, which can potentially provide rich descriptions of participants' lived worlds. For the purpose of my research, I decided to conduct face-to-face interviews with the children. This decision was mainly based on three

reasons. First, I did not want children to write anything (such as narratives, life stories, etc.), lest it fall in someone else's hands, jeopardising their safety. Second, during interviews, one can ensure that any misunderstanding on the part of the interviewee or interviewer can be resolved immediately (Brenner et al., 1985). Third, meeting the children in person provided me with an opportunity to build rapport with them and create a relationally safe space for them to share their experiences.

I used semi-structured interviews, which are one of the most common methods of data collection in phenomenological research (Langdrige, 2007; Smith et al., 2009). This provided a framework for dialogue with my participants and allowed me to ask follow-up questions as and when relevant and simultaneously gave the children enough control to direct our conversation to the topics they wanted to discuss. Thus, the interview guide was not strictly implemented, and I went with the flow of what the participant was talking about. However, it was useful to have some prompts ready when needed. The main aim of the interviews was to co-construct and jointly explore participants' worldviews concerning CPS (Langdrige, 2007).

Giving children opportunities to choose the interview site and time and whether to be interviewed with someone or on their own has been found to enable a sense of empowerment (Irwin & Johnson, 2005). Thus, interviews were conducted at locations and times chosen by the participants and/or their parents/guardians. All interviews, except for one, were conducted individually, were audio-recorded and lasted about an average of 1 hour. Two siblings were interviewed together. Other researchers have found that paired interviews can facilitate recruitment and make children feel more relaxed and secure in the research setting (P. H. Christensen, 2004; Hight, 2003). Simultaneously, I had to pay more attention to ensure both participant's well-being and that each of them received a fair opportunity to share their perspective. Conversely,

the interview took much longer, making the children tired, as they started to yawn towards the end.

It is important to create a relationally safe space for children, especially when conducting research on sensitive topics (Øverlien & Holt, 2021). To achieve this, I assured the children of their confidentiality and anonymity, that they could say no if they did not want to answer a question and that there were no right or wrong answers. They were informed that they could pause, postpone or cancel the interview at any time. Interviews did not start officially (turning on the recorder) until the children were ready. Their consent was also obtained to use the recorder. All interviews started with the broad question, ‘What is it like to be involved with Norwegian CPS?’ Even though an interview guide was prepared, in reality, the interviews were like conversations, where participants could decide what was important for them to share and what they did not want to share. Expansions were requested using open-ended questions (e.g. ‘Can you tell me more about that?’ or ‘Can you give me an example when you felt ...?’)

All interviews were mainly conducted in Norwegian, except for one (conducted in English), at the preference of the children. However, a combination of Urdu and English was also used, along with Norwegian, especially when talking about certain cultural aspects or colloquial phrases; for example, one child mentioned when her parents come ‘*makhan mein dabbo kay aatay hain*’ (or come ‘to visit her’). Using multiple languages during the interviews helped the participants and myself co-construct richer descriptions of their experiences and create a better understanding of each other’s points.

I was conscious of the emotional nature of the research topic and question. Finlay (2006) advises researchers to be aware of the issues of embodiment in the interview process. This means that researchers need to attend reflexively to their own bodies as well as to participants’ bodies during the interview. There are three main aspects related to this (Finlay,

2006): (1) bodily empathy, or paying attention to the participant's movement and general demeanour; (2) embodied self-awareness, or being conscious of the researcher's own bodily responses to the stories being told by the participant; and (3) embodied intersubjectivity, or the interplay of roles that occur between the researcher and the participants. Taking heed of this advice, I paid attention to participants' body language, for example, if they moved uncomfortably in their seats or looked distressed. One way I dealt with this was to move the interview at the participant's pace. For example, silences were not considered awkward but were treated as breathing space for the participant. However, at times, I moved to another question, assuming that the 'silence' was not a pause to think but a sign of dissent (choosing not to answer). Sometimes, I repeated the question later in the interview, assuming that the participants might want to answer after they were given time. All questions were asked in a way that showed the intent to invite an answer rather than to require it, for example, 'Can I ask, what did you think about it?' I was also mindful of my own emotional responses that could be visible through my physical reactions. For example, when children told me about their suffering (e.g. being beaten badly at home), I showed empathy but did not over sympathise or pity them. Keeping a nonjudgemental stance also helped in this regard. The children and their feelings were always the focus, and I took the lead from this. I was mindful of how I presented myself to the children, how we sat together (at the same level) and the body language (e.g. sitting with arms crossed, like a professional taking notes, etc.). This kind of reflexivity is vital to provoke 'an alertness or heightened sensitivity to understanding the relational aspects of the research process: an interdependent awareness of how I, as a researcher, am influencing my research participants' perceptions and a simultaneous and interdependent awareness of how they are influencing me' (Warin, 2011, p. 810).

4.5.6 Data processing and analysis

3.5.6.1 Transcribing

Following the interviews, I transcribed all interviews verbatim. These are detailed transcriptions noting any pauses, stutters and such during the interviews. This was important, as Spyrou (2016) argues that children's voices, their silence and contradictions in their perspectives also need to be considered in research with them. The children were given pseudonyms, and transcriptions were cleaned to make them anonymous by removing all identifiable information.

All transcriptions were translated into English from Norwegian and Urdu. The back-translation method (Ennew et al., 2009) and native-language speakers of Norwegian and Urdu were used to ensure the quality of the translations and the meanings were kept as close as possible to what the children said. Listening to the recordings, transcribing and translating the text initiated the first step of the analysis as I became more familiar with the data.

Qualitative researchers are wary of the emotional impact of the transcription process and the cumulative effect of listening to participants' narratives of a sensitive or distressing nature (Bahn & Weatherill, 2013; Kiyimba & O'Reilly, 2016). During the interviews, my main focus was on the participants and keeping the dialogue flowing between us; some children even used humour when talking about distressing situations, such as a failed suicide attempt. The whole focus during the transcriptions was on the words and narratives told by the children, who were narrating their normal everyday lives. However, I knew that experiences such as '*not being seen as a human*' (Zoe) or '*starting to cut myself*' (Julia) were not normal. I made sure to take breaks during the transcription process and remind myself how these children survived these adverse situations and had positive hopes for the future.

3.5.6.2 Six steps of data analysis

The data were analysed in accordance with the key principles of IPA, which are represented in the six analytical stages (Smith et al., 2009).

Step 1: Reading and re-reading transcripts

The first step in the IPA analysis involved familiarising and becoming immersed in the data by reading and re-reading the transcript (Eatough & Smith, 2006). I read each transcript twice and listened to the audio-recording once while reading to become more responsive to the content of the interview. I also reviewed my field notes, which I wrote after every interview and included my impressions of the participant and reflections on the interview process, to remind myself of the context. The general focus of these readings was on the exploration of children's lived experiences of CPS and how they made sense of these experiences. Any initial thoughts or distortions at this stage were also noted in my field diary.

Step 2: Making initial notes

Next, I read the transcripts again, this time paying closer attention to the semantics and language used in the transcript (Smith et al., 2009). While reading the transcript, I highlighted any words, phrases or sentences that stood out as 'gems' (Smith, 2011) or were relevant to the experiences that children had with CPS. I noted my initial observations and exploratory notes in the right-hand column of the transcript. This helped me explore the ways in which participants talked about or understood specific issues. This stage was open and involved taking note of anything that stood out for me in the text. I stretched those bits to understand what was going on in an attempt to access the different layers of the experiences and meanings embedded in the written text. Taking guidance from Larkin and Thompson (2012), I endeavoured to look for objects that mattered for participants, such as events, relationships, values and

spaces, as well as linguistics and conceptual comments that provided clues to the meaning of those objects (p. 106).

Step 3: Generating emergent themes

At this stage, I used my notes to generate ‘emergent themes’ in the left-hand column of the transcript. There, themes were thick descriptions (phrases or statements) capturing the core features of the experiences and perceptions of CPS embedded in children’s accounts (Smith et al., 2009). Thus, emerging themes reflected not only the participant’s narrative but also my interpretation, which I tried to keep as close to the original narrative as possible. I experienced this to be the most difficult stage and had to rework it a couple of times, as I tried to balance the participant’s narrative and my interpretation.

At this stage, I shared my work with an IPA expert. His feedback helped me immensely to move from ‘descriptive’ emergent themes to ‘interpretative’ ones that reflected the original narrative, keeping in line with the IPA analysis. During this process, even though I focused on smaller parts of the transcript, the interview as a whole was also considered. This process represents one manifestation of the hermeneutic circle, where the smaller parts of the transcript are interpreted in relation to the whole and the whole is understood in relation to its parts.

Step 4: Looking for connections between emergent themes

This step involved connecting emergent themes to see if any patterns could be established. Since I was using printed copies of the transcript to make notes and initial themes, I photocopied the transcript and cut out all the emergent themes. These were then spread on a big desk. I grouped different emergent themes together based on key expressions, ideas or perspectives to develop ‘superordinate’ themes. The emergent themes that were not readily developed or did not represent the children’s experiences with CPS were set aside for later analysis.

At this stage, this cluster of emergent themes was again shared with the IPA expert for feedback. I learned about the process of data reduction, for example, by removing duplicates without compromising the complexity. The superordinate or subthemes were then grouped together to develop the master themes.

I wrote a draft case study based on this analysis, which was shared with my supervisors and the other researchers for feedback. Given the role of the researcher's position and interpretation in data analysis, sharing this with interdisciplinary researchers increased the rigour and trustworthiness of the analysis.

Step 5: Analysing the next participant's interview

This process was repeated for each participant until all superordinate themes or subthemes were developed. An Excel sheet was created to record the subthemes for each participant.

Step 6: Looking for patterns across participants

Afterwards, the superordinate themes were closely examined across all cases to note recurrent topics, similarities, differences and interrelations among these. The process included selecting a different colour for each participant's superordinate themes in the Excel sheet, which was then printed. I cut out all the themes and spread them on the floor to get an overview before starting to group them together. At this stage, the secondary questions were developed based on the analytical outcomes presented in the introduction chapter. These questions were used to engage with the broader literature and theoretical concepts at the discussion stage (Larkin & Thompson, 2012).

This consequently led to the generation of three themes: i) power struggles in relation to family, ii) power struggles in relation to CPS, and iii) the war within – emotional experiences due to being in contact with

CPS. The first two themes are presented in Paper 2 and the third theme in Paper 3.

4.5.7 Quality in IPA

This study uses Yardley's (2000) four principles to assess the quality of qualitative research, as suggested by Smith et al. (2009).

4.5.7.1 Sensitivity to context

Sensitivity to context includes issues such as the need for the researcher to pay attention to the local sociocultural landscape and issues, exploring existing literature, the method of data collection and the handling of data obtained from participants. The way I navigated and worked with the gatekeepers in the field to gain access to the participants, used semi-structured interviews and practised reflexivity at all stages and critical consideration of ethical dilemmas shows that this study adhered to the principle of 'sensitivity of context'. This was also demonstrated through a review of the existing literature (Paper 1), which highlighted issues such as the stigma and shame attached to being involved with CPS. Thus, I was more sensitive to children's social identities and being respectful (see also Section 3.5.4 Reflections on challenges during the fieldwork).

4.5.7.2 Commitment and rigour

This principle is related to the previous principle and, in this study, was demonstrated by being sensitive to the impact of interviews on the research participants before, during and after the interviews, during the analysis. The interviews were conducted at the participants' pace. Open-ended questions were asked to allow participants to choose what they wanted to share and/or thought was important to share. The interview guide was used flexibly and as guidance only. Embodied reflexivity was practised during the interviews to provide a safe physical and emotional space for children to share their experiences (Finlay, 2006; Smith et al.,

2009). However, the commitment to and rigour regarding the research questions and participants does not end at data collection. This principle was also applied to the analysis and presentation of the findings. My co-authors for Papers 2 and 3 were involved at different stages of the data analysis to ensure that the interpretations were grounded in the participants' narratives and to reduce the risk of over- and/or misinterpretation of the data.

4.5.7.3 Transparency and coherence

This principle can be demonstrated through clear and detailed descriptions of the research process. The current chapter presents an account of my positionality as a researcher and the research process, including the methods of data collection and analysis. In my papers (2 and 3), quotes from participants are extensively used to show that our interpretations are grounded in the participants' accounts. I had regular discussions with my supervisors and co-authors regarding the data analysis.

4.5.7.4 Impact and importance

This principle focuses on the impact and importance of the findings. My research was also driven by the need in social work education to hear the experiences of children from immigrant backgrounds with CPS. I have been sharing my preliminary findings through university lectures, blog writing, podcast interviews, seminars and conference presentations. The findings are also expected to be published in academic journals. These will also be shared with a wider audience through the aforementioned channels.

Being a Pakistani researcher conducting research with Pakistani immigrants raises the question of objectivity, as native researchers are sometimes considered too close to the research population to be objective and professional (Alexander, 2004). There is also the burden of

representation placed on native researchers, which demands extra care in how they represent the researched population, especially when the topic is politically charged, such as in the case of immigration and child protection (Ghaffar-Kucher, 2015). I hope that the readers will see this thesis as a glimpse into the complex lives of Pakistani children and selected (by children and me) fragments of their lived experiences with CPS.

4.5.8 Reflections on challenges during the fieldwork

I found the *recruitment of children from Pakistani backgrounds* to be most challenging during the fieldwork. It is an established practice in qualitative research to include children through negotiation with gatekeepers, who can be professionals or informal community leaders. Gatekeepers were my first contact points in the field, and I was aware of their power to block or delay my access to potential participants. Therefore, it was very important for me to land on the right foot with them.

I started with CPS offices, thinking that they would be the ones benefitting most from this research; even though it was not an evaluation of services, it could still provide some information to improve service delivery. I wanted to be seen as a researcher and not just a 'native' who was too close to the research community to be able to conduct proper research. In her chapter 'Writing Race', Alexander (2004) shares her experience of being seen as 'too "native" to be professional, too close to be objective, and altogether just too Asian' (p. 136) by an editor, which led to the rejection of her article questioning the continuously negative portrayal of Asian communities in Britain. While I did not get such a response about my research project, CPS offices were unable to help me with recruitment mainly due to being overworked. A few offices/social workers tried to help me but could not find any relevant and willing parents and/or children.

Thus, my next strategy was to meet Pakistani gatekeepers, such as informal community leaders and professionals. Pakistanis are a heterogeneous group; therefore, I contacted diverse gatekeepers, such as youth clubs, schools and mosques. This part was challenging from the start, as I did not have any social network in Oslo. Through the snowball method, I was able to identify and arrange meetings with a few Pakistani community members. This time, I was even more conscious of how I presented myself. I did not want to be wrongly identified as someone hired by CPS, someone who would reinforce the already established stereotypes about Pakistanis in Norway or a ‘Westernised/Norwegianised’ person who could be a bad influence for the children. I later discovered that being a female Pakistani student living on my own in Norway seemed to be a rare thing in Oslo. One Pakistani-Norwegian youth worker told me that *‘she was surprised that I came alone to Norway to study. She never met anyone who came here for studies [from Pakistan]. It is mainly people who come here because of marriages’* (Field notes, 2019).

My aforementioned positionality helped me gain the trust of some gatekeepers, especially Pakistanis but also non-Pakistanis. For example, I wrote the following in my field diary after a meeting: *‘I had a meeting with a Pakistani gatekeeper today. He seemed supportive of my project. Not sure if he was supportive of the research project or of a Pakistani doing PhD’* (Field notes, 2018). During this meeting, as well as throughout my research, I moved between an insider and an outsider position. There were instances when I felt a connection to gatekeepers as a Pakistani. For example, I wrote in my diary that *‘we had the meeting in Urdu with some Norwegian words here and there’* (Field notes, 2018). Conversely, I did not know much about the culture of children from Pakistani backgrounds and how they lived their everyday lives. Similar to other researchers’ experiences, I found gatekeepers acting as cultural mediators, thus increasing my cultural competence (De Laine, 2000; Sanghera & Thapar-Björkert, 2008). Through them, I learned:

Children from Pakistani backgrounds mainly speak Norwegian and Urdu or Punjabi. Second-generation parents are better, but there are still sociocultural challenges. People are still concerned about ‘what will people say?’. CPS is a loaded word, and just by saying that word, parents get scared. (Field notes, 2018)

Some Pakistani gatekeepers were sceptical of the research and possibly me, although this was not stated directly. For example, I was invited for a meeting by a few gatekeepers. I noted:

It also seemed that they had misunderstood the invitation letter for children. They thought I was interested in ‘statistics’ (seeing children as numbers). They thought NSD was SSB because they said that they (NSD) would love the numbers I give them. I tried to clarify things, but they kept on telling me about how they are working with young people and trying; the cases are resolved by the family and don’t go to CPS. They also said that, in the ’90s, Pakistani children were involved with CPS, but we are not in the spotlight anymore. (Field notes, 2018)

They seemed to be wary of my research, suspecting that I would reinforce the stereotypes about the Pakistani community in Norway. This meeting was also in Urdu, however, I still felt that they positioned me as an ‘outsider’ and ‘Norwegian-state-agent’. This meeting left me with many questions: Did they change their mind about the research after meeting me? Were my clothes not proper enough? Were my age and gender an issue. This made it difficult to have a dialogue with them about my research and clarify any ethical concerns that they may have. Conversely, this meeting provided me with a different understanding of the Pakistani culture in Norway.

Building rapport and trustful relationships with the children was another challenge in the fieldwork. These are the most important aspects of the research process. P. H. Christensen (2004) considers a trustful and confidential relationship between the researcher and participants the basis of a successful data collection process. Given that sharing

experiences related to CPS can be a very intimate and emotional process, the positionality of the researcher in terms of gender, age and ethnic and social background can play a vital role in establishing trust with participants. In this research, I took the role of an adult who had a genuine interest in understanding the lived experiences and social world from the children's perspective, as described by P. H. Christensen (2004). This type of researcher is both a social person and a professional with a distinctive purpose. I introduced myself to the children as a PhD student from Pakistan who was working on my PhD degree in Norway and was interested in knowing about the experiences of children from Pakistani backgrounds with CPS.

The process of gaining the children's trust started with building rapport with adult gatekeepers, which, in this case, were mainly teachers, youth workers and foster parents, as mentioned earlier. Emmel et al. (2007) emphasises the importance of trust in the relationship between vulnerable groups and gatekeepers, as this facilitates the researcher's access. This trust flows, to some extent, into the relationship between the researcher and the participant. However, once access to participants is gained, the process of trust continues to be an important part of the researcher-participant relationship. Alexander (2004) describes her experience of conducting research with the Asian community: 'while I acknowledge that my identification as "Asian" facilitated my access initially, it was neither a sufficient nor simple foundation for the relationships that emerged later' (p. 145).

Ideally, the researcher should devote time to building rapport (Spyrou, 2011). However, that was a challenge in my case. Accessing children and arranging even one meeting with them was difficult due to factors such as their busy schedules, lack of independent mobility and living conditions (foster care). Nevertheless, building rapport in this study started from the first contact with the child/young person and continued throughout the interview until the meeting finished. Seeking similarities facilitates the rapport-building process (Hale, 2000), which was

sometimes initiated by the children themselves. This is illustrated through the following example involving an SMS exchange with Rachel (not her real name):

Rachel: Are you from Pakistan?

Me: [a little nervous, not sure if it is a good or bad thing] Yes.

Rachel: Mujhey Urdu aatee hai (I know Urdu).

[We exchange a few more SMS in Urdu.]

I was aware that, while sharing the same ethnicity as my research participants provided me with better access to them, it would also affect the way they perceived me (Ganga & Scott, 2006). As presented in the context chapter, children are sometimes not only controlled by their families but also by transnational communities. I aimed to be seen by the children as a nonjudgemental and supportive adult who was interested in their experiences and wanted to learn about CPS. I showed respect to the children and listened to their experiences without putting my own valuation on them, for example, by showing an openness and understanding of their justification for physical punishment as being good for them. However, sometimes, it was challenging when children made stereotypical statements, such as, in Pakistani culture, boys and girls are not allowed to meet. A few times, I respectfully told the children that there are more than 180 million people in Pakistan who have diverse cultures and cultural practices. However, I did reflect afterwards on those situations and tried to find ways to keep my position as a neutral researcher without condoning the children's discriminatory remarks.

Research with practitioners investigating sensitive issues, such as child sexual exploitation, emphasises that not giving up on children is a useful factor in building rapport with children (Ahern et al., 2017). Thus, I did not give up on children when they did not show up for interviews. I offered to reschedule if they still wanted to participate. Out of four cases,

two children rescheduled and the other two declined to participate. I was mindful of reciprocity in terms of information. My literature review (S. Wilson et al., 2020) shows that children are aware of the fact that, while social workers know their personal stories, they do not know anything about them. Therefore, I did share some personal information, for example, what I am doing in Norway, information about my family and siblings, my favourite food from Pakistan and so on. We also talked about their parents' hometown in Pakistan and if I had visited it. This can also be viewed as my attempt to seek similarities with the participants. These conversations helped initiate a rapport, establish a shared understanding and create a safe space for interaction.

4.5.9 Ethical considerations

Children have the right to be properly researched, as mentioned previously in chapter 3 (Ennew et al., 2009). This entails that children's perspectives and opinions must be integral to the research, that selected methods should facilitate children to express themselves easily and freely, that they should be protected from harm and exploitation that might result from taking part in research and that researchers should conform to the highest possible scientific standards and quality (Abebe & Bessell, 2014; Ennew & Plateau, 2004).

This research received ethical clearance from the NSD, project number 57527 (annex 4). The NSD is the national body that is responsible for ensuring empirical research is conducted ethically to protect participants and data. The main issues of anonymity, confidentiality, voluntary participation and recruitment strategy were included in the form. The process of receiving ethical clearance from the NSD was not an end in itself. Ethical issues were navigated, negotiated and reflected upon throughout the data collection process. Some of the main areas of ethical concern in this study are discussed below.

4.5.9.1 Informed consent as a process

Gaining children's informed consent is an integral part of conducting research with them. This is aligned with the recognition of children as social actors and as having participation rights, as discussed in Chapter 3. Informed consent refers to the process of providing understandable information to children, getting their explicit and voluntary consent and the opportunities to renegotiate this throughout the process (Gallagher et al., 2010; Moore et al., 2018). However, ensuring informed consent in qualitative research is challenging due to the unpredictable nature and direction of this type of investigation (Alderson & Morrow, 2011). From the beginning of the research, I considered children's consent to gatekeepers as an initial but not sufficient step in the consent process. Children were given an opportunity to clarify any questions they had about the research, research process or myself before agreeing to the interview. This practice sought to honour children's rights and dignity by directly providing them with information about research participation and allowing them to provide their own consent (Truscott et al., 2019). As previously mentioned, two children agreed to participate in the beginning but declined later. This highlights the complexity of seeking children's informed consent and their participation in research through the layers of gatekeepers.

Truscott et al. (2019) highlight the importance of research relationships and the researcher's reflexivity in being attuned to children's verbal and nonverbal cues indicating their wish to withdraw. Thus, I treated consent as an ongoing process that was negotiated throughout rather than as a formality fulfilled at the start of the interview. I did not start recording the interviews until the children were ready and gave their consent. The interviews became a conversation with a purpose (Kvale, 1999), where the children shared their experiences and tried to make sense of them. During the interviews, the children were able to tell me when they did not want or could not answer a question. At the same time, I paid attention to children's body language to pick up any signs of dissent

and/or discomfort. Sometimes, I moved to a different question if I could feel that the child was struggling to answer. However, I tried to keep it as an open conversation where the children could share if they wanted more time to think about a topic/question or wanted me to ask another question.

4.5.9.2 Protection and participation

Children are a controversial population for research studies for a variety of reasons. One of the major dilemmas faced by researchers working with children is finding a balance between protection and participation: to enable children to be heard without exploiting or distressing them and to protect them without silencing and excluding them (Alderson & Morrow, 2004). Researchers argue that, while it is important that research is grounded in robust ethical principles, an over consciousness risks muting the voices of vulnerable children and taking away their opportunity to participate in research that offers them the space to speak about some of the difficult situations in which they find themselves (Leeson, 2014; Winter, 2006).

During my fieldwork, there were some tensions between children's rights to protection and participation. NSD approval required arm's-length recruitment, which meant that I could only approach the potential participants through gatekeepers. Thus, I was dependent on gatekeepers' views on children and whether they deemed them 'fit' to participate in the research. However, this process was found to be challenging when two gatekeepers had diverging views on children and their competency. For example, one child told her teacher that she wanted to participate; however, her social worker did not think that she was in the right emotional state to do so. While the teacher felt that participating in the research would empower the 18-year-old, her social worker did not think it was in her best interests. Ethical research requires that children's participation is in their best interests while ensuring that the most vulnerable children are not excluded from participating in the process.

Thus, balancing these ethical requirements presented a dilemma for me. I discussed this matter with the other gatekeepers. Based on their recommendation, I contacted the social worker to inform her about my research project and ethical considerations and offered to meet with her to clarify any concerns that she may have about the process. This did not change her mind. Finally, the child was not invited for an interview to protect her from the consequences of participating, which might have adversely affected her relationship with her social worker. This highlights the importance of balancing children's protection and participation not only in the short term (e.g. during the interview) but also in the long term, which considers the consequences of children's participation on their relationships.

Children's participation in research on sensitive topics, such as experiences with CPS, includes ethical concerns over retraumatising children. Conversely, an overconcern with this can jeopardise and potentially minimise children's rights to participate in the research (Øverlien & Holt, 2021). I found that using face-to-face semi-structured interviews was useful in balancing children's protection and participation. These interviews provided a framework for conversation about children's experiences, where I could ask follow-up questions and children had the opportunity to introduce and discuss issues that mattered to them. As previously mentioned in the interview section, children could say no to any question which they did not want to answer. This corresponds to Charmaz's (1995) view that interviewees are the holders of information and control what they choose to disclose or hide.

I was committed to being responsive during the interviews by not only engaging with the children's responses but also observing their behaviour and providing them with space and time if and when they became distressed talking about their experiences. While participants sometimes looked visibly sad or talked slowly, none of the participants broke down, cried or asked to stop the interview. Similar to what other researchers have noted, I also found that children wanted to talk about

their experiences and thoughts as a way to comprehend what has happened to them (Leeson, 2014).

During the interviews, I focused more on the participants' emotions and body language than on my own emotional response, as I assumed them to be vulnerable due to their lived experiences. Vulnerability is a contested concept, as there can be differences in the etic (external evaluation) and emic (how people see themselves) perspectives on people's vulnerability (Spiers, 2005). Heaslip et al. (2018) recommends an etemic view that values and combines both external and internal dimensions of vulnerability achieved through eliciting people's lived experiences along with paying attention to external factors that make them vulnerable. They argue that it is not a simple dichotomy of whether one is vulnerable or not. Thus, while I was cautious about their safety during the research process, I also showed an understanding that the children may not feel vulnerable. I was inspired by the children's stories of survival. This is exemplified by the following excerpt from my field notes: *'She seemed to be a resilient girl. For example, she audio-recorded a normal day at home as evidence. When I asked how she came up with such a smart idea? – her answer was "survival". I have learned a thing or two from her about survival'* (Field notes, 2019).

I always ended the interviews with a positive topic, for example, their plans for the future, holidays and so on. I asked the children how the interview made them feel. Everyone felt fine and did not find the interviews stressful. They were informed about the help lines where they could call in case they felt stressed or emotionally disturbed. They could also talk to their gatekeeper and/or call me. I checked with the gatekeepers a few days after the interview to make sure that everything was fine. None of the participants called me or shared any distress with the gatekeepers. One of the participants said during the interview, *'It helps to hear your own story. Then you know that it was not you that is crazy but them [her family]'* (Zoe).

4.5.9.3 Negotiating children's spaces of research and confidentiality

Privacy issues in research studies such as this one require careful consideration. Not only do participants need a safe, private physical location in which the research can take place, but the privacy of the participants themselves must also be ensured through anonymity and confidentiality (A. E. Powell & Davies, 2012). Most often, the location where research with young people takes place presents a dilemma regarding confidentiality, as there are no spaces which are exclusive to children (Abebe, 2009b). It is challenging to find spaces in society that are exclusively for children. Thus, research with children requires negotiating both physical and social spaces (Abebe, 2009b; Dockett & Perry, 2007).

Interviews with children should be conducted in locations that not only provide privacy and confidentiality to children but are also familiar to them and make them feel comfortable/safe. Children and gatekeepers (e.g. parents) could choose the places for interviews. For this study, six children decided to meet for interviews at cafés, while three children were interviewed at their homes/foster homes and two at a youth club. Homes and schools are the usual spaces where research is conducted with children in the Global North; at the same time, these locations can create ethical challenges in terms of hiding the content of interviews from family and friends. I was sceptical in the beginning regarding interviewing children in public spaces, such as a café, due to concerns for children's safety and confidentiality; however, the children felt comfortable talking about their experiences with CPS and shared their personal stories in those settings. During the interviews, I checked with the children to determine if they were still comfortable sitting there or would rather move elsewhere. None of the children wished to move. Thus, my study demonstrates that cafés are effective as neutral substitutes for homes or schools and offer safe and anonymous environments for interviews/conversations with children. This highlights

the importance of reflexivity and goes beyond the researcher's paternalistic view of safe spaces for the participation of children to acknowledge children's agency in creating their 'own spaces' (Moss & Petrie, 2005).

Negotiating the social aspects of the research space ensured that the children could decide on their role and positioning of people in that space. For example, I had planned to conduct individual interviews in light of the personal and intimate nature of the research question. However, two of my participants (siblings) wanted to be interviewed together. There are advantages and disadvantages to this approach. Being interviewed together can make the interview experience less daunting for children, especially when interacting with unfamiliar adults (S. Punch, 2013). Conversely, there is a possibility that they might have influenced each other's answers. Respecting the children's right to negotiate a safe space for their participation, I interviewed the children together. I tried to make sure that both children received equal opportunities to share their experiences and were later analysed separately.

Other privacy issues, such as anonymity and confidentiality, are important considerations in research with children. For my research, the children were assured that I would not share the content of the interviews with anyone and that any resulting publication would be anonymised and could not be traced back to them. Nevertheless, putting this into practice was challenging, as I could not guarantee that, during the interviews at home, nobody in the family was listening. In such cases, it was emphasised that children had the right to say no to any question that they did not wish to answer. Another dilemma regarding confidentiality involves the disclosure of personal or confidential information, such as experiences of abuse or risk of harm. It was decided beforehand that I would not break a child's trust but would rather encourage them to talk to appropriate adults. However, the participants in this study made no such disclosure.

4.5.9.4 Reciprocity

Reciprocity is a process of receiving and giving. Social research ethics require researchers to consider what they are receiving from the participants and what they are giving back to the participants and the community (Given, 2008). Although I wanted my research process and relationship with the participants to be mutually beneficial, finding a balance was challenging, as the children provided me with invaluable information for my research by sharing their personal stories.

In my research, I followed the Pakistani cultural code of hospitality when meeting children for interviews. I treated them as my guests and bought refreshments for them at cafés. There is no consensus about right or wrong reciprocity, and some researchers consider payments – whether monetary or in food – as bribery or inducement (Aptekar & Heinonen, 2003; Bradbury-Jones & Taylor, 2015). However, I decided to buy refreshments for children, as it is a common courtesy and Pakistani cultural practice to show people that they are welcome and important. Similarly, I brought flowers when visiting the children's homes and accepted their parents' hospitality by sharing meals and/or tea that they had prepared. This helped me establish reciprocal relationships with children and their families, where they could ask questions about me, such as where I came from, information about my family and what I am doing in Norway. I assume that it helped create a trusting relationship between the participants (children and their families) and myself. Additionally, some children appreciated the interview as an opportunity to make sense of their lived experiences and felt good about helping me (S. Wilson, 2020).

Long-term reciprocity goes further than material compensation for the research participants and obliges the researcher to communicate their findings to practitioners and policymakers so that it can contribute to improving children's well-being as a whole (Abebe, 2009b). Disseminating my research findings through academic publications,

conference presentations, seminars and university lectures for social work students, as well as popular science platforms, such as blog posts and podcast interviews, comprise my long-term reciprocity.

4.5.9.5 Power differentials

While the power imbalance between the researcher and research participants is an issue in any research, it is especially pertinent when conducting research with children due to inequalities in power and status between children and adults in society (M. A. Powell et al., 2012). Edwards and Mauthner (2002) argue that ‘rather than ignoring or blurring the power positions, ethical practice needs to pay attention to them’ (p. 27). Reflexivity helps researchers bring their awareness to the power dynamics that might arise in the research process and create conditions where children have agency and share power to the fullest extent possible (Barker & Weller, 2003; S. Punch, 2002).

One way of giving power to children is by providing them with the opportunity to be heard (Grover, 2004). As previously mentioned, using semi-structured interviews gave the children the opportunity to talk about experiences with CPS and issues that they wished to discuss. While I asked follow-up questions to gain a deeper understanding, the children knew that they did not have to answer all the questions. I purposely emphasised my role as a student and ‘naïve researcher’ who was interested in learning about children’s experiences with CPS and who respected the participants as knowledgeable agents whose views were important. I positioned myself as a student not only to help reduce the power dynamics between the children and myself (as an adult) but also to present myself as a neutral person who neither represented CPS nor their parents. Furthermore, selecting the location and setting of the interview is another factor which can contribute positively or negatively to the power dynamics (Graham et al., 2015). It was important for me that the children felt safe and comfortable; thus, I asked them to select the place and time that was convenient for them for interviews. All

interviews were conducted in the children's language of preference, which, in most of cases, was Norwegian, even though it is not my strongest language. However, we used a mix of English, Urdu and Norwegian, especially in cases when I could not find the right word in Norwegian or when the children felt that some things could best be elucidated in Urdu. Through these strategies, I attempted to create a positive and empowering experience for the children participating in my research.

The view that adults have more power than children in the research relationship is somewhat simplistic. Gallagher (2008) offers an alternate conceptualisation of power in the form of actions carried out through various strategies, such as resisting, redirecting and subverting, rather than a commodity possessed by an individual. During the fieldwork, I felt that the children exercised their power by not showing up when they agreed to meet for the interview. These situations made me feel powerless. At the same time, I was aware of the emotional and personal nature of experiences of being in contact with CPS. Children had the right to change their minds, rethink their consent and take as much time as they needed to talk about their experiences. I normally waited for 30–45 minutes before asking the children if they were well and said that I would be happy to reschedule the interview if they wished to do so. Out of four such cases, two children rescheduled their interviews, while the other declined to participate.

4.5.9.6 Literature review – Methodology

While Papers 2 and 3 in this thesis are based on the empirical data generated through interviews with children from Pakistani backgrounds, Paper 1 is a qualitative synthesis of previous research. The aim of this research was to consolidate previous research conducted with children to gain a broader and more holistic overview of their experiences with CPS. Although this was not the focus of the paper, the review process provided

useful information about methodologies that were used by researchers. Only one study out of 39 articles used hermeneutic phenomenology.

The inclusion criteria included peer-reviewed articles based on primary research with children that were published in English during the period from January 1990 to November 2018. A systematic search was conducted in the following databases: Academic Search Premier, CINAHL, SocIndex, Scopus, Web of Science and Psychological & Behavioural Science Collection. To expand the search process, reference lists from the articles included in the search results were also read to find any relevant papers that fulfilled the inclusion criteria. Furthermore, Google Scholar was used to track forward citations to find papers that referred to the included articles. A combination of the following words and their synonyms were utilised to find the relevant articles: ‘children’+ ‘experiences’ + ‘Child Protection Services’. A total of 875 articles were initially identified. In the end, 39 articles were included for further analysis. Further information about the search strategy can be found in Paper 1.

This was a qualitative synthesis, a process which not only consolidates the previous findings but also presents a (relatively) new interpretation of it. The data pertaining to children’s own perspectives and the author/s’ interpretations presented in the findings section of the article were extracted and imported into NVivo 11 for coding. The data were analysed using thematic analysis, as proposed by Thomas and Harden (Gallagher, 2008).

The analysis generated the following four themes capturing children’s subjective experiences with and perceptions of CPS: 1) coming in contact with CPS, 2) experiences with CPS intervention or services, 3) perceptions of outcomes of the intervention and 4) perceptions of self, social identity and stigmatisation. These themes are presented and discussed in Paper 1.

5 Summary of findings

In this chapter, I will first provide a recap of the primary and secondary research questions. Afterwards, I will present a short summary of each of the articles and indicate how they address the research questions in a complementary manner.

The overall research question for this thesis is: What are the lived experiences of children from Pakistani backgrounds in the context of Norwegian CPS?

The specific questions discussed in the articles are as follows:

Question 1. What are children's experiences with CPS internationally, as reported in previous research?

Question 2. How do children from Pakistani backgrounds experience their relationships with parents/family and CPS?

Question 3. What are the emotional experiences of children from Pakistani backgrounds in the context of CPS?

Question 4. How do children's relational and emotional experiences affect their actions and in-actions in their everyday lives?

5.1 Summary of articles

5.1.1 Paper I

Wilson, S., Hean, S., Abebe, T. and Heaslip, V. (2020). Children's experiences with Child Protection Services: A synthesis of qualitative evidence. *Children and Youth Services Review*. (published)

Keeping in view the whole research project, this paper aimed to explore the state of the art in relation to children's perspectives of and

experiences with CPS internationally and to identify the gaps in the research that needed to be addressed. A thorough and well-conducted review can create a firm foundation for advancing knowledge and theory building and identify areas for further research (Snyder, 2019). Therefore, a systematic literature review method for synthesising qualitative evidence was used. Through this review, we aimed to comprehensively identify, synthesise and analyse the findings of qualitative research with children about their views and experiences of statutory CPS interventions provided by the state to gain better insight into their understandings and subjective experiences.

This paper was based on 39 articles conducted in 14 different countries in the Global North. These were published in the period of 1990–2018. Findings from these articles were extracted and analysed using thematic analysis. The focus was on the children’s own narratives and the authors’ interpretations of them. The analysis generated four main themes: 1) coming in contact with the CPS, 2) experiences with CPS interventions or services, 3) perceptions of outcomes of interventions and 4) perceptions of self, social identity and stigmatisation.

This article answered the question regarding children’s experiences with CPS in previous research (Question 1). The findings highlight that, overall, there were many similarities between children’s experiences despite being in CPS in different countries. For example, all children reported that their initial contact with CPS was stressful due to the lack of information about the process, loyalty conflicts due to choosing between reporting to CPS and their love for their parents, and fear of consequences. Most children did not understand the reasons for their contact with CPS and appreciated it when social workers took time to explain the case to them. While there was a focus on children’s participation, it was ambiguous from the children’s perspective, especially because the children did not have enough information to meaningfully participate in the CPS process and meetings. Children expected out-of-home care to be better than the home. Some children

were satisfied with the foster care arrangements, while others were confused by the different expectations of foster care from that of their caretakers and themselves. The lack of stability and permanence in children's placements was challenging, as it disrupted their personal and social lives and negatively affected their relationships. On the one hand, children gained material goods through CPS, but on the other hand, they lost their relationships with their family and friends. This highlights that there is more focus on children's deficiency needs, such as shelter, food and clothes, compared to their needs of love, belongingness and self-actualisation. However, in some cases, the educational opportunities and material resources provided by CPS contributed to the development of children's positive self-esteem.

The literature review demonstrates that there has been an increasing acknowledgement of children as service users of CPS and the importance of research with them over the past three decades. However, this is still a growing field and needs more contributions, especially research that explores children's lived experiences and how they make sense of their experiences in the context of CPS. The research methodologies used in most of the studies in this review adhered to broad qualitative research methodologies. Only one study used a phenomenological research methodology. This is not to say that any one research methodology is better than the other; we need different methodologies to answer different research questions. Since social work seeks to understand the person-in-context, which entails viewing individuals as complex, multifaceted and embedded in multilayered relations, the different phenomenological research methodologies can be useful in this regard (Wilcke, 2002). The issues faced by children in the context of CPS are complex. Thus, gaining an understanding from a holistic perspective can provide valuable insights into how children understand and make meaning of their experiences in CPS from their own perspective. Thus, phenomenological methodologies can provide a valuable approach to social work research (Smeeton, 2017).

Furthermore, the findings also suggest that children are not a homogeneous group. They have different experiences of the same service based on their subjective understanding and experiences with family, CPS, social workers and the wider structural and sociocultural factors. Given that children from immigrant backgrounds are overrepresented in CPS, it was surprising that very few of the studies included the perspectives of immigrant children, specifically (Fylkesnes et al., 2018; Johansson, 2013). However, both of these studies presented a multigenerational perspective that included adults (parents and social workers), young people (over 18 years of age) and children. While this perspective is useful, there is a need for studies that specifically focus on exploring the experiences and views of immigrant children, as this is an underresearched area. This highlights the need for more and democratic research with children, which provides an opportunity for different groups of children to participate and share their experiences. Therefore, I decided to explore the lived experiences of children from immigrant (Pakistani) backgrounds using IPA research methodology.

5.1.2 Paper 2

Wilson, S., Hean, S., Abebe, T. and Heaslip, V. (under review). Pakistani children's lived experience of relationships in the context of Child Protection Services in Norway: An interpretative phenomenological analysis.

This paper focused on the following research question: How do children from Pakistani backgrounds experience their relationships with family and social workers when in contact with CPS (Question 2). Looking at the superordinate themes for participants, I noticed how they all, in one way or another, talked about their relational experiences in terms of fear, lack of control and powerlessness in their relationships to both their families and social workers/CPS. This invoked my interest in the perspectives on power and power relations. This was discussed with my co-authors, who also found these relevant and useful perspectives to

discuss our findings. By exploring the less known experiences of children from Pakistani backgrounds in CPS, we discussed how children make sense of their relational experiences and how they negotiate and navigate their power relations, which is both generational and gendered in this case.

The findings showed that the Pakistani children in CPS not only had to negotiate and navigate the generational (inter- and intra-) power in their families, which affected their actions. This power also had a gendered aspect, as girls faced more abuse and control from their families than boys. Similarly, the children also felt controlled by CPS due to social workers' institutional and generational power. However, the power did not always stay with the adults (family and CPS), and the children attempted to take back control over their lives and important decisions. The children's power manifested as a continuum rather than as binary and unidimensional, where children moved along positions and spaces of powerlessness to being able to use power to influence other's (such as social workers or parents) actions using overt or covert strategies. For example, some children participated in meetings with social workers, while others refused.

Children made sense of their experiences of maltreatment from families by using Pakistani culture and religion as justification for their parents' behaviour. Thus, parents' coercive power was not always resisted, negotiated or challenged by children. At times, it was considered to be in their best interests. Some children showed an evolving understanding of violence; as they grew older and learned about what parents are not allowed to do (e.g. beating their children) and how their ethnic Norwegian counterparts are treated by their parents and families, they realised this is not right/legal and should be challenged. This highlights a challenge for the ideals of multicultural societies: the complexity of maintaining and respecting different practices of raising children and simultaneously providing social justice to all children.

The concept of power and power relations was presented in this article. Some scholars define power as a possession, while others view it as a capacity (Foucault, 1991). In this paper, power was viewed as capacity, which makes action possible and can change the actions of others (Arendt, 1972; Dahl, 1957). While this kind of power is accessible to everyone, not everyone can realise/utilise it. Using the lens of childhood to analyse power highlights that children are placed within a complex network of power relations due to the construction of childhood as a generational (related to age) order (James et al., 1998). This means that adults have asymmetrical power in relation to children because of their age. However, Jørgensen and Wyness (2021) argue that the levels of power people have, whether individually or collectively, are not static but undergo constant negotiations. Thus, children can be simultaneously powerful and powerless, with different aspects to their social worlds, depending on how their unequal power relations are negotiated and renegotiated with different people in different contexts and at different times (S. Punch, 2005). This highlights the need for a wider and less binary understanding of power relations. I find the framework proposed by Jørgensen and Wyness (2021) to be useful in this respect. They base this framework on three propositions: 1) Power should be understood not only as a zero sum, for example, children gaining power at the expense of their parents in CPS, but can also be a positive sum, such as both children and parents working together with CPS to improve the family situation. This view of power creates a broader understanding and acknowledgement of children's and adults' interdependent relationships. 2) Power relations are not only intergenerational but also intragenerational. This highlights that age hierarchy is not the only 'ticket' to exert power over others. For example, in some Pakistani families, boys have the responsibility to protect the family honour by controlling their sisters. This shows the gendered aspect of power relations, which should be incorporated in the framework. Montgomery (2005) argues that 'the centrality of gender in children's lives is such that the very length of childhood may be determined by gender rather than

chronological age, biological changes or socially recognised rites of passage' (p. 478). 3) Power is multidimensional and should be analysed accordingly. In the case of CPS, children's explicit participation is the only dimension of them exercising power; thus, overly focusing on it can create an incomplete impression of the 'powerful child' while ignoring their experiences of hidden and invisible power. This calls for exploration of other dimensions of children's power beyond participation in the context of CPS – spaces and relations in which children negotiate power relations with adults so that CPS can provide them better and culturally safe services (that takes into account the different forms of power).

Overall, by analysing the way children experience their relationships with families and social workers in CPS, we observed that children in CPS remain relatively powerless and have fewer possibilities to use their power despite their position as a third party/citizens with a direct relationship with the family and state.

5.1.3 Paper 3

Wilson, S., Hean, S., Abebe, T. and Heaslip, V., Smith, J. (under review).
The war within: Emotional experiences of children in Norwegian Child Protection Services

This paper focused on answering two research questions about children's emotional experiences in CPS (Question 3) and how these emotions invoke and revoke their agency (Question 4). By exploring the less known experiences of children from Pakistani backgrounds in CPS, I discussed how children's emotions are an integral part of their experiences, which are relational (arising in the context of their interpersonal relations) and sociocultural. By doing so, I highlighted the ways children navigate complex emotions in their everyday lives in the context of CPS, affecting their actions and choices.

In this paper, emotions were understood as relational, sociocultural and political; these feelings of bodily change are created by the way the world impresses upon people and the way people orient themselves to the world (Ahmed, 2014). Children's emotions, such as guilt and shame, are understood in the backdrop of honour culture. Pakistan ranks high on the honour culture scale (Rodriguez Mosquera, 2016), which is not a surprise, as words like 'family honour', or 'izzat', are commonly used among the Pakistani people. It was also reflected in my participants' interviews. Therefore, before presenting my main findings from the paper, I will briefly introduce the conceptualisation of honour culture and how it shapes emotions, such as shame, guilt and regret.

Honour cultures are centred around avoiding dishonour and maintaining a social reputation according to the honour code (Mosquera et al., 2004). The honour code adheres to a set of normative standards that define what is considered honourable or not. These are generally divided into four areas: family honour, social interdependence, feminine honour and masculine honour (Mosquera et al., 2004). In practice, family honour and feminine honour are considered the same, which can explain why the girls in my study felt more controlled and discriminated against than the boys. Interdependence is highly valued, as is the concern for family honour, which entails caring about the social evaluations of one's family, the impact of one's behaviour on family honour and defending the family name (Mosquera et al., 2004). This is evident in one of the most common phrases used in our families: 'what will people say?', or '*log kya kahain gay?*' It should be noted that there is a difference in the level of internalisation regarding core values of honour culture in different individuals, which affects the extent to which an individual will adhere to the honour code. This was shared by the participants, who were blamed by their family members for ruining the family's reputation by contacting CPS.

My findings from Papers 2 and 3, when seen together, show that, while individual children viewed CPS as a helping institution for those who

needed it, it was also perceived as a threat to family honour. This provides a useful context for understanding children's emotional experiences, as discussed in this paper.

Our findings highlight the psychosocial aspects and complexity of emotions that shaped the participants' relationships and sense of self and impacted their choices. Children's actions and inactions led to their experiences of emotions, such as guilt, regret and hope, which consequently affected their future actions and decisions. These emotions were generated through their interpersonal (e.g. how CPS made their parents feel) and intrapersonal (e.g. how CPS fulfilled their expectations) relations. In addition, being in CPS created emotional and moral dilemmas for children, as they felt compelled to trade unreconcilable options, such as choosing between saving the family honour and contacting CPS for their own well-being. While contacting CPS usually provided them with some safety and care, the participants felt hopeless, as CPS (or their parents) could not bring back their lost childhood and/or reverse the trauma that they had suffered. Furthermore, children's emotional experiences were laden with dissonance between their belongingness to Norwegian and Pakistani cultures and identities. As presented in chapter 2 (context), on one hand, these children are exposed to liberal Norwegian values and discourses of childhood that promotes independence, autonomy and democratic family relationships (Hennum, 2011). On the other hand, their families promote the ideal Pakistani cultural values of honour code, interdependence and hierarchal generational and gendered roles. Children's experiences illustrate that their understandings and emotions shape how they performed their Norwegianness and Pakistaniness in specific sites such as CPS and within cultural discourses. For example, children seemed to perform their Norwegian identity by resisting their parents' physical violence and social control and contacting CPS for help, while those who identified more as Pakistanis blamed CPS and Norwegian society in general for not accepting that physical punishment is a part of Pakistani cultural and

religious practices. This can lead to children internalising that being Pakistani and Norwegian is not compatible especially in the context of CPS, and therefore they have to choose a side. This shows that children's emotional experiences are not only social and psychological but are related to the wider political and sociocultural context.

Given the focus on children's rights to participation and agency in CPS, especially in Norway, I believe that this knowledge can contribute to the understanding of children's relational and emotional agency in the context of CPS (Question 4). Furthermore, it demonstrates that children's rights to protection need to be framed in children's complex lived realities and should take into account the broader sociocultural, economic and political environment in which children and their families live.

6 Discussion

This thesis sheds light on how children, particularly from Pakistani backgrounds, reflect on and make sense of their experiences in the context of CPS and how these experiences are manifested in terms of agency in their everyday life. As pointed out in Paper 1, much of the existing research in the context of CPS include studies conducted with youth and adults and has paid less attention to children. This is surprising, since younger children are even more vulnerable. My thesis explores the experiences of children from Pakistani backgrounds in CPS, which have been largely missing in previous research. This is an important contribution, as it brings forth the voices of children who represent the largest second-generation immigrant group in Norway. This has been accomplished through engaging with children in a culturally situated, relational, transparent and committed research approach using the qualitative methodology of IPA. The findings offer a nuanced understanding of the experiences of these children, whose complex identities and lived realities are shaped by their social interdependencies, paradoxes and contradictions between the Norwegian and Pakistani cultures, how they perceive themselves in relation to others as well as how they perceive that Norwegian society and CPS view them. This thesis opens up further understanding of the constructions of children and childhood as relational beings with power and emotions, which act as important dimensions to build their empowerment.

The chapter provides a synthesis and discuss the salient intersecting themes and the main findings and arguments of the articles that are presented in the thesis. It is divided into three main parts. First, I focus on how children make sense of their lived experiences in the context of CPS. Afterwards, I address the issue of children's multidimensional agency and why it is relevant in this context. Finally, I present implications and recommendations for practice and future research.

6.1 *Making sense of lived experiences with CPS*

My study shows that children's experiences with CPS crystallise between their experiences with familial relationships, perceptions and beliefs about violence and neglect, professional interventions and practices of CPS, and public discourses about Pakistani culture, parenting and childhood.

6.1.1 *Interpretation and understanding of violence in the context of family and the reporting of this to CPS*

The children's understandings of violence and neglect were heterogeneous and nuanced; thus, it cannot be assumed that they will implicitly understand the relevance of CPS intervention into their lives. They disclosed an evolving sense of meaning making around violence, especially physical violence (Papers 2 and 3). As the children grew older, they learned at school about what parents are not allowed to do (e.g. beating their children) and how their ethnic Norwegian counterparts are treated by their parents and families; thus, they realised that what was happening to them at home is not right/legal and should be challenged. Some children's understanding of violence evolved in a different direction, where they saw it as an important component of raising children in Pakistani culture. The children used notions such as their parents' culture and religion to make sense of the maltreatment they suffered at home, a finding which is also present in previous research with minority youth (Aadnanes & Gulbrandsen, 2018). In this respect, the views of children from Pakistani backgrounds in CPS differ from those of the majority children (S. Wilson et al., 2020, Paper 1). The different thresholds for what constitute violence and neglect for children based on their sociocultural context highlight the challenges in defining child maltreatment and abuse, which seems to be a complex phenomenon in CPS. This is connected to the presence of different childhoods that are

socially and culturally constructed in multicultural societies. Thus, while these children have equal access to the services provided by CPS, they do not necessarily have equal accessibility and might need more support to seek help. This highlights the importance of making social services more equitable for people and not just focusing on equality.

While most of the children considered physical punishment from their parents to be violent, a few believed it to be in their own best interests. This difference in the perspectives of children can be attributed to their varied socialisation and acculturation in the majority (Norwegian) and minority (Pakistani) sociocultural contexts. However, it is not just specific factors in a culture that affect children's judgements. Imoh (2013) argues that children have a more nuanced view of their situations rather than just using simplistic dichotomies between good and evil. For example, in her research with children, she found that sometimes children strategically accept their subordinate position and endure physical punishment to receive benefits, such as a roof over their heads. In my study, more boys than girls condoned the use of violence. This can be seen as their strategy to accept an overall patriarchal culture that benefits them more compared to the girls, as discussed in the context chapter. Similarly, Herman (2015) suggests that children often blame themselves for receiving physical punishment in order to protect the image of having a good parent. My analysis shows that children not only experience conflicted loyalties and fear of losing contact with their parents and siblings during CPS investigations, but they also have to attend to complex emotions, such as regret and guilt, as a result of receiving help from CPS, which is elaborated on in Papers 1 and 3.

In this study, child maltreatment unfolded in the form of physical violence as well as emotional and psychological violence; most of the children were not only regularly beaten by parents but were also made to feel worthless, too 'Norwegianised' (going against their Pakistani cultural values) and blamed for bringing shame to the family. Aadnanes and Gulbrandsen (2018) found that emotional and psychological abuse

and neglect constitute the most hurtful experiences for children. However, children in my study focused more on physical violence, which follows the wider society's and CPS's focus on physical abuse compared to other forms. Children's experiences, in this study and previous research, show that proving psychological and emotional violence to CPS is much harder than physical violence, even though these are equally as damaging, if not more (Aadnanes & Gulbrandsen, 2018). Furthermore, seeking help from CPS sometimes worsened children's situations at home instead of improving it, as they had to deal with the negative consequences from their family in the form of shaming for being involved with CPS, exacerbated control and fear of being sent back to Pakistan or forced marriage (Paper 2). These insights and perspectives can assist social workers/caregivers and policymakers in better responding to the needs of these children.

The different understandings of violence among children, their parents/families and CPS implies that child abuse and neglect is a complex social phenomenon. The lack of clarity about when parents' child-rearing practices should be considered abuse and neglect among the children hindered them from contacting CPS in a timely manner. Conversely, parents might not see their behaviour as maltreatment but as a way to protect their children from the liberal values of the society, which can negatively affect their cultural and religious values and bring dishonour to the family (Chand & Thoburn, 2006). Thus, children, especially girls, seeking support or in contact with CPS were seen as destroying the family and honour, which resulted in negative consequences for the children, for example, parents getting even stricter and using force to control the children (Paper 2). This highlights the challenges these children have in accessing support from CPS that focus on the children's individual rights, which often comes at the cost of children's horizontal relationships with their family, friends and local community. This shows that, while the current approaches to responding to child abuse and neglect have been successful in protecting some

children, children who are hardest to help require different CPS approaches and services (Devaney & Spratt, 2009).

6.1.2 The experience of minority group pressures when in contact with CPS

The children in this study faced additional stress from within their own community as a result of being in contact with CPS. Within the Pakistani subcultures, there are cultural expectations to maintain the family's reputation in accordance with an honour code, which includes social interdependence and a shared common identity with the family that needs to be protected (Mosquera et al., 2004). Thus, being in CPS can lead to children receiving double consequences, not only from their own families for ruining the family's reputation but also from the community in the form of ostracism and becoming an object of gossip, as shown in this study. Recovering the family's honour can lead to further violence against the person causing dishonour, forced marriage, honour killing or being sent back to the parents' country of origin (Toor, 2009) – some things that the girls in my study suspected could happen to them (Paper 2). This is in contrast to the children from the majority communities in Western countries, who may feel stigmatised due to low socioeconomic status and being at the edge of society but not due to 'honour culture' (S. Wilson et al., 2020, Paper 1).

In a report on honour-based violence in the United Kingdom, Branden and Hafez (2008, p. 6) provide examples of conduct by children, especially girls, that are considered to bring dishonour and shame to the family: publicly defying parental authority (e.g. by contacting CPS); becoming 'Western', as expressed through clothes, behaviour or activities; engaging in a relationship prior to marriage; or using drugs or alcohol and being an object of gossip for any other reason. However, these acts do not become dishonourable until they are exposed and become public knowledge (Brandon & Hafez, 2008). My study shows that, in the context of CPS, this has serious implications for children, as

the fear of damaging the honour creates strong pressure to keep their maltreatment and neglect a secret from others because it could bring shame and dishonour to family if the events become known in the community (Paper 2). The need to protect family honour through secrecy represents a barrier that hinders social services, such as CPS, from helping South Asian children who are maltreated, abused and neglected (Henderson et al., 2017). My findings show that all children, especially those referred through other people/institutions, felt scared, anxious and powerless during initial contact with CPS (Papers 1 and 2). Their fear was mainly based on information received about CPS from friends, parents, the community and the media. This made the threshold for contacting CPS much higher for children. This is similar to the perceptions of CPS among immigrant parents (Berg et al., 2017; Fylkesnes et al., 2015), which highlights the negative impact of misinformation and myths about CPS among immigrant communities on children's and their family's ability to seek and receive timely help. The lack of early intervention and support for children and parents can result in worsened and prolonged maltreatment of children before it is reported to CPS. Mohammed-Roe and Paulsen (2021) consider it one of the factors behind the high rate of emergency placements of children from immigrant backgrounds in CPS.

The extended kinship structure, known as biradari (extended family/community) is seen as a resource providing 'identity, a code of behaviour and a support network' (M. Lewis, 2008, p. 46). However, the same reasons can make it a constraint as well. While boys and girls face similar challenges, the situation is exacerbated for girls, as the family's honour and reputation are perceived as largely lying with females. Thus, girls are at a relatively higher risk of experiencing stricter rules due to parents' fears of them becoming too influenced by Western values (Eriksen & Sørheim, 2003). The role of the Pakistani diaspora is quite prominent in this type of social control. Walseth and Strandbu (2014) found that parents rarely stopped their daughters from taking part in sports; it was

the broader Pakistani community, such as boys and neighbours, that sanctioned their participation. These sanctions operate in practice through bullying girls for being too Norwegian and spreading false rumours about her, which can destroy her honour and reputation (Walseth & Strandbu, 2014). These studies highlight the gendered aspect of family honour. This implies that girls might need more support to receive equitable social support from CPS, not only to deal with and come out of abusive family situations, but also to deal with the negative consequences from family and community as a result of being in contact with CPS. These negative consequences are enacted for a double audience: a message for other children in the family to deter them from seeking help from CPS and to members of the community to regain the family honour.

6.1.3 Interacting and negotiating with the ambiguous CPS system

This section focuses on the main findings from the three papers regarding how children experience their relationships with CPS. Disclosing abuse and maltreatment is challenging for children and involves many steps before they finally inform a professional (S. Wilson et al., 2020, Paper 1). For the children in this IPA study, it was a dialogical process in which they talked with themselves and sometimes with the people around them to evaluate the pros and cons of contacting CPS. In some cases, siblings deterred them from reporting the situation at home to anyone to save the family's honour. While the chances of underreporting cases of child abuse and neglect are present in all societies, this risk is higher in shame-based societies, where concepts such as honour prevail (Gilligan & Akhtar, 2006). This highlights challenges for the children in seeking help from CPS while they are at the same time responsible for safekeeping the collective values of the family. This makes the threshold for contacting CPS much higher for them. Therefore, it is important that

children are met with understanding, care and respect when they first come in contact with CPS, as argued in Paper 1.

The empowerment of children through their meaningful participation is an important tenant of CPS policies and practice. However, children in this study felt powerless in relation to CPS because, once they entered CPS, things were no longer in their control, as shown in Paper 2. The findings show that children are acutely aware of the power imbalance that exists between them and the social workers, which is manifested in various manners, such as how social workers have the power to define children's lived realities of maltreatment from their own sociocultural and professional perspective, delayed provision of services and the way social workers behave towards the family (Paper 2). Furthermore, the bureaucratic procedures made children feel 'powerless' rather than empowered, as the important decisions about their lives and 'best interests' were taken over by professionals as well as their parents. The best interest principle emphasises that children do have their own interests, which should be given importance when set alongside those of adults (D. Archard, 2015). Nevertheless, determining what is in the child's best interests is not an uncontested area. Some scholars find this principle problematic due to the existence of cultural and moral disagreements (Alston, 1994). Thus, what is best for a child may differ in different cultural contexts. However, there is no denying that some cultural practices do harm children, and what has long been considered socialisation and discipline can be seen very differently through the lens of child welfare, well-being and their best interests (Montgomery, 2015, p. 40). While this does not deny room for cultural variation in determining a child's best interests nor promote a single model of child rearing, it does suggest that culture is neither uniform nor neutral towards its members (Montgomery, 2015). Ennew (1998) argues that 'while cultural context must be respected, it is important to note that culture is not a "trump card" in international human rights' (p. 8). My analysis strengthens Brighthouse's (2003) argument that we should involve

children in a consultative process and pay more attention to their complex lived experiences in order to determine their best interests, both in the short term and long term.

The findings of my study show that, while CPS protected the children from physical violence, they could not help children escape the psychological and emotional violence and stress that resulted from them contacting CPS (Papers 2 and 3). Children felt that social workers' failure to apply cultural knowledge and understanding of the dynamics and politics of extended family systems hindered them from finding suitable solutions. This highlights a challenge for the ideals of multicultural societies, showing the complexity of maintaining and respecting different practices of raising children and simultaneously providing social justice to all children. Cultural differences are one of the main themes when discussing CPS's work with immigrant and minority communities in Norway (Berg & Paulsen, 2021b). Research with social workers shows that there is a risk of either putting too much or too little value on culture to explain children's maltreatment in immigrant families (Rugkåsa et al., 2017b). Both positions have their negatives, such as either the child's abuse is tolerated under the label of different cultural practices or the child is put at unnecessary risk without understanding their situation. While CPS law and policies emphasise the importance of cultural sensitivity (Child Welfare Act (Norway), 1992), it remains elusive in practice. This is because culture is dynamic and organic, involving shifting processes of interpretative construction and reconstruction across people, groups and generations (J. Korbin, 2008). Furthermore, the differences between people within a cultural group make it difficult to define borders between different groups. Thus, to provide culturally competent social services with a strong commitment to the principles of empowerment and of countering oppression and discrimination to children from immigrant backgrounds, we need to understand their complex lives and how intersecting power relations related to differences in culture, ethnicity, gender, age, socioeconomic

class, sexuality and different abilities affect people's situations in a given context (Dean, 2001; Rugkåsa & Ylvisaker, 2021).

6.1.4 *Feelings of dissonance*

The children's contact with CPS resulted in feelings of cultural and emotional dissonance as they tried to find ways to negotiate the different sets of apparently conflicting information and discourses: Norwegian/CPS childhood ideals and being a good Pakistani/Muslim child (Paper 3). On the one hand, their families promoted Pakistani cultural practices, such as a hierarchical and authoritarian parenting style that condones physical punishment and traditional gender norms, especially sexual policing of girls and wearing clothes that are considered modest by the community. The Norwegian culture was viewed as a deterrent to being a good 'Pakistani and Muslim'. On the other hand, Norwegian law and society promoted liberal values, such as gender equality, a horizontal and authoritative parenting style and children's right to choose what they want to wear and eat and who to be friends with. Pakistani culture, in this context, is seen as oppressive. For children, their experiences of living with two very divergent identities create feelings of dissonance; this finding is also present in research with Pakistani-American and British-Pakistani youth (Dwyer, 2000; Ghaffar-Kucher, 2015). The children's perceptions of CPS affected the way they made sense of their lived experiences in this context. As discussed in Paper 3, the children who strongly affiliated with their Pakistani cultural heritage and condoned authoritarian parenting practices as part of that culture experienced CPS policies and practices as discriminatory. Their grievances with CPS related to feelings of social injustice, perceived discrimination related to their religious background and disrespect, as their cultural practices are not accepted in the society. In contrast, the children who did not agree with the Pakistani cultural values of strict and unequal gender norms, use of violence against children and lack of freedom (which is available to their ethnic Norwegian counterparts)

expected CPS to help them assert equal rights as Norwegian citizens. This varied understanding of culture and sense of belonging highlights the need to gain a deeper understanding of children's complex lived realities and dynamic identities, especially in the context of CPS, which some researchers argue represent Norwegian middle-class values (Hennum, 2011; Kojan, 2011b; Kriz & Skivenes, 2010).

Cultural dissonance can lead to a sense of otherness, raising questions of belonging and identity among children. The findings show that children felt caught between their Pakistani families (and communities) and CPS (and Norwegian society), who have different and, at times, opposing normative standards for children's upbringings and what is considered good for them (Paper 3). Welterlin and LaRue (2007) argue that immigrant families may not share the values underpinning Western social services' approaches, which focus on promoting independence and ensuring equal opportunities, with the aim of meeting 'specific standards of social functioning' (p. 754). This is especially true for families that follow a collectivist culture and place a high value on family honour and social interdependence. Therefore, while the individualisation of family members provides a more equal status to the children, it may come at the cost of the dependent, contextually and socially rooted child (Ulvik, 2009). Conversely, children are social actors who are not only influenced by cultures but also influence them. Since cultures are also dynamic and organic, we cannot take it for granted that children have the same cultural understanding and interpretation of Pakistani or Norwegian culture as their parents. Thus, children can occupy multiple and fluid cultural identities, which influence their experiences and their making sense of those experiences. This means that cultural competence in CPS, which often generalises cultural groups, needs to focus on children who are allowed to have different cultures, and their voices need to be considered in their given structural and relational context.

6.2 *Multidimensions of children's agency: How children's experiences of power relations and emotions impact their actions*

The children's lived experiences of CPS were impacted by the family perspective, institutional policies and practices and sociocultural views of how the adult-child relationships should be. As mentioned in the previous section, the children felt perplexed by the different understandings and conceptualisations of what constitutes child maltreatment. This presented challenges for children when seeking help from CPS, which subsequently led to receiving negative consequences from the family and community. Furthermore, the children felt at the mercy of CPS, as the important decisions about their lives were based on how professionals understood their lived realities, best interests and cultural context. All of these factors contributed to feelings of cultural and emotional dissonance among the children. They felt caught between the two opposing cultures (Pakistani and Norwegian), which constructed children and childhood differently. Understanding how these children made sense of their lived experiences is important, as it impacted the actions (or inactions) they took in the context of CPS. As discussed in the theory chapter, children are not passive beings but are understood as social actors and meaning-making beings (Prout & James, 2015). Here, the concept of children's agency is relevant and provides a useful lens through which to further discuss the findings of this study. In this section, I first present a brief overview of children's agency that has developed in the discipline of childhood studies and consider its relevance to CPS's practice with children. Drawing from this, I discuss how the children's understanding of their experiences influenced their agency.

Recently, scholars in childhood studies have argued that agency, as the 'ability to act creatively and make things happen' (James, 2009, p. 42), is not a universal possession that belongs to individuals but is rather a process that is exercised (or not) in relation to others (Abebe, 2019; Edmonds, 2019). Such agency is also evident in children's rights, for

example, the right to participate, as ascribed in the UNCRC, that assumes that all children will assert their agency and rights (Abebe, 2019). This notion overlooks the wider historical, sociocultural, political and economic context in which children are socialised and its impact on the ways children exercise their agency (Esser et al., 2016). Hoang and Yeoh (2015) posit that ‘children’s agency is contingent on a social construction of childhood that is neither static nor universally uniform’ (p. 3), which highlights the importance of ‘adult perceptions of children’s agency and needs, [which] in turn structure these processes’ (p. 1). My study shows that, while CPS policies view children as rights holders and social actors, in practice, tension exists between children’s position as vulnerable and the need for protection and recognition of their agency (S. Wilson et al., 2020, Paper 1). This has major implications for children in CPS, as this context establishes the kind and form of agency that is expected of and permitted to these children.

Experiences related to children’s relationships, whether in relation to the family or CPS, were apparent across this research. Thus, while I acknowledge the importance of the structural component of agency, I am focusing on the relational aspect of agency in this section to elaborate on the findings of my study. A broad conceptualisation of agency is provided by Robson et al. (2007) as ‘an individual’s own capacities, competencies and activities through which they navigate the contexts and positions of their life-worlds fulfilling many economic, social and cultural expectations, while simultaneously charting individual/collective choices and possibilities for their daily and future lives’ (p. 135). This highlights the understanding of agency as interdependent, relational and dynamic, depending on the context. Two related conceptualisations of agency that resonate with my study view it first as a continuum from thin to thick agency (Klocker, 2007) and, second, through the perspective of ‘ambiguous agency’ (Bordonaro & Payne, 2012). ‘Thick agency’ denotes ‘having the latitude to act within a broad range of options’ and ‘thin agency’ refers to ‘decisions and

everyday actions that are carried out in highly restrictive contexts, characterised by few viable alternatives' (Klocker, 2007, p. 85). My findings support that the children's position on this continuum varies depending on their family context and circumstances, leading to CPS involvement and in relation to their social identities, power positions/relations based on social hierarchies, and the state of emotions, as discussed in Papers 2 and 3. These variations highlight the social and interdependent dimensions of children's agency. Agency is described as ambiguous when it is in contrast to the moral and social order of society (Bordonaro & Payne, 2012). In CPS practice, this can entail that children's agency is acknowledged only in the institutional framework and when it is consistent with the hegemonic sociocultural ideals of childhood.

The generational order and interdependent child–adult relationships are important spaces in which children's agency can be situated (Alanen, 2009; S. Punch, 2005). The children in my study experienced that they occupied a powerless position within the family context because the family exercised oppressive, controlling and manipulative power over them, as discussed in Paper 2. The children used subtle to overt agency to navigate their family's power, for example, by leading a double life, seeking care outside the home, developing a tolerance for physical punishment and/or threatening to report their parents to police or CPS. The children's decisions to negotiate and resist parental authority presented them as agents who interpreted their situations as oppressive and non-normative compared to their Norwegian counterparts and took actions for change. Nevertheless, CPS was considered the last resort by these children, who, in most cases, waited a long time before seeking help from CPS. Children's agency in these situations was 'thin' and limited. This supports earlier research stating that child abuse and maltreatment are underreported and underestimated in most Western countries (Gilbert et al., 2011), which highlights that children need

considerable ingenuity and courage in order to contact CPS for support services.

Children in contact with CPS are constructed as particularly vulnerable (Keddell, 2018). Children's vulnerability can be inherently caused by their biological immaturity but is also structural, as it 'comes about as a consequence of, and subsequently serves to reinforce, social and political mechanisms that reduce children's power, fail to take their agency into account and disregard their rights' (M. A. Powell & Smith, 2009, p. 138). Vulnerability is often perceived as the opposite of children's agency (S. Punch, 2016). My study found that it was when children felt the most vulnerable that they used their agency to gain some control over their lives, whether it was through the action of contacting CPS to resist their parents' power or by keeping information away from CPS to avoid their control over children (Paper 2). This highlights the dichotomy between agency and vulnerability as problematic, as children can be both agentic and vulnerable at the same time. Based on their research with street children in Ghana, Mizen and Ofofu-Kusi (2013) argue that vulnerability is integral for agency. For example, they showed how children's vulnerability led them to make choices and decisions to leave home and live on the street. However, one also needs to consider the social and contextual constraints regarding children's lived realities that may have triggered such decisions. Thus, it is necessary to examine the 'meanings that children hold and how these constitute the basis of their actions' to gain a holistic and nuanced understanding of children's agency (Mizen & Ofofu-Kusi, 2013, p. 363).

The children's narratives support existing findings about the critical importance of confidence in the welfare system and services and of trusting relationships with social workers (Cossar et al., 2016; Husby et al., 2018). These act as empowering tools for supporting children's agency and motivate them to seek help from and collaborate with CPS. Agency and power are closely related concepts (C. R. Jørgensen & Wyness, 2021), as it is through the former that power relations are

navigated, negotiated and resisted. As presented in Chapter 4 power is the capacity that makes action possible and impacts the actions of others. However, while this capacity is accessible to all, its realisation is not (Arendt, 1972). This study reveals that the social relationships responsible for developing the ‘power within’ children by promoting confidence, self-esteem, feelings of safety and self-efficacy not only facilitated children’s agency but also increased CPS’s ability to improve children’s well-being. Social workers were particularly vital in this respect, as they had the power to define children’s lived realities and make decisions about them. Thus, social workers must work creatively to provide ‘thickeners’ for children’s agency by providing them with whatever small choices are possible in the restrictive framework of CPS and/or by sharing their ‘power with’ them (Morrison et al., 2019). However, sometimes the bureaucratic procedures and processes of CPS made the children feel powerless, especially when they did not trust their social workers, a finding present in other studies, as shown in Paper 1. Powerlessness, as it refers to the sense of a lack of control and the ability to influence one’s own life, is an experience shared by all the children in this study. Their feelings of powerlessness and despair led them to manifest ambiguous agency through actions such as attempting or threatening to commit suicide and self-harm. As discussed in Paper 2, these behaviours could be understood as the children’s cries for help, attempting to be taken seriously by the social workers and gaining a sense of some control over their own lives. Knowledge about the different ways children demonstrate agency and their reasons has implications for CPS practice.

The children’s accounts also highlight that their demonstrations of agency are not limited to the institutional framework of CPS and through (non)participation in meetings with social workers; it is something they negotiate in their interdependent and generational relationships as a part of their everyday lives. Cultural practices and beliefs in relation to generation and gender often intertwine with the power relations and

emotional experiences which can complicate the spaces for children's everyday agency. My findings show that children themselves were sometimes participants in the production and maintenance of generational and gender hierarchies, contributing to the marginalisation of those (like siblings) who deviated from the family's sociocultural norms (Papers 2 and 3). Thus, children had to negotiate both inter- and intragenerational power at home and in their community and balance different interests, such as personal well-being, with family honour. In some cases, the children used their limited agency to protect the collective (family and community) instead of their own 'best interests', for example, by not reporting their parents to CPS. Furthermore, the children's feelings of cultural and emotional dissonance at times resulted in them favouring their Pakistani heritage and culture. In such instances, they used their 'power' with family and resisted interventions by CPS, which was considered 'other' and as lacking understanding and respect for Pakistani culture (Paper 3). However, the normalisation of violence and gender discrimination under the label of 'culture' and 'religion' can act as a thinner for children's agency in CPS. This has implications for CPS practice, as the most vulnerable children might never encounter social services.

When considered as a whole, the results of this thesis introduce some new ideas in terms of theoretical developments about children's agency as relational and interdependent. Analysis of the data highlights how children negotiated power struggles in relation to their parents/families and the state/CPS and how intersecting factors, such as age, gender, the family context and culture, enhanced or limited their agency. While the relational understanding of agency somewhat takes into account the role of children's power negotiations (S. Punch, 2005), the impact of their emotional experiences on agency has not yet been focused on, especially in the context of CPS. This thesis contributes to filling this gap.

6.3 Implications for CPS practice

This thesis explored the experiences of children with CPS, particularly the lived experiences of children from Pakistani backgrounds with CPS in Norway. The findings that emerged from the study through primary and secondary research offer some implications that can be valuable for improving CPS practice with children. While some of the recommendations proposed below are specific to children from immigrant backgrounds, the others can be relevant to all children.

The importance of context and cultural differences in shaping understandings of violence

This thesis shows that children have a nuanced and evolving understanding of what constitutes violence and maltreatment. Their perspectives on violence changed over time and were influenced by factors such as comparing themselves to their ethnic Norwegian counterparts and varied levels of tolerance towards and acculturation in the different cultures to which they belonged. This presents a barrier for children to seek timely help from CPS for the violence and maltreatment suffered by them at home, which can lead children to remain in unhealthy conditions for a long time before they receive support, if any. By the time CPS intervenes in their lives, the children may have been subjected to substantial damage to their physical, psychological and emotional well-being. Conversely, children who do not agree with CPS's definition of violence consider their intervention in the family as intrusive, disrespectful and unsolicited. This negatively affects their experiences with CPS. Holding intra- and intergenerational dialogues at the local and regional levels on how violence affecting children is defined and experienced would create awareness about the issue. It would also enable the development of more representative policies that could be clearly translated into practice. This would also enhance the possibilities for meaningful engagement with children and their communities to encourage change. This would require a multisectoral approach

involving sectors such as schools, youth clubs, NGOs and the relevant state departments to organise these dialogues and forums.

While psychological and emotional violence are as harmful as physical violence, children found it relatively easier to receive help in cases of physical violence compared to the other forms. One reason for this is related to proving physical violence; for example, a blue mark is easier to detect than psychological and emotional violence. Thus, it is important for CPS to provide information and counselling to children on how to identify and report different forms of violence so that they can receive the necessary support. This can be done through schools and kindergartens to ensure that all children have equal access to social services.

Significance of creating safe communities for children

This study highlights the complex interplay between children, family and the minority community for children's well-being. While having the diaspora community provides support and contributes to positive identity development, the children reported being negatively controlled not only by the family but also by their community due to the honour code. Being in contact with CPS is considered to bring dishonour and shame to the family. This has implications for both children and their families who need support from CPS. The fear of damaging family honour makes children keep their maltreatment and neglect at home a secret from the people who may report it to CPS. This situation is worse for girls, as they are considered a symbol of the family's honour. They are at higher risk of losing their reputation, friends and social network and, thus, being isolated. There is a need for a holistic model of child protection that addresses community factors (Wright, 2004). Children need not only safe homes but also safe communities in which to grow up. This would entail moving beyond CPS interventions focused on the individual child and their family to the inclusion of the community as a preventative measure. CPS can work with local organisations to create children's

advocacy groups that work together with stakeholders to raise awareness about children's rights and the protection issues faced by children in the community and find ways to change the situation. We can learn from examples of children and youth advocacy groups in the Global South who are working to change harmful traditional practices, such as child marriages (Tisdall & Cuevas-Parra, 2020).

Importance of children's relationships in CPS

The results showed that children's relationships with family and social workers were an important aspect of their subjective experiences with CPS. The children's accounts highlight the asymmetrical power relations that exist between them and the adults in the context of CPS. The adults' power over the children is exhibited through their controlling and deciding what they consider is best for the children. Generational power relations influence children's ability to assert their agency and how it is negotiated. This concerns CPS policies and practices focusing on children's individual autonomy, where they are expected to assert individualistic and unconditioned agency, for example, through contacting CPS and participating in decision making (Jensen, 2020). Such a view does not fully take into account that children are part of interdependent and generational relations (Abebe, 2019; Alanen, 2009). Sometimes, CPS intervention to provide physical safety to children can inadvertently harm their social relationships and worsen their psychological and emotional safety, as shown by this study. Therefore, it is pertinent that social workers show understanding and sensitivity towards the issues of power and power relationships (generational and gendered) when working with children from immigrant backgrounds. This can help CPS identify children who are more vulnerable and might need additional support.

Giving more control to children (thickeners of agency) in CPS

The children who participated in this study felt that they lacked control over important aspects of their lives in their contact with CPS. In addition

to feeling not being heard and believed by the social workers, the participants reported that a lack of participation in important decisions about their lives and best interests contributed to their sense of powerlessness.

Some of the recommendations suggested previously (Papers 1, 2 and 3), such as providing clear and understandable information about how the child protection system works in different forms (verbal and written), providing emotionally and psychologically safe spaces for children to talk about their lived realities and enhancing the participation and other procedural rights of children in their own cases, can promote children's sense of control and agency over important aspects of their lives. The perceived power imbalance between children and social workers can be addressed by providing a proper and accessible channel through which children can report, challenge or appeal the decisions made by the professionals/social workers about their lives. This could entail appointing an ombudsperson to handle children's concerns in the local CPS offices. Similarly, children's advisory boards comprising elected representatives of the children in CPS could be formed to provide input into CPS practices and policies. This board could also contribute to establishing child-friendly procedures to investigate children's complaints against CPS/social workers.

Children in CPS appreciate having a relationship with social workers based on trust and a reciprocal sharing of power; social workers shared their power with the children by taking time to listen to them, trusting their life stories, involving them in the decisions and respecting them as equals. In addition to these factors, social workers' responsiveness to children's knowledge, opinions and experiences acts as an empowering tool for children and as thickeners for their agency in the context of CPS. It is important that social workers are trained to hold an open dialogue with children in a safe relational space, where one not only listens to children's responses but also shows reflexivity to embodiment issues. These dialogues should not be one-off events but should be arranged

regularly with children to keep up to date with their care needs and make necessary changes in the CPS intervention when needed.

Increasing cultural understanding in CPS

Culture plays an important role in shaping the understandings and experiences of children in the context of CPS. However, this research demonstrates that children had varied understandings of Pakistani culture and levels of acculturation in Norwegian society. The clash between their Pakistani and Norwegian identities created feelings of dissonance that impacted their acceptance or rejection of CPS interference in their lives. Nevertheless, their cultural identity is not fixed but is dynamic and organic, as the cultures are evolving and **integrating** and people are continuously being exposed to new cultural ideas and beliefs through immigration and information technology. This has implications for social workers in CPS, who need to stay abreast of the altering cultural needs of different groups of children and their families. Therefore, it is important that social workers and other relevant professionals, such as teachers and school nurses, receive cultural competence training and periodic refreshers to keep up to date. As previously mentioned, cultural competence is not about gaining knowledge about a particular culture but is rather achieved by gaining an understanding of how people live their complex lives and how intersecting factors, such as culture, ethnicity, gender, age, socioeconomic class, sexuality and different abilities, affect them.

As discussed in Chapter 2 (context), culture is not uniform, nor does it impact its members uniformly. For example, in Pakistani patriarchal culture, girls have less power than boys; the girls in this study complained about the gender discriminatory practices at home. Thus, CPS is a way for children to assert their rights not just to protection but also to gender equality. However, girls may need more support and encouragement to contact social services due to their relative powerless position in their homes. This could be achieved by CPS having

community-based representatives with whom children can discuss their case before making any formal reports.

6.4 Future research possibilities

This study highlights the importance and need for research with children from different backgrounds who represent various childhoods to contribute to more democratic research, where the voices of different groups of children can be heard. Furthermore, this research has indicated areas that I would like to develop further in the future.

The current research has demonstrated the challenge of different understandings and definitions of violence among children, which impacts their agency to seek timely support from CPS. Therefore, a study with different groups of children about their understanding of violence and child maltreatment has the possibility to provide more nuanced understandings into ways these concepts evolve in a multicultural society and how children respond to violence in their everyday lives with sociocultural and structural constraints and changes.

This study was conducted with second-generation Norwegian-Pakistani children about their experiences with CPS. Children's accounts showed that being in contact with CPS negatively affects family honour and reputation and impacts their social relationships with the family and community. It would therefore be useful to conduct follow-up research to see how care leavers (children/young people leaving CPS) from Pakistani backgrounds fare in their lives and how they manage their relationships with their families and community. This would allow an exploration of whether CPS interventions are effective in benefitting children in the long term.

Furthermore, embracing the generational and relational perspectives on childhood, I believe that it would be insightful to conduct a similar study to explore the lived experiences of parents, especially those who were

born in Pakistan but are married to Pakistani-Norwegians. This group often faces additional challenges to parenting, such as adjusting with the in-laws, lacking personal networks, learning a new language and raising children in a foreign culture (Bredal, 2006). This can provide useful insights into the challenges faced by the parents and may provide a basis for initiating an intergenerational dialogue to discuss the relevant issues faced by the diaspora community. Moreover, similar studies should be conducted with both children and parents from other immigrant backgrounds in CPS to identify the nuances of other constructions of children and childhoods. This knowledge can promote a better understanding of the challenges with and expectations from CPS in a multicultural society.

6.5 Concluding remarks

This thesis synthesised previous research conducted with children and explored the lived experiences of children from Pakistani backgrounds with CPS in Norway. Research with minority and immigrant children in CPS has so far not received adequate attention in the existing literature, which is reflected in the introduction chapter and Paper 1. The current study attempted to address this gap. This was achieved by conducting interviews with 11 children (aged 13–19 years) from Pakistani backgrounds who received services from CPS about their subjective experiences with CPS. It provides valuable insights into how these children made sense of their experiences and the ways in which these experiences affected their actions.

By bringing out a more nuanced and holistic understanding of children's, particularly immigrant children's, lived experiences in the context of CPS, I aim to contribute to the growing literature on the relational understanding of childhoods and a broader view of child protection. Through reflexive analysis of the lived experiences of children from Pakistani backgrounds with CPS, this thesis makes a meaningful contribution to the understanding of how children's complex

sociocultural identities shape the way in which they make sense of and navigate maltreatment at home and, in doing so, makes recommendations for CPS policies and practices.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Paper 1



Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Children and Youth Services Review

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/childyouth



Children's experiences with Child Protection Services: A synthesis of qualitative evidence



Samita Wilson^{a,*}, Sarah Hean^{a,b}, Tatek Abebe^c, Vanessa Heaslip^{a,b}

^a University of Stavanger, Kjell Arhulns Gate 41, 4021 Stavanger, Norway

^b Bournemouth University, House B414, 19 Christchurch Road, Bournemouth BH1 3LL, United Kingdom

^c Norwegian University of Science & Technology, PAViljong A, 215, Dragvoll, 7034 Trondheim, Norway

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:
Young people
Child Welfare Services
Child protection
Children's experiences
Systematic review

ABSTRACT

Background: Research shows that young adults, previously in contact with Child Protection Services (CPS) often have lower overall wellbeing when compared to their peers in the general population. To redress this balance and fulfil children's right to receive good quality and child-centred services, the child's lived experience of the CPS processes and interventions must be better understood. There is research with children about specific aspects of CPS, such as experiences of investigation, out-of-home care, end of intervention and participation. Yet, there is no available synthesis of the literature that would provide a general overview of children's lived experiences of these services.

Objective: The aim of this review was to comprehensively identify, synthesise and analyse the current empirical research that explored children's overall experiences of Child Protection Services.

Method: This is a systematic review and qualitative evidence synthesis of primary studies. A systematic search was conducted using five databases related to social sciences and social work for relevant qualitative publications in English. Using PRISMA, 39 studies were included in this review. A qualitative evidence synthesis was carried out, which entailed extracting, synthesising and thematic analysis of text from the findings section of the included studies.

Results: Most of the literature focused on the perceptions of children in out-of-home care. Four main themes emerged that captured these subjective experiences: children described the processes of coming in contact with CPS, their experiences of the CPS intervention or services, their perceptions of the outcomes of the intervention and lastly their perceptions of self, social identity and stigmatisation.

Discussion and Conclusion: This review concludes that, from the perspective of the child, clear, understandable and comprehensive information about the CPS process is required so that they can assert their right to participation and protection. Being in CPS is an emotional experience for them, thus emotional as much as physical safety, is needed. A sense of belongingness and self-actualization are as important for children's wellbeing as food and shelter. This knowledge should be considered in practice to improve both short and long-term outcomes for children in contact with the CPS.

1. Introduction

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) defines the child as a right-bearing citizen of the state, and asserts that the 'best interest of the child', and her or his right to protection, should be taken into consideration in all actions concerning them (UN, 1989). Children have a right to state services that ensure their well-being and protection from neglect and abuse (Parton, 2014; Tisdall, 2015). Child Protection Services (CPS) are responsible for investigating reports of maltreatment, determining whether child abuse/neglect has occurred,

and collaborating with families/care providers through in-home services and out-of-home care to ensure a safe environment for the child (Featherstone, White, & Morris, 2014; Jones, La Liberte, & Piescher, 2015; Munro, 2001).

Child Protection Services is sometimes used synonymously with Child Welfare Services but in theory there are differences between the two (Gilbert, Parton, & Skivenes, 2011; Fargion, 2014). Gilbert et al. (2011) note that the child protection model is more remedial than preventive, focusing on deficiencies and risk factors for the child and family, whereas child welfare models focus on partnership between

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: samita.wilson@uis.no (S. Wilson), sarah.hean@uis.no (S. Hean), tatek.abebe@ntnu.no (T. Abebe), vheaslip@bournemouth.ac.uk (V. Heaslip).

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2020.104974>

Received 31 October 2019; Received in revised form 27 March 2020; Accepted 29 March 2020

Available online 06 April 2020

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social workers and families, and providing supportive services to parents. In this literature review, the term CPS will encapsulate both models (Pöso, Skivenes, & Hestbæk, 2014), viewing children's right to protection not just as safeguarding but also ensuring their overall well-being.

Using Child Protection Services can be challenging for children. First, although children have a right to access CPS services directly, most children access these through adults (e.g., parents, teachers, and social workers), putting children in a potentially vulnerable position, and limiting their ability to act as independent citizens and service users (Lorenz, 2015). A recent systematic review of empirical evidence into the outcomes of children who had been in contact with the CPS concluded that persons who have been involved with CPS often experience reduced educational outcomes, fewer employment opportunities, lower annual income, and poorer mental health compared to the general population (Gypen, Vanderfaellie, De Maeyer, Belenger, & Van Hoken, 2017). These findings were confirmed by a quantitative research (Vinnerljung & Hjern, 2011), which concluded that the dire outcomes were the same regardless of whether the child in contact with the CPS had received a home-based service or had been placed in out-of-home care. Improvements in including the child's perspectives in CPS can ameliorate these challenges (Alexanderson, Hyvönen, Karlsson, & Larsson, 2014).

Listening to children's views and striving to understand their lived experiences is key to fully realizing their right to protection, support, and participation (UN, 1989; Cossar, Brandon, & Jordan, 2011). While there is an increasing focus on research with children in CPS, no literature review has been conducted to present an overview of children's generic lived experiences across different services provided by CPS, starting from their first contact to the end of intervention and how it affects their view of themselves and others around them. Being with CPS significantly affect a child's life and inter-personal world, thus, it is pertinent to explore their subject perception and appraisal of their time with the services. Direct exploration and description of children's lived experiences (emic perspective) would develop a richer, deeper and more accurate understanding of issues concerning children in CPS (Mitchell & Kuczynski, 2010; Heaslip, Hean, & Parker, 2018).

Hence, a literature review to synthesize current evidence of children's experiences of Child Protection Services has potential to reveal common challenges and disruptions that children experience in CPS, which can inform future practices, research and policies related to child protection. The aim of this article is to synthesize current research with children about their perspectives on and experiences with CPS to gain better insight. The research question was: *What are the children's experiences with Child Protection Services?*

2. Methods

Qualitative research approaches are well suited to capture the lived experience of participants and to allow their voices to be heard. These approaches can uncover how participants make sense of their lives, their subjective or lived experiences, and the world around them (O'Day & Killeen, 2002). Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) is an evidence-based minimum set of items for reporting in systematic reviews and meta-analyses (Liberati et al., 2009). This systematic review was conducted in accordance with the PRISMA flow chart to provide the reader with a better understanding of the selection process (see Fig. 1). Furthermore, the qualitative meta-synthesis approach was adopted to integrate and present new interpretations of data (Sandelowski, Barroso, & Voils, 2007).

2.1. Search strategy

A systematic search of the literature was conducted using databases most relevant to social work practice: Academic Search Premier, CINAHL, Socindex, Scopus, Web of Science, and Psychological &

Behavioural Science Collection. The search strategy also involved screening reference lists of included papers, forward citation tracking of studies in Google Scholar and manual selection of articles. This method of 'ancestry search' (looking through reference lists) and 'forward citation' approach (looking for publications that cite the selected paper) has been found to increase the recovery of relevant articles by almost 50% (Fegran, Hall, Uhrenfeldt, Aagaard, & Ludvigsen, 2014, p. 125).

Population, Context, Outcome (PCO) framework is a modified form of PICO (Population, Intervention, Comparison, Outcome) for qualitative methodologies (Stern, Jordan, & McArthur, 2014). PCO was used to identify the key words in the review question, which provided the basis for the search strategy. An overview of these terms is provided in Table 1.

To keep the search volume manageable, the function 'NOT' was used for terms such as: 'practitioners', 'social workers', 'parents', 'education', 'health', 'mental health' and 'sexual health'. These terms were selected after going through the initial 200 titles and abstracts and listing the keywords for studies that showed up in the initial search results but were later found not relevant.

The search was carried out between May 2018 and July 2018. Other studies were added until November 2018 by the first author through manual selection of articles from previous search and/or recommendation from colleagues, in addition to the chaining process.

2.1.1. Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Child Protection Services were defined as those structures and interventions that have a state mandate to intervene in families and children's lives, when children's well-being and protection is in jeopardy (Waterhouse and McGhee, 2015). The inclusion and exclusion criteria for the review are presented in Table 2. All articles focus on children's lived experiences of services and interventions provided by the CPS. Studies related to, for example, educational attainment of children in foster care or foster children's perspectives of biological parents were excluded. There were no restrictions placed on geographical location of the studies. The time limit (1990 and onwards) was applied to capture research done after the ratification and adoption of UNCRC in state policies.

2.2. Search outcome

The initial search yielded 875 articles. The titles and abstracts of these articles were screened by the first author based on the predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria and 44 articles were shortlisted for full text reading. After a careful examination of the full-texts, 28 articles were excluded. Two of the team members (SW & SH) applied an inter-rater check on 33% of the retrieved papers and a third team member was brought in when there was a lack of agreement between the review pair.

The reference list of the 16 included studies were reviewed and forward citation tracking conducted. Twenty-three more studies were included through this process. A total of 39 papers formed the final sample for further analysis. Fig. 1 illustrates the PRISMA flowchart to represent the search process.

2.3. Quality appraisal

The quality of the 39 articles was appraised using the Critical Appraisal Programme (CASP) assessment tool for qualitative studies (CASP, 2018). Two team members (SW & VH) individually appraised the quality of 10% of the articles. Where there were discrepancies, we discussed the paper until consensus was reached. First author appraised the remaining articles in line with the discussed criteria.

The main purpose of CASP was to become familiar with the included studies and assess the methodological rigour of the studies. As recommended by Sandelowski et al. (2007), no articles were excluded due to lack of methodological rigour.

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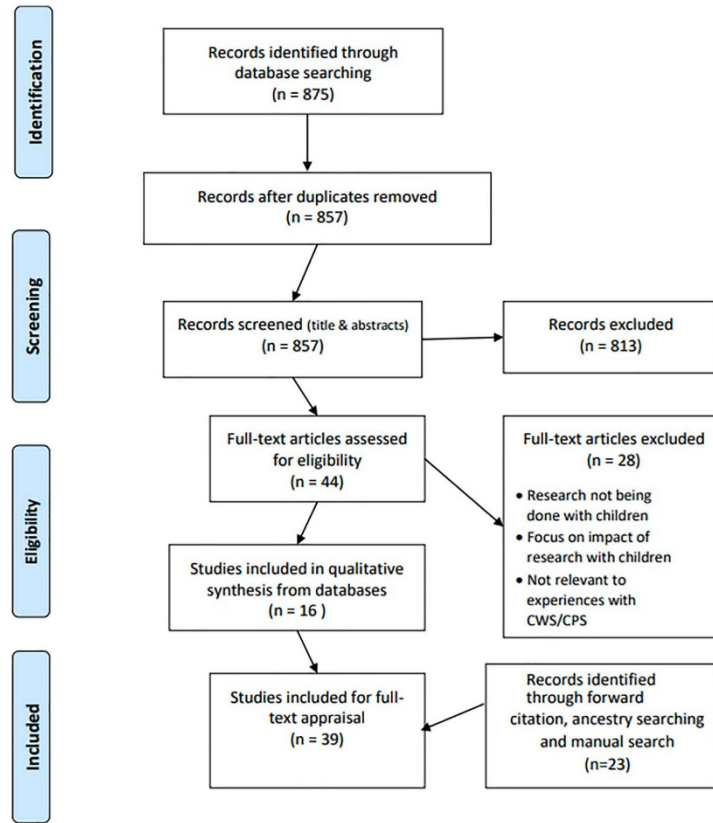


Fig. 1. PRISMA flow chart.

Table 1
Search terms (with *truncation notation) used in the PCO framework.

Population	Context	Outcome
Children or adolescent* or "young people" or "youth" or "child in care" or "look after child**"	"Child Protection Service*" or "Child Welfare Service*" or "social services" or "social care"	"Lived experience*" or experience* or view* or attitude* or perspective* or perception*

Table 2
Inclusion/Exclusion criteria.

	Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Population	Include children aged (0–18 years) involved with CPS	All other populations
Context & outcome	Experiences and perspectives of CPS provided by the state	Any other experience
Place of study	No geographical limitation	
Time period	1990 – June 2018	Before 1989
Language	English	All other languages
Study design	Original qualitative data/research done with children and published in peer reviewed journals Mixed method studies (but only qualitative part was included in analysis)	Editorials, discussionpapers, reports, policy documents, MS and PhD thesis, Quantitative studies, surveys, qualitative research with parents and social workers on children's experiences

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Table 3
Studies included in the analysis.

Authors & Country	Year	Title	Focus	Methodology	Method	Analysis	Sample	Context	CASP score
Munro (UK)	2001	Empowering looked-after children	Children's views about their experience of being looked after and the degree of power that they felt they had to influence decision-making		Unstructured interviews		15 looked after children (10–17 years), 7 Black and 8 White children	Children from both residential and foster care	14
Bell (UK)	2002	Promoting children's rights through the use of relationship	Children's experiences of child protection process		Semi structured interviews		27 children and young people (8–19 years). One child was non ethnic minority	Six children lived with other relatives and five were in foster care	12
Bamba & Haight (Japan)	2007	Helping maltreated children to find their voice: Japanese perspectives on supporting the well-being of children in state care	Perspectives of Japanese child welfare professionals, educators and children living in the state care on how to support the well-being of maltreated children		Semi structured interviews	Emic coding	Two child care institutions (Nagano and Ehime) and three public schools in western Japan		15
Melood (England)	2007	Whose agenda? Issues of power and relationship when listening to looked-after young people	To understand why some young people may choose to participate or not to participate and the process behind social exclusion		Interviews		11 children and young people (9–17 years), Four girls and seven boys.	Looked after children	15
Pitthouse and Crowley (Wales)	2007	Adult rule? Children, advocacy and complaints to Social Services	Views and experiences of children about making a complaint to social services about independent advocacy		Semi structured interviews	Constant comparative method	23 children (17–24 years), 3 were Black British & 20 White Welsh	Two thirds of the sample were being looked after and one third were living at home with parents or independently	12
Stanley (England)	2007	Young people's and carer's perspective on the mental health needs of looked after adolescents	Views of looked after young people and their carers about what contributes to their mental health needs and how these can be best met		Focus group (separately with girls and boys)	Using standard approaches	14 young people (12–19 years old) 159 carers (parents, foster carers, residential staff, relatives etc.)	Children from both residential and foster care settings	15
Hyde and Kammerer (USA)	2009	Adolescents' perspectives on placement moves and out-of-home care: Complex situations and disabilities in foster care	Adolescents' perspectives on placement moves, life in congregate care, and the associated disabilities in their lives	Qualitative research	Repeated interviews (two interviews)	Text coding analysis	20 children (aged 16–19 years)	Child Protection Services	15
Mitchell and Kozzinski (Canada)	2010	Does anyone know what is going on? Examining children's lived experience of transition into foster care	Children's lived experiences of the initial placement into foster care	Phenomenological study	Workshop and semi-structured interview	Phenomenic phenomenological analysis	20 children (8–15 years), 7 males & 13 females	Children in regular non-kinship foster care	15
Bamba and Haight (Japan)	2009	Maltreated children's emerging well-being in Japanese state care	Experiences and challenges of maltreated Japanese children who live in state care	Qualitative research	Semi structured interviews	Emic coding	9 children (10–15 years) 5 boys & 4 girls, 18 staff members	Participating children had lived in the residential institution for an average of ca. 6 years (ranging 3 months–11 years). Children whose cases had been investigated by CPS	15
Woolson, Hefferman, Paul, and Brown (Scotland)	2009	Young people's views of the child protection system in Scotland	Experiences of children and young people about the CPS investigation and about improvements that could make the CPS more effective		Semi structured interviews		11 children (aged 12–17 years)	Children in out-of-home care	18
Dunn, Cullhane & Taussig (USA)	2010	Children's appraisals of their experiences in out-of-home care	Children's perceptions about the hardest and most helpful things associated with living in out-of-home care	Mixed method research	Qualitative methods: interviews		167 children (aged 9–11 yrs), 46.1% children were Hispanic, 48.9% Caucasian, 30% African American, and 6.7% Native American	Children in out-of-home care	14

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Table 3 (continued)

Authors & Country	Year	Title	Focus	Methodology	Method	Analysis	Sample	Context	CASP score
Melrose (England)	2008	"A friend and an equal": Do young people in care seek the help of social workers and how effectively social workers listened to children in care?	Views of young people in care on the role of social workers and how effectively social workers listened to children in care.	Case studies	In-depth semi-structured interviews	Qualitative analysis using post-coded themes	11 young people	Child Protection Services	13
Winter (Ireland)	2010	The perspectives of young children in care about their circumstances and implications for social work practice	Perspectives and experiences of young people living in out-of-home care about restrictions	Case studies	In-depth interviews	Thematic analysis	10 cases involving 39 individual interviews with 14 children, their parents and social workers	Children had been in care (type not specified) between 6 months – 2 years at the time of interview	16
Baukts, Fusco, Caballero, Bernert, Bernhart (USA)	2011	"Try to make it seem like we're regular kids": Youth perceptions of restrictiveness in out-of-home care	Perspectives and experiences of young people living in out-of-home care about restrictions	Case studies	Focus groups	Thematic analysis	40 young people (37 of them were of age 18–20 years)	Youth who had or were currently living in out-of-home care	15
Buckley, Carr & Whelan (Ireland)	2011	"Like walking on eggshells": Services users' (including children) views on Irish Child Protection Services	Services users' (including children) views on Irish Child Protection Services	Case studies	In-depth interviews	Thematic analysis	Out of 67 participants, 13 were between age 19–23 years	Participants were involved with child protection system at some point within the last 4 years	12
Andreasen (Norway)	2011	From 'placement' to 'a child on the move': Methodological strategies to give children a more central position in Child Welfare Service	Children's experiences and reflections about the changes in their life situation in context of Child Welfare Services	Life-Mode Interview	Structured interviews	Narrative configuration	109 children (aged 6–12 years)	Children in out-of-home care/alternative care	18
Larsen (Norway)	2011	Help or formality? Children's experiences of participation in home-based child welfare cases: A Norwegian example	Children's experiences of participation in their CPS cases	Life-Mode Interview	Interview	Cross-case method of qualitative evaluation	22 children (6–11 years), 13 girls and 9 boys	Children involved in home based CPS programs and/or interventions	17
Pirkki, Vuorinen, Pursiainen, and Riihonen (Finland)	2012	Children's participation in child protection processes as experienced by foster children and social workers	Examine the quality of foster children's participation in different phases and contexts of Child Protection Services	Life Path method	Interviews	Qualitative content analysis	8 children (7–17 years) and 4 social workers	Children in foster care	17
Jobe & Gorn (England)	2013	"If kids don't feel safe they don't do anything": young people's views	Young people's experiences of seeking and receiving help from Children's Social Care Services for maltreatment	Life Path method	Interviews	Thematic analysis	24 children (11–18 years) 14 boys and 10 girls, 18 white British, 1 British-Asian & 5 unaccompanied minors	Child Protection Services	17
Burnside & Fuels (Canada)	2013	Bound by the clock: The experiences of youth with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, who were in care of child welfare agencies, participating in out-of-home care	Experiences of youth with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, who were in care of child welfare agencies, participating in out-of-home care	Social constructivist perspective	Semi-structured interviews	Constant comparison method	17 young people (12–18 years)	Children in residential care	13
Johansson (Sweden)	2013	The rights of the child and ethnic minority families in Sweden	Social work with ethnic minority families within Child Protection Services	Social constructivist perspective	Interviews	Thematic analysis	7 young men from ethnic minority or immigrant background (14–22 years old) and their social workers and adult carers (3 parents and one older brother)	Young people in out-of-home care	7
Ceser, Brandon & Jordan (UK)	2014	"You've got to trust her and she's got to trust you": children's views on participation in the child	Views of children and young people about the Child Protection process	Qualitative research	Activity based interview	Thematic analysis	26 children (6–17 years), 13 girls and 13 boys, 20 of those were white British and 6 were from Ethnic minority groups	Children had a child protection plan and were living at home	18

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Table 3 (continued)

Authors & Country	Year	Title	Focus	Methodology	Method	Analysis	Sample	Context	CASP score
Rahley, Preyde & Ghahabghahi (Canada)	2014	A survey of adolescents' perceptions of their relationships with non-parental caregivers in group	Perceptions of adolescents' currently living in group home settings of their relationships with the child and youth workers that work in their group home	Mixed method research	Qualitative study: Semi-structured interviews	Thematic content analysis	17 young people (13–18 years)	Children were living in residential care	15
Van Bijleveld, Dooding, and Benders-Aelen (Netherlands)	2014	Seeing eye to eye or not? Young people's and child protection workers' perspectives on children's participation within Dutch child protection and welfare services	Children's and child protection workers' perspectives on child participation within the Dutch Child Protection and Welfare Services		Interviews based on time-lapse method	Qualitative content analysis	16 children (13–19 years) and 14 case managers	11 of the young people had been committed to compulsory residential care at some point and 5 had been placed in an open residential setting	17
Jones (USA)	2015	Was taking me out of the home necessary? Perspectives on removal from their biological parents' home for residential care	Views of youth regarding the necessity of their removal from their biological parents' home		Questionnaires (closed and open ended)	Thematic and constant analysis	97 youth (17–20 years) African American = 58%, Whites = 24%, Hispanics = 16%, Other = 3%	Congregate facility	16
Burgard and Zegarac (Serbia)	2016	Perspectives of youth in care in Serbia	How youth experienced and understood their experience of placement		Semi-structured in-depth interview	Thematic analysis	16 youth (13–18 years)	Children in foster & institutional care	17
Bolin (Sweden)	2016	Children's agency in interprofessional collaborative meetings in child welfare work	Children's perceptions of their agency capacity in regulating participation in interprofessional collaborative meetings		Semi-structured interviews	Coding analysis and constant comparison techniques	28 participants, 6 (5–10 years) & 22 (11–20 years)	Children with care plan living at home	16
Dillon, Greenop, and Hills (England)	2016	"He's got some nasty impression of me he has": Listening to children in the secure estate	Explore the experience of children's participation in their own child protection/child-in-need planning within a statutory setting		Interviews		5 children (12–17 years), One girl and four boys	Children who had either current or historical experiences (length not specified) with CIN/CP plan	18
Ellis (England)	2016	"They got some nasty impression of me he has": Listening to children in the secure estate	Exploring girls' experiences of being in secure care	Ethnographic study	Observations & in-depth interviews		15 girls and 12 case files of those girls	Girls in secure care setting	14
Fylkesnes, Taylor, and Iversen (Norway)	2018	Precarious participation: Exploring ethnic minority youth's narratives about out-of-home placement	Ethnic minority youth's perspectives of their participation in the out-of-home placements	Narrative analysis	Interviews	Thematic narrative approach	6 young people (17–19 years) from African background	Two lived in foster care, two lived at home and the other two had independent living arrangements	15
Søhlhøien and Willassen (Norway)	2017	Service user participation in interprofessional teams in child welfare: Perspectives of child welfare workers with stable adolescents' perceptions	Perceptions of young people of participating in inter-professional teams in child welfare	Explorative & interpretive design	Interviews	Qualitative content analysis	5 adolescents (13–16 years)	One child lived in foster care, two with a single parent and two with both parents	17
Magalhães, Calheiros, and Antunes (Portugal)	2018	"I always say what I think": a rights based approach of young people's psychosocial functioning in residential care	Young people's perceptions of their rights in residential care and how these perceived rights could be related to their self-reported functioning		Focus group discussions	Qualitative data analysis based on grounded theory	29 young people (12–18 years)	Children in residential care	18
Mareos Vaquero, Baskells, and Ponce (Spain)	2017	"They didn't tell me anything they just sent me home": children's participation in the return home	Children's experiences of participation in their return to home as part of the process of family reunification	Qualitative multi-informant study	Focus groups & semi-structured interviews	Content analysis process	135 total participants: 30 Children (12–20 years), 42 parents and 63 professionals	Children's experience of family reunification	15

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Table 3 (continued)

Authors & Country	Year	Title	Focus	Methodology	Method	Analysis	Sample	Context	CASP score
Sanders et al. (New Zealand)	2017	Conditional openness: young people define practices for successful child protection interventions	Perspectives of vulnerable young people about the practices of Child Protection Services		Semi-structured interviews. Case file review	Qualitative data analysis	109 young people (12–17 years). Young people were also asked to nominate a person who knew the most about them		16
Moore, McArthur, Death, Tilbury & Roche (Australia)	2017	Young people's views on safety and preventing abuse and harm in residential care: "Its got to be better than home"	Young people's perspectives on what makes residential care safe		Semi-structured interview	Coding techniques of a grounded theory approach	27 children and young people (10–21 years)	Young people had lived in residential care for more than 3 months in the past 3 years	17
Lindahl and Euhlin (Sweden)	2017	Foster children's experiences and expectations concerning the child welfare officer role. Prerequisites and obstacles for close and trusting relationships	Asian & Samotompanied minors		Relatively structured interviews	Principles of meaning categorization	53 children (11–19 years)	Children were placed in foster care based on the Social Services Act or in coercive care, regulated by the Care of Young Persons Act	16
Arbeter and Toros (Estonia)	2017	The rights of the child and ethnic minority families in Sweden	Views of child protection workers, parents and children along different dimensions including interpretation of engagement, approaches with families in the engagement process, collaboration and relationship, barriers and factors promoting engagement	Qualitative research	In-depth semi-structured interviews	Qualitative content analysis	11 child protection workers, 11 parents and 11 children (7–5 years; 6 boys & 5 girls)	Seven of the children were living with biological families and four of them were in foster care	18
Ellis (England & Wales)	2018	Contested vulnerability: A case study of girls in secure care	Young people's views about the intervention they received and its perceived effectiveness in reducing harmful behaviour	Ethnographic study	Participant observation, semi-structured interviews, case note analysis	Thematic analysis	All girls in the institution (15 girls) and 5 staff members	Secure care institution	17
Husby, Rik, and Juul (Norway)	2018	Children's encounters with professionals - recognition and respect collaboration	Identify successful social work practices and challenges in the context of collaboration in child services from children's perspectives and their experiences of recognition in the context of service collaboration.	Qualitative research	Semi-structured narrative interviews	Narrative analysis combining both thematic and structural analysis	10 children (9–17 years)	All children had been involved in collaborative processes with social workers and teachers, school counsellor, an educational psychologist, a	14

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2.4. Data extraction & analysis

The first author used an excel spreadsheet to document information pertaining to the following domains: bibliographic details, geographical location, research focus, research design, data-collection and analysis methods, sample, and study context (see Table 3).

For the purpose of synthesis, findings related to experiences of children with the CPS from the child's own perspective were extracted from each article. Target findings included both direct quotations of the children presented in the article as well as the primary researcher's interpretations of children's experiences. These two data sources were imported into NVivo for coding (Britten et al., 2002; Edlund, 2011).

The findings were first read and re-read in their entirety by the first author to obtain an initial and holistic overview of experiences (Lindseth & Norberg, 2004). The direct quotations and the interpretations were merged and a thematic analysis of all data as a single entity was conducted using three stages as proposed by Thomas and Harden (2008). The resulting text was initially coded and constructed into descriptive themes, which eventually generated analytical themes. Themes and sub-themes were discussed with the research team to explore the confirmability of the analysis and achieve critical interpretation and understanding of the experiences.

Although we tried to include only children's voices in this review, this was at times challenging. A few studies reported on interviews with both children and adult, and it was not always clear who was quoted; the child or the adult, which was the case, for example, in the studies of Johansson (2013) and that of Burnside and Fuchs (2013). However, as both studies included the children views – it was agreed across the research team to include them.

Of 39 articles reviewed, 36 were qualitative and three were mixed method studies (Table 3). Studies were conducted in the US (n = 3), Sweden (n = 3), UK (n = 15), Norway (n = 5), Japan (n = 2), Canada (n = 3), Serbia (n = 1), Portugal (n = 1), Finland (n = 1), Spain (n = 1), New Zealand (n = 1), Australia (n = 1), Netherlands (n = 1), and Estonia (n = 1). Twenty-two studies were of children living in out-of-home care, two studies had children living both in out-of-home care and at home, two studies were done with children living at home, while others did not provide a clear context. Overall, the CASP results showed that most of the included articles had good quality (scoring 15 points and above), with only a few lacking clarity in the type of methodology and analysis that was used, while a few did not clearly present the findings (see Table 3).

3. Results

3.1. Coming in contact with the Child Protection Services

3.1.1. The first point of contact

Children talked of friends and family usually being the first point of contact when seeking help. They disclosed abuse to peers, especially when they were afraid to ask adults. Family members were mostly helpful when the perpetrator was someone outside the family. However, when the perpetrator was an insider, children felt not believed or dissuaded to seek help (Pölkki et al., 2012; Jobe & Gorin, 2013). Teachers were usually the first professional to whom children disclosed abuse. Children reported mixed experiences of the teachers' responses: While some believed children and actively tried to help them, others were caught up in bureaucracy and lost view of the child (Bell, 2002; Jobe & Gorin, 2013; Fylkesnes et al., 2018).

3.1.2. Disclosure to CPS

Children described the first contact with CPS as particularly frightening (Bell, 2002). This occurred by either them reporting abuse and actively seeking help or the CPS contacting them. The later contact was sometimes considered unsolicited by children.

Children varied in their understandings of the reasons why CPS

contacted them if this was unsolicited. Most children were surprised and neither knew nor had a clear understanding why they were contacted, even in cases where their social worker from CPS tried to explain it to them (Woolfson et al., 2009; Larsen, 2011; Jobe & Gorin, 2013; Fylkesnes et al., 2018).

In general, children's greatest fear was being taken away from their home and family. They were confused, not knowing what was going to happen during the safeguarding process, with a limited understanding of the professional's 'role' (Van Bijleveld et al., 2014; Jobe & Gorin, 2013; Bell, 2002). In a few cases, the involvement of CPS was seen by children as a positive; an opportunity to share and receive help (Winter, 2010; Woolfson et al., 2009).

3.1.3. Going through the investigation process

Children described the investigation stage of CPS process stressful, describing feeling fearful, especially of being removed from the home, anxiety, confusion, and concern for family (Bell, 2002; Woolfson et al., 2009; Pölkki et al., 2012; Cossar, Brandon, & Jordan, 2016; Sanders et al., 2017). They reported feeling pressured by personal questions from the social worker, often a stranger to them, which felt invasive. This was especially the case when they were being treated as the sole source of evidence (Cossar et al., 2016). For example, a child described this as: "The lady who came asked me a lot of questions. She put me under pressure" (Bell, 2002: 5). Children talked about finding it hard to focus on and understand what was happening and the information provided to them, due to the emotional pressure (Woolfson et al., 2009; Buckley, Carr, & Whelan, 2011; Jobe & Gorin, 2013; Lindhal et al., 2017). Children reported a need for clear and understandable information during the investigation process with time to absorb this information. Well-informed children were more positive about the investigation even if they did not agree with the intervention (Woolfson et al., 2009; Jobe & Gorin, 2013; Van Bijleveld et al., 2014).

Children, during the investigative process, reported not being listened to, not being asked for their opinion, and that the adult's perspective was given priority over theirs. They also feared that social workers would not keep their information confidential (Bell, 2002; Woolfson et al., 2009; Pölkki et al., 2012; Jobe & Gorin, 2013; Cossar et al., 2016; Sanders et al., 2017; Fylkesnes et al., 2018; Lindahl and Bruhn, 2017). A child complained that: "No, it all felt like what ever I told them they would go and tell my mum..." (Jobe & Gorin, 2013: 435). Some children also reported social workers not following through after a disclosure, leaving the child frustrated or worse off (Woolfson et al., 2009; Sanders et al., 2017; Johansson, 2013; Fylkesnes et al., 2018).

In some cases, children felt surprised when social workers were not able to observe things that were right in front of them during the investigation. This meant that parents succeeded in creating a false picture of their situation at home (Pölkki et al., 2012). Sometimes children felt judged and disbelieved due to their appearance or circumstances. For example, a child commented that social workers did not believe that she was being abused at home, as she belonged to a white middle class family (Sanders et al., 2017). This highlights the vulnerable position of children in relation to the adults on whom they are dependent for information, participation and making appropriate assessment of their situation.

3.1.4. Conflicting emotions and self-blame

Children were hindered from seeking help for fear of being placed in care, concern for and loyalty towards family members (even if they were the abusers), or fear that the abuse might escalate (Jobe & Gorin, 2013). They reported generally not feeling safe enough to disclose abuse and lacking the self-esteem to report it. The most important factor for children when disclosing abuse was to have space to express themselves, feeling genuinely listened to and having time to develop trust with the person(s) (e.g., the social worker) from whom they were asking help (Jobe & Gorin, 2013).

Some children blamed themselves and felt responsible for CPS being

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involved in their lives, considering themselves as troublemakers or not having proper clothes to wear at school, etc. (Winter, 2010; Jones, 2015; Mitchell & Kuczynski, 2010). Even if children understood that their parents did not treat them well, they still loved them and wanted to take care of them (Mitchell & Kuczynski, 2010; Winter, 2010; Pölkki et al., 2012; Jones, 2015; Burgund and Zegarac, 2016; Sanders et al., 2017). For example, a child mentioned that: "They may have asked something but because my own mother was near me, I did not start explaining... yes, she always drinks. I only said that it was going well" (Pölkki et al., 2012: 118).

These findings highlight the emotional and psychological stress that children experience at the start of their contact with CPS, even when they were in clear need of these services. The following section shows children's subjective experiences of the interventions and services received from CPS.

3.2. Experiences of the CPS intervention or services

3.2.1. Being transferred to foster care

In case of removal from home, most of the children showed little to no understanding of the reasons for this. In some cases, they were taken by surprise and did not see the necessity for the intervention (Mitchell & Kuczynski, 2010; Pölkki et al., 2012; Burgund and Zegarac, 2016). However, knowing the reason for removal did not necessarily mean that children agreed with it (Mitchell & Kuczynski, 2010; Pölkki et al., 2012; Burgund and Zegarac, 2016; Jones, 2015; Sanders et al., 2017; Lindahl and Bruhn, 2017).

Removal from home left children distressed and shocked, and they could not remember what information they had been given by social workers at that point (Burgund and Zegarac, 2016): "They just came suddenly. The police came. Took me, my (siblings), then went away" (Fylkesnes et al., 2018: 345). While most children were notified by their social worker that they were going to be placed in foster care, a few mentioned receiving this information via a parent or even strangers, such as taxi drivers (Mitchell & Kuczynski, 2010; Pölkki et al., 2012; Jones, 2015; Burgund and Zegarac, 2016; Sanders et al., 2017). They often did not know what foster care meant and when they would return home. They reported fear, anxiety, sadness, anger and confusion (Mitchell & Kuczynski, 2010; Johannson, 2012; Burgund and Zegarac, 2016). Younger children felt kidnapped as nobody provided them with any information about placement in foster care (Mitchell & Kuczynski, 2010). They worried whether their basic needs (play, sleep, food, and companionship) would be met. They were traumatized by thoughts such as fearing pets in the foster home, fear that they or their siblings might get hurt or that they would never see their friends and family again (Mitchell & Kuczynski, 2010). One child told that "I was afraid that they might hit me or my little (siblings)... Like I didn't mind if they hurt me, but like my siblings, they are too important to get to me. So it was sort of scary for that" (Mitchell & Kuczynski, 2010: 441).

3.2.2. Feelings and attitudes towards institutional care

Children in institutional or residential care were usually older (13–18 years). Children stated that it was difficult to find foster homes for adolescents as people consider fostering them difficult (Hyde & Kammerer, 2009). Some children who had experienced foster care preferred residential care as they did not feel that they were invading someone else's space there and needed to make a new family. For example, one child commented: "Woah!... who are these people? I don't even know these people. I don't even know them and I'm moving in with them... Holy! Bring me somewhere else. I don't care where I'll have to go. I'll get locked up as long as I am not with just some family I don't know" (Mitchell & Kuczynski, 2010: 441) Some children considered their room to be their safe haven, even when there was chaos in the institution (Bamba & Haight, 2009; Moore, McArthur, Death, Tilbury, & Roche, 2017).

While it was children's own choice to be in an institution in most

cases, they had entered the institution not knowing enough to make an informed choice (Burgund and Zegarac, 2016). Children highlighted that they are not a homogenous group. Thus, they desired better planning when placing children together in a residential care, instead of randomly putting them together (Moore et al., 2017). They felt that residential care should not be an option for younger children due to peer-to-peer violence, bullying, sexual harassment, and lack of supervision from staff (Moore et al., 2017). Children who never understood the reason for their placement found it difficult to come to terms with these experiences (Van Bijleveld et al., 2014).

Children reported using difficult behaviour to negotiate their needs with professionals, as in their experience, staff did not prioritize 'good children' (Bell, 2002; Hyde & Kammerer, 2009; Ellis, 2015; Ellis, 2018). As one child explains: "I show them I'm being good and tell them and that I am being good, but they're not bothered. When I'm naughty they're always on the phone and always coming, but when I'm being good, they're never really bothered (Ellis, 2015: 1563). They discussed the short-term benefits of such behaviours, but that this behaviour was documented and had longer-term repercussions was not considered by them (Ellis, 2015; Husby et al., 2018).

3.2.3. Failed expectations, deceptions & disappointments

While some children were satisfied with their foster care and appreciated the quality of relationships with people in their foster homes, developing trustful relationships with foster parents and pets over time (Mitchell & Kuczynski, 2010; Johannson, 2012; Burgund and Zegarac, 2016; Fylkesnes et al., 2018), others found it hard to adapt to the rules and routines of the new home (Mitchell & Kuczynski, 2010; Rautkis, Fusco, Cahalane, Bennett, & Reinhart, 2011; Fylkesnes et al., 2018). It was especially confusing for children who moved to various foster homes, and who experienced different and contrasting norms and rules within each household (Mitchell & Kuczynski, 2010; Rautkis et al., 2011). For example, in some foster-homes children could stay out late, have mobile phones and have contact with family and friends, while other households had stricter rules (Rautkis et al., 2011).

Sometimes there were different expectations of foster care from children and adults, which left children confused and sad (Mitchell & Kuczynski, 2010). Children, especially young adolescents, felt mismatched with their foster family in some cases. A few of the factors that children attributed this to included: different religious beliefs and practices, limited tolerance of different sexual orientations, generational gaps, and lack of knowledge/skills on how to care for adolescents (Hyde & Kammerer, 2009; Rautkis et al., 2011; Fylkesnes et al., 2018). Children found it hard to disclose unfair treatment at a foster home, especially if they had to continue living there. A few who did report the mistreatment found themselves in a worse situation than before (Hyde & Kammerer, 2009).

Young people who expected to return home soon from institutional care, and who saw institutional care as a temporary intervention, felt deceived by professionals when that did not happen. This resulted in anger and frustration and desire for honesty from adults about the time they would spend in out-of-home care (Hyde & Kammerer, 2009; Magalhães et al., 2018). It was painful for children to realize they had false expectations (Hyde & Kammerer, 2009). Those who perceived themselves to be the reason for ending up in out-of-home care felt trapped and did not know what they could do to return home. They felt that information received from different staff members about what they needed to do to return home, and what happened in practice, to be contradictory. Inconsistencies and delays led to some children making poor decisions, such as running away or fighting (Hyde & Kammerer, 2009).

In addition, institutional care did not always live up to children's expectations of safety. They expected it to be less violent and abusive than their homes, but this was not always the case (Moore et al., 2017; Hyde & Kammerer, 2009). Some found institutional care worse, as they had to fight for survival, both with the staff and peers (Hyde &

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Kammerer, 2009). These situations made them to choose to run away to deal with their problems and get away from this unsafe environment (Ellis, 2015; Moore et al., 2017).

Children who considered CPS to be the worst experience of their life reported feeling misunderstood. They felt that their opinions had not influenced decision-making processes. Sometimes they felt interventions to be sporadic and that new referrals did not draw on information/plans from previous referral (Sanders et al., 2017).

3.2.4. Disrupted personal and social lives

Children asserted their need for an explanation for the reasons of their removal and what did it entail. The lack of information left them sad and stressed by the worry that they might not see their parents again (Mitchell & Kuczynski, 2010). Many children discussed how moving into out-of-home care resulted in feelings of isolation and loneliness due to displacement from family and friends (Mitchell & Kuczynski, 2010; Fylkesnes et al., 2018).

Being moved between placements or being sent back home abruptly, in general, took a toll on young people emotionally, physically, and psychologically (Mateos et al., 2017; Moore et al., 2017). Uncertainty about their future was a great source of anxiety and frustration. It entailed children losing their community, adjusting to new living situations, finding new schools, establishing relationships with new staff or new family members, peers etc. These difficulties increased when the changes were sudden, unpredictable, and without explanation. It made children believe that nothing they did matters, thus becoming emotionally distanced with each placement move (Mateos et al., 2017; Hyde & Kammerer, 2009). Children wanted to know about the changes that occur in their situation, as they needed to prepare for those changes, for example, saying good-byes, and getting used to the idea of moving to a new place (Hyde & Kammerer, 2009; Van Bijleveld et al., 2014). The lack of stability and permanence in their placement affected their relationships with social workers and peers.

3.3. Perceptions of outcomes of the intervention

3.3.1. Sense of gain

Some children considered removal from the home to be the best solution for them. This was especially the case when they were informed about the process i.e., about what and why something was happening, and had a trusting relationship with their social worker (Winter, 2010; Jones, 2015; Bell, 2002; Van Bijleveld et al., 2014). While most of the children found the initial process confusing and stressful, at the same time there were some who found the interventions helpful and appreciated when social workers believed and helped them (Woolfson et al., 2009; Jobe & Gorin, 2013; Johansson, 2013; Fylkesnes et al., 2018). Thus, children's dissatisfaction with the investigation process did not necessarily mean that they were disappointed with the outcomes (Woolfson et al., 2009; Johansson, 2013; Arbeiter & Toros, 2017).

Some children reported that things had improved for them as a result of CPS interventions: changes in their own behaviour, material gain, and improved parenting (Bell, 2002; Woolfson et al., 2009; Dunn, Culhane, & Taussig, 2010; Larsen, 2011). A child commented, "There was too much abuse in my home. I would not be where I am today had I stayed with my parents. I got a lot of help that I probably would have not gotten otherwise. The system allowed me to do much better than my cousins who have not even finished college. Besides the system is rich. My parents are poor" (Jones, 2015: 112). Even when children did not think that their situation had improved, they acknowledged CPS efforts. There was a general sense of gain. Children experienced positive life changes and felt that the intervention had made them a better person (Jones, 2015). It was important for them that their basic needs had been met (e.g., a safe place to stay, enough food, clean clothes) (McLeod, 2008; Winter, 2010; Jones, 2015). They valued having a regular household, a 'normal' family, and an overall good environment (McLeod, 2008; Sanders et al.,

2017). Survival was another gain mentioned by children; they felt safe in foster care and reflected that without it, they might have been killed, become pregnant, get sexually transmitted diseases, or suffered homelessness. They appreciated the safe, stable environment, as it provided freedom from abuse and time to recover psychologically from abuse (Jones, 2015; Winter, 2010). The relationships (e.g., with foster-family, pets, friends, professionals and community) developed as a result of CPS intervention were also vital (Jones, 2015; Fylkesnes et al., 2018; Sanders et al., 2017). It was helpful when they had the same people, whether foster parents or social workers, throughout the whole process of CPS (McLeod, 2007; Lindahl and Bruhn, 2017; Sanders et al., 2017).

Some children reported that institutional care gave them learning opportunities, space to plan a future and improved life conditions that they would not have had within their family (Magalhães et al., 2018). They stressed that the 'system is rich'; hence CPS was able to provide them with opportunities and experiences that their parents could not offer (McLeod, 2008; Jones, 2015:111). One such opportunity was to attend post-secondary education, which offered them a sense of optimism for the future (Bell, 2002; Woolfson et al., 2009; Dunn et al., 2010; Fylkesnes et al., 2018; Magalhães et al., 2018; Sanders et al., 2017; Bamba & Haight, 2007; Burgund and Zegarac, 2016; McLeod, 2008; Jones, 2015).

While some children welcomed opportunities to be a child again, to play, draw, and be in a drug free environment (Dunn et al., 2010; Ellis, 2018), others were resentful towards CPS and found the case closure to be the most helpful (Bell, 2002; Sanders et al., 2017).

3.3.2. Sense of loss

Children also felt a sense of loss because of CPS intervention. They were particularly unhappy with out-of-home care. Many missed their parents and siblings, and it made them sad thinking that they might never see them again. They reported a loss of the familiar and found it hard to adapt to new routines and ways of living. The foster home felt like a prison to some of them due to all the routines and regulations (Jones, 2015; Bell, 2002; Mitchell & Kuczynski, 2010; Dunn et al., 2010). One child commented, "I'm used to having siblings and stuff, so, I'll want to hang out with my friends and stuff because I'm the only kid there and it's really boring" (Mitchell & Kuczynski, 2010: 442).

Some children mentioned that they would have liked contact with their biological family, siblings, friends and community; however, they did not receive any support or advice for doing so. This entailed children feeling isolated, lonely and helpless (Burgund and Zegarac, 2016; Mitchell & Kuczynski, 2010). Similarly, discontinuity of social workers left children feeling deprived, forgotten and confused (Bell, 2002). They complained about people not keeping their promises/commitments, thus making them lose trust in people and authorities (Bell, 2002; Dunn et al., 2010). A child complained, "I told them I'd like to be off the care order. I think they said they'd try ...but I don't think they did try" (Bell, 2002: 4).

Children placed in out-of-home care from an early age had huge gaps in their life story (Pölkki et al., 2012). Those experiencing multiple foster homes and institutional care felt that they did not have a place to call home (Fylkesnes et al., 2018; Dunn et al., 2010). Children in institutional care felt that they had lost their childhood in comparison to peers in their home community who were living a normal life (going to school, hanging out with friends, sleepovers, dating, engaging in new experiences etc.). Lack of permanence and stability in children's life due to multiple placements, uncertainty about their future and social relations were some of the challenges that hindered them from having what they considered a normal life. Their circle of friends grew smaller as the years passed by, as did the number of trustworthy adults (Hyde & Kammerer, 2009). They lacked control of their lives, privacy and independence. Children complained that CPS were trying to turn them into someone they were not (Raukšis et al., 2011; Ellis, 2015; Dunn et al., 2010; Fylkesnes et al., 2018).

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3.4. Perceptions of self, social identity and stigmatisation

3.4.1. Negotiating 'vulnerability' and 'childhood'

Some institutionalized young people disliked being treated as 'children' by social workers. This was not only because of the activities they were expected to participate in, such as playing board games, but also because children generally have an unequal status in society. They felt that social workers treated them as incapable (Ellis, 2018; McLeod, 2008; Moore et al., 2017) and resented the different rules for adults and themselves. As one child complained "I think children are treated very much in this society, but particularly by Social Services, as incapable, the same way mentally ill or elderly people are treated" (McLeod, 2008: 777). They demanded equal respect and a right to have say in determining their own future (McLeod, 2008; Van Bijleveld et al., 2014; Bolin, 2016).

Children described themselves as good, strong, adaptable, and communicative. However, they did not think that other people perceived them in the same way (Burgund and Zegarac, 2016; Magalhães et al., 2018; Lindahl and Bruhn, 2017; Ellis, 2018). Furthermore, young people did not agree with the notion of 'vulnerability' ascribed to them and insisted that they could take care of themselves. Rather than seeing their life experiences as making them vulnerable, they focused on their image as strong, independent people who survived their experiences (Ellis, 2015, 2018). Children insisted that: "I can actually look after myself [...] I don't think I'm vulnerable" and "I know I ain't vulnerable [...] I know about me and nobody can tell me what I am" (Ellis, 2015: 161).

Nevertheless, some children felt vulnerable to exploitation, as they were not always able to distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate relationships, the latter often being formed as compensation for the attention, care and material resources they lacked when in institutional care and the absence of good adult role models (Moore et al., 2017; Rabley, Preyde, & Gharabaghi, 2014).

3.4.2. Seeking recognition

Most children in institutional care perceived themselves labelled as 'nothing' or 'bad' by adults. They had lived with that label for so long that they internalized it and sometimes acted it out, thus confirming adult opinion about them (Hyde & Kammerer, 2009). One child explained, "They drug tested me before and it came back negative, I never did anything, but she (caseworker) always just treated me as if I did something wrong... they assumed I was doing drugs... even if it comes out negative, you are still making them feel like you are assuming they are a bad kid" (Hyde & Kammerer, 2009: 270). However, children were worried about what other people think about them and were frustrated that their reputation followed them because of information recorded in their case files, which was shared across services. They felt that adults in their lives focus more on their negative than positive behaviours, which fed their negative self-perception (Ellis, 2015).

Moreover, children perceived themselves as a 'job', because social workers mostly treated them in a detached manner – just another person to help (Husby et al., 2018). It helped boost children's perception of themselves as equal and strengthened their well-being when they could help social workers or had someone to speak up for them (Bamba & Haight, 2009; Bell, 2002). Children believed that if adults focused on their positive behaviours that would develop their self-esteem (Hyde & Kammerer, 2009; McLeod, 2008; Husby et al., 2018; Ellis, 2015; Rabley et al., 2014; Pölkki et al., 2012; Burgund and Zegarac, 2016).

Consequently, children constructed the idea of a 'good' child and tried to behave accordingly. Being 'good' for them meant that one did not get in trouble or cause trouble, did not do drugs or drink, did not start fights and followed rules. They suppressed difficult emotions and did not show it to adults around them to up-keep their image of 'good child' (Ellis, 2015; Burgund and Zegarac, 2016). However, this did not always result in positive feelings. For example, children found it unfair that they were in secure settings with 'bad' kids, even though they

themselves were 'good'.

According to children, they were perceived as good, helpful, as a good friend, and strong by people who knew them (Burgund and Zegarac, 2016). Nevertheless, they also mentioned that sometimes they were tired of being strong and just wanted to feel happy (Mateos et al., 2017).

3.4.3. Feeling of stigma

Children felt stigma and shame due to their association with CPS and believed that, because they are in the system or in care, people looked at them as troublemakers or vulnerable – at risk of potential harm and in need of being looked-after (McLeod, 2008; Buckley et al., 2011; Ellis, 2015). For them, CPS is associated with lower status and with being on the margins of society (Buckley et al., 2011). A few children reported that professionals disrespected them and their families (e.g., name-calling) (Magalhães et al., 2018). In addition, they felt that professionals used language as a tool of power, which made them feel even more vulnerable as they could not understand the information provided to them about their case or fully participate in meetings (Bolin, 2016; Magalhães et al., 2018).

Children's perceptions of negative social image/stigma associated with being in institutional care resulted in emotional difficulties. Children expressed that "... Because we are in the system, why should we feel like we are not normal? We have all these restrictions and stuff. ... like it makes us feel as though we have foster care stamped on our head..." (Rauktis et al., 2011: 1229). Some considered it being their 'biggest secret' and concealed their residential placement from their peers. Their self-esteem was even lower if they were bullied (Magalhães et al., 2018; Bamba & Haight, 2009; Rauktis et al., 2011). However, it helped when they felt understood by teachers and accepted by other children in school (Burgund and Zegarac, 2016).

4. Discussion

This paper synthesized current documentation of children's lived experience of CPS, following the introduction of the UNCRC in 1990. The literature demonstrates an increasing acknowledgment of children as knowledgeable agents (James, Jenks, & Prout, 1998) as this research field has developed over the past three decades.

Children and young people expressed emotional and psychosocial impacts of being involved with CPS on their lives while highlighting their struggle with conflicting emotions and loyalty towards their parents, failed expectations and feeling deceived by the services, isolation, uncertainty about future due to lack of stability and permanence and desire for recognition. They constantly seek ways to survive, which might result in them using bad behaviour to achieve ends or living up to their construct of 'good child' and not showing their emotions at all or running away from the situation. The material resources and educational opportunities provided by CPS were also important in ensuring their positive self-esteem and better future.

In this meta-synthesis, children found the initial contact with CPS and investigation process to be the most stressful and frightening experience. This psychological and emotional stress, as well as lack of information and mistrust on the social workers, hinders children to make full disclosure to CPS. In Ungar, Tutty, McConnell, Barter, and Fairholm (2009) study, disclosure of abuse is described as a pattern from less direct disclosure (e.g., talking with peers, family etc.) to those mandated to intervene (e.g., teachers, CPS etc.). While children in this review somewhat follow this pattern, however, none of them reported any benefit from the non-direct disclosure. Children's disclosure of abuse and neglect is crucial if public services are to provide them support and protection, especially when there are no third-party witnesses (Linell, 2017). This highlights the need for training professionals as teachers, and peers in recognizing signs of indirect disclosure so that they can help children in need. While CPS need to understand that children need emotional and psychological safety in addition to the

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physical safety to make a disclosure.

The findings highlight the importance of children's right to information and participation in decision-making process in CPS. The sentiments of children and young people towards CPS intervention and services varied at different phases. Children who were removed from home at a young age did not remember much about their life and felt a hole, while others felt trapped and kidnapped. This happened especially in cases where children were not well informed about what is happening and the reason behind it. While those who received information from CPS were more acceptable and satisfied by its intervention. The UNCR promotes child-centered, participatory social work practice (Alderson, 2000). However, actual children's participation is often ambiguous due to lack of clear guidelines and different perspectives of social workers on what 'listening to a child' entails in CPS (Van Bijleveld et al., 2014; McLeod, 2007). Studies with social workers show that they find children's participation in decision making challenging due to perceived communication difficulties or unnecessary and even inappropriate because it might be harmful for the children (Vis, Holtan, & Thomas, 2012). This suggests that even though there is a shift in CPS policies towards child rights discourse, in practice the protectionist discourse is still dominant. CPS, in practice, must treat children as service users with rights, providing them with complete and understandable information. This would support children's meaningful participation in the CPS process as well as decrease their stress and improve their self-esteem (Schofield & Beek, 2005; Gilligan, 2000).

Our results revealed that children expected the out-of-home care to be better and safer than home, however, that was not always the case. The social environment in out-of-home care, especially institutions compromised children's safety through violence, bullying, stealing, etc. These concerns are echoed elsewhere by former youth in out-of-home care (Freundlich, Avery, Gerstenzang, & Munson, 2006). This environment is considered a risk factor for child development and has an adverse impact on their emotional, physical and psychological well-being (Mazzone, Nocentini, & Menesini, 2018). This emphasizes the importance of timely follow-up for children, both during and after the CPS intervention (Davidson-Arad & Kaznelson, 2010). This can be achieved by actively involving citizens and community groups in CPS (Jones, Litzfeldner, & Ford, 2003). An example of this are Citizen Review Panels (CRP) in the USA. While research shows some benefits of CRP, for example, more stability in children's foster placements and adoption, there is a need for improved sharing of information and collaboration between CRP and CPS (Bryan, Jones, & Lawson, 2010). In addition, CRP members would benefit from specific trainings about policies, practice and ongoing challenges faced by CPS to work effectively (Jones, 2004; Miller & Vaughn, 2018).

Nevertheless, children appreciate the material support provided by CPS; as children from low income households are more likely to end up in CPS (Featherstone, White, & Morris, 2014). Children describe the 'system as rich' and that there was more material support for them in foster or residential care than there had been at home. However, at the same time, they suffer from a sense of loss as well; loss of family and friends, lack of social relations due to instability and loss of privacy and independence. A study by Braxton and Krajewski-Jaime (2011) criticized CPS for focusing too heavily on the deficiency needs of safety and permanency, and not enough on 'being needs'. This highlights the need for CPS to focus on children's 'being needs', such as love and belongingness, self-esteem, and self-actualization, in addition to fulfilling their 'basic needs', i.e., food, shelter, safety, etc. (Maslow, 1943). Thus, challenging CPS to think beyond the conventional rights of provision, protection and participation to include other rights that relate to a wider definition of well-being. Children's right to develop and to reach their full potential is a complex process, which cannot be reduced to three Ps – provision, protection, and participation (UN, 1989).

Children and young people in CPS are often seen by adults around them as 'problematic', 'vulnerable' and are 'stigmatised' due to their CPS status. Internalisation of stigma can result in feeling of guilt and

shame (Goffman, 1963), which has long-term consequences such as negative emotional, psychological, behavioural and educational outcomes (Kang & Inzlicht, 2012). Children in care want to be seen as 'normal' (Martin & Jackson, 2002) and are concerned about what other people think of them and their family situation (Dansey, Shbero, & John, 2019). They wish to be seen as resilient, strong and treated with respect. Their desire for acknowledgement adheres to Honneth's theory of recognition, which postulates that recognition is a fundamental element in human interaction and for individual identity (Honneth, 1995). He considered all three forms of recognitions (love, rights and solidarity) to be foundations for development of one's self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem, respectively. Thus, all needs for recognition (love, rights and solidarity) must be satisfied for an individual to develop a positive relation to oneself successfully. This entails CPS providing supportive adults for children, who would take interest in their lives and invest time; treat children as right-bearing individuals and recognize their strengths and talents when working with them.

This review highlighted that children have varied experiences of the CPS and that they are a heterogeneous group; each child and her or his context should be considered individually. It also presented an overview of children's perspectives described in the literature but bearing in mind the heterogeneity of these views there is a need for future research to explore the perspectives of particular population groups, children with special needs, gender, national, socio economic and ethnic differences, for example. Furthermore, research on children's emotional experiences of being with CPS is needed. Although only a few children talked about culture and importance of their cultural and ethnic roots, it would be a useful topic to explore, especially within the present context of increased migration due to globalization. The reviewed studies also show that there is a dearth of comparative, cross-cultural and longitudinal research that can shed light on how children who come of age in CPS from different 'welfare regimes' fare in their lives.

4.1. Strengths and limitations

This review brings out the voice of children in research by encapsulating their subjective experiences and perceptions of CPS, highlighting their emotional, psychological and social struggles to receive help and the importance of treating children as right bearing individuals whose 'being' needs are as important as their 'basic' needs. By using a broader and non-categorical question (such as experience of participation in CPS, etc.), this meta-synthesis was able to contribute useful insights for practice and further research.

The limitations of this review are that relevant qualitative studies may have been left out due to unclear titles or abstracts, issues with indexing, and the inclusion of English language studies only. Also, even though CPS provides a wide range of the services, most of the studies (about 77%) included in this review focused on children in out-of-home care, which may have caused a biased perspective.

5. Conclusion

This review explored and synthesized 39 qualitative articles regarding the experience of children with CPS. This has shown that although research capturing the child's experiences is growing, it remains small. Even though children reported varied experiences of CPS processes, however everyone finds initial contact and investigation particularly stressful. Children demand more and understandable information about CPS process and transparency in decision-making. Timely follow-up of CPS interventions is crucial to ensure the latter.

Overall, the review suggests that CPS have a strong focus on children's right to provision, which can obscure their other rights, such as the right to clear and understandable information, to participate and to be protected. Children's right to protection entails more than physical safety; it encompasses their emotional and psychological safety, and overall well-being. Lastly, children feel that there is a stigma attached

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to being involved in CPS, which negatively affects their self-perception and self-esteem.

This highlights that children need emotional support and a safe space for disclosure at this stage instead of bureaucratic investigation. Information about CPS and its work should be made readily available for children to facilitate easy access to the services when needed. Children's right to information is important, as is their participation. Information provided to them should be detailed, clear, and understandable. Children must be given respect as CPS users who can provide useful insights regarding their situation and recommend suitable interventions for them. Lastly, interventions must be tailored to the child's needs.

Declaration of Competing Interest

None of the authors have any conflict of interest.

Appendix A. Supplementary material

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chi.2020.104974>.

Prospero registration: CRD42019125110. Registered 19th March 2019.

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Appendix 2 – Paper 2

This paper is under review, and not yet available

Appendix 3 – Paper 3

This paper is under review, and not yet available

Appendix 4 – NSD approval



Samita Wilson
Kjell Arholms hus
4036 STAVANGER

Vår dato: 21.12.2017

Vår ref: 57527 / 3 / LAR

Deres dato:

Deres ref:

Tilråding fra NSD Personvernombudet for forskning § 7-27

Personvernombudet for forskning viser til meldeskjema mottatt 01.12.2017 for prosjektet:

57527

The right to be heard: Lived experiences of children from minority background with Child Welfare Services in Norway

Behandlingsansvarlig

Universitetet i Stavanger, ved institusjonens øverste leder

Daglig ansvarlig

Samita Wilson

Vurdering

Etter gjennomgang av opplysningene i meldeskjemaet og øvrig dokumentasjon finner vi at prosjektet er unntatt konsekvensplikt og at personopplysningene som blir samlet inn i dette prosjektet er regulert av § 7-27 i personopplysningsforskriften. På den neste siden er vår vurdering av prosjektopplegget slik det er meldt til oss. Du kan nå gå i gang med å behandle personopplysninger.

Vilkår for vår anbefaling

Vår anbefaling forutsetter at du gjennomfører prosjektet i tråd med:

- opplysningene gitt i meldeskjemaet og øvrig dokumentasjon
- vår prosjektvurdering, se side 2
- eventuell korrespondanse med oss

Meld fra hvis du gjør vesentlige endringer i prosjektet

Dersom prosjektet endrer seg, kan det være nødvendig å sende inn endringsmelding. På våre nettsider finner du svar på hvilke [endringer](#) du må melde, samt endringskjema.

Opplysninger om prosjektet blir lagt ut på våre nettsider og i Meldingsarkivet

Vi har lagt ut opplysninger om prosjektet på nettsidene våre. Alle våre institusjoner har også tilgang til egne prosjekter i [Meldingsarkivet](#).

Vi tar kontakt om status for behandling av personopplysninger ved prosjektslutt

Ved prosjektslutt 31.07.2021 vil vi ta kontakt for å avklare status for behandlingen av personopplysninger.

Se våre nettsider eller ta kontakt dersom du har spørsmål. Vi ønsker lykke til med prosjektet!

Dokumentet er elektronisk produsert og godkjent ved NSDs rutiner for elektronisk godkjenning.

Appendices

Vennlig hilsen

Marianne Høgetveit Myhren

Lasse André Raa

Kontaktperson: Lasse André Raa tlf: 55 58 20 59 / Lasse.Raa@nsd.no

Vedlegg: Prosjektvurdering

Personvernombudet for forskning



Prosjektvurdering - Kommentar

Prosjektnr: 57527

PURPOSE

This study aims to research the experiences of children with minority background during their time with CWS' services and care. The specific research questions are:

1. How do these children reflect upon their time with CWS?
2. How do these children understand their CWS case, social work (barnevern) and caseworkers?
3. How do these children perceive the notion of protection?

PROJECT PERIOD

The Data Protection Official understands, based on the letter of information, that personal data will be anonymised by July 2021. Based on this, we have changed the project end date to July 31, 2021, as opposed to December 31, 2018 as indicated in the notification form.

RECRUITMENT

The Data Protection Official presupposes that the recruitment process is done in a way that fulfils the requirements of voluntarily participation and confidentiality. Please note that sensitive information is implied in the selection criteria. This means that the researcher cannot get access to contact information or other personal data for informants before they have consented to this.

INFORMATION AND CONSENT

According to the notification form, the sample will receive written and oral information and give their consent to participate. Based on an evaluation of the project's nature and scope, the Data Protection Official considers that informants aged 16 or older may consent to participation themselves.

Referring to email correspondence with the researcher on December 19, 2017, the Data Protection Official understands that the inclusion of children under 16 is vital for the project's scientific purpose. The choice of the age group 13–19 is based on an evaluation of ethical issues, including the balance between children's right to protection and their right to participation.

For informants under 16, consent from parents/guardians will also be gathered. Please note that consent must be gathered from the person(s) with parental responsibility. As a main rule, this responsibility legally lies with the biological parents, even if the child is not in their care.

The Data Protection Official notes that the informants may be vulnerable, and that consent gathered from a guardian may cause uncertainty with regards to voluntary participation. It must be considered in each case whether the principles of voluntary participation and informed consent are fulfilled. As the researcher cannot get access to personal data before consent has been gathered, a large part of this responsibility will necessarily

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rest on the recruiters/gate-keepers.

The information letter we have received is mainly well formulated. However, we ask that contact information for the researcher is added.

CHILDREN IN RESEARCH

We remind you that children themselves must consent to participate, even if their parents/guardians have given their consent. Children should receive age-appropriate information about the project, and you must ensure that children understand that participation is voluntary and that they can withdraw at any time if they wish to do so.

VULNERABLE GROUPS

Researchers have a special responsibility to protect the interests of the informants when doing research on vulnerable groups. The burden on the informants must be weighed up against the social and scientific benefits of the study. The Data Protection Official recommends that you consider the necessity of having a plan for follow-up of the informants.

SENSITIVE INFORMATION

It is indicated that you intend to process sensitive personal data regarding health, ethnic origin and/or political/philosophical/religious beliefs. This means that the researcher must be even more careful with regards to use of the data, both when it comes to ethical issues, data collection and information security during the project.

INFORMATION REGARDING THIRD PERSONS

The Data Protection Official understands that you intend to register personal data about third persons, i.e. caseworkers. As a rule, all individuals about whom personal data are collected should be informed about the project. We recommend that the informants are encouraged prior to the interviews to refer to other persons in a way that does not make them identifiable.

If identifiable information regarding third persons is registered, it must be necessary for the scientific purpose of the project; it must be reduced to a minimum and not be sensitive, and it must be made anonymous in the publication. As long as the disadvantage for third persons is reduced in this way, the project leader can be exempted from the duty to inform third persons.

PUBLISHING PERSONAL INFORMATION

You have indicated in your notification form that personal data (indirectly identifiable) will be published. Based on the documents accompanying your project the Data Protection Official cannot see that this is the case, and presupposes therefore that personal data will not be published.

DATA SECURITY

The Data Protection Official presupposes that you will process all data according to the University of Stavanger internal guidelines/routines for information security.

PROJECT END

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The estimated end date of the project is 31.07.2021. According to your notification form/information letter you intend to anonymise the collected data by this date.

Making the data anonymous entails processing it in such a way that no individuals can be identified. This is done by:

- deleting all direct personal data (such as names/lists of reference numbers)
- deleting/rewriting indirectly identifiable personal data (i.e. an identifying combination of background variables, such as residence/work place, age and gender)
- deleting digital audio

Appendix 5 – Invitation letter for children

Er du 13-19 år gammel? Vi trenger din hjelp!

Hei. Jeg er PhD stipendiat ved Universitet i Stavanger. Vi ønsker å invitere deg til å delta i et forskningsprosjekt med mål om å kartlegge erfaringene med barnevernet hos unge mennesker med Pakistansk bakgrunn.

Før du bestemmer deg om du ønsker å delta i prosjektet så er det viktig at du forstår *hvorfor* det blir gjennomført og *hva* din deltagelse vil medføre.

Det er bare å spørre om det er noe du skulle lure på eller har problemer med å forstå.

Hvorfor utfører vi denne studien?

Barn og unge mennesker er i sentrum for barnevernets tjenester. Derfor er det viktig å vite hva deres erfaringer med tjenestene som blir tilbudt er. Dette vil hjelpe oss å gi anbefalinger til barnevernet om hvordan de kan forbedre tjenestene de tilbyr barn. Dessuten har barn og unge rett til å bli hørt i saker som angår dem.

Hvem er invitert til å delta?

Du kan være en del av denne studien hvis du er mellom 13-19 år gammel, med Pakistansk bakgrunn og mottar eller har mottatt tjenester fra barnevernet i de siste 18 månedene. Vi håper at så mange som 14-15 unge mennesker deltar.

Hva vil din deltagelse innebære?

Deltagelse i denne studien er frivillig. Du vil bli intervjuet 1-2 ganger, hvor du kan fortelle om dine erfaringer med barnevernet. Intervjuene kan bli utført på Norsk, Engelsk eller Urdu, basert på hva du foretrekker. Hvert intervju vil vare omtrentlig 30-45 minutter, men det er fullt mulig å prate lenger hvis du ønsker det.

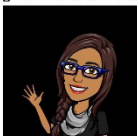
Deltagelse er ikke bindende; du står fritt til å forlate studien når som helst om du så skulle ønske. Du vil ikke måtte oppgi noen grunn for dette. All informasjon om deltagere og intervjuene vil være konfidensiell og anonym. Kun forskeren og veiledere ved universitet vil ha adgang til informasjonen og den vil kun bli brukt i denne studien.

Studien har blitt godkjent av Norsk senter for Forskningsdata (NSD). De sørger for at det er trygt for barn og unge å delta i forskningen. Jeg kommer selv fra Pakistan og har bodd i Norge de siste sju årene. Jeg snakker norsk, engelsk, urdu og punjabi. Jeg har en bred erfaring med å jobbe med barn og ungdom fra ulike bakgrunner og kulturer, og er utdannet til å drive etisk forskning med barn.

Vi vil ta kontakt med dine foreldre eller verger for en formell godkjenning om du er 13-15 år og vil være del av denne studien.

Hvis du ønsker å delta og / eller ønsker mer informasjon så kan du kontakte meg eller saksbehandleren din. De vil isåfall gi meg kontaktinformasjonen. Da tar jeg kontakt med deg.

Jeg ser frem til å møte deg!



Samita Wilson

Mobilnummer: [REDACTED]

Appendix 6 – Interview guide

Interview guide

Introduction: I am a PhD student with the Stavanger University. I am interested in knowing what it is like for children to be receiving services from Barnevern. I am not a part of barnevern. Any information that you will give me will remain confidential and anonymous. I might use it in my thesis but that will be made anonymous (nobody would know your name, where you live etc.).

1. Background information: Tell me about yourself? (*Prompts: age, family, hobbies etc.*)
2. I am interested in knowing about how children's experiences with 'barnevern' (CPS). Can you tell me about your experience of being in contact with *barnevern*? Or How is it for you to be with *barnevern*?

Prompts: How long have you been in contact with CPS? Tell me about your life during this period? Can you tell me about your relationship with your caseworker? Your family?

3. What does protection mean for you?

Prompts: Can you tell me a time/experience when you felt protected? Can you given me an example/experience when you did not feel protected?