

Maintaining Balance in the New Culture: Stories of Immigrant Female Youth and Mothers

Ö. Hacifazlioglu¹ and M. Öztabak²

Istanbul Kültür University, Faculty of Education, Istanbul, Turkey
E-mail: ¹<o.hacifazlioglu@iku.edu.tr>, ²<m.oztabak@iku.edu.tr>

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ABSTRACT The purpose of this study is to investigate immigrant, female, high school students' and their mothers' stories of "balance" during their first year in the new culture. In line with this purpose, 15 narrative stories were collected from the female students and mothers. Therefore, this study focuses on female voices of balance in the transition phase to a new culture. The themes that emerged were "Maintaining balance in social life: Shifting from conflicting/segmentational balance to instrumental balance", "Maintaining balance between school and family: Shifting from conflicting balance to compensational balance", and "Maintaining balance between work and family: Shifting from compensating to instrumental balance". This research is supported by the Turkish Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TUBITAK) as a part of the project entitled, "Role Immigration on Student Engagement: Influence of Social, Cultural, Psychological Factors and Social Capital".

INTRODUCTION

Turkey has been influenced by the winds of immigration especially in the last decade. Global crisis and the impact of immigration have been felt in various parts of Turkey especially in Istanbul, which is the most cosmopolitan and largest city. Foreign students and their parents became the stakeholders of the educational system as a result of this mobility. This study aims to illuminate the understanding of intersectionality of immigration and gender on the basis of work and family balance among females and provide recommendations for school administrators.

Balance is a relative term, since the way it is defined and experienced varies from one individual to another. Studies have shown that maintaining harmonious integrity in a person's life is a subjective, complicated and continuous process (Ashforth 2000; Keene et al. 2004). Bailyn et al. (1997) asserts that balance is a synergistic relationship in which different components of life complement others (cited in Hacifazlioglu 2010). Scholarship on work-family balance revealed that both, women from low income and middle income settings and women with professional lives feel stressed and overwhelmed in dealing with work-family balance regardless of their social class (Weight and Solomon 2008).

Pescatello (1973) suggested the idea of Marianismo to appreciate women's value to support her family. Tiano (1997) noted that Marianismo

glorifies motherhood and teaches "women to be self-sacrificing guardians of the family and foster a gender division of labor in which men perform public productive functions and women reproductive, private ones" (Twombly 1998: 373). Brock (2008) asserts that woman-to-woman relationships are a powerful force in women's lives. After a woman marries and faces challenges, she seeks the help of another woman friend or relative to gain another perspective. Hacifazlioglu (2010) mentioned in her study that academic leaders get support from their mothers or women relatives in their academic careers whereas American women receive support from their husbands and male partners within the house rather than their parents. Traditional cultures appear to continue this woman-to-woman support mechanism in women's lives whether they have a higher or a lower professional role. Brock (2008) illustrates the changing role of woman since 1970s, and emphasizes the multiple roles a woman is supposed to play in the modern world with the following words: "*Today's successful women are expected to attain advanced degrees and powerful positions, and at the same time look gorgeous, be perfect wives, have perfect homes, raise perfect children, and be devoted caretakers for aging parents*" (p. 214). Higher education leadership literature reveals stories of women leaders in higher administrative positions and the initial challenges women face as women and leaders, as well as mothers and spouses in their homes (Hornig 1980; Astin and Leland 1991; Hensel

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1991; Crowley 1994; Diroce 1995; Finkel et al. 1994; Chliwniak 1997; Gmelch 2000; Brown 2001; Nidiffer 2001; Turner 2007). This expectation also refers to women coming from low socio-economic status.

Aisenberg and Harrington (1988) propose “marriage plot” and “adventure plot” as the two plots for academic women. These plots may also align with the experiences of working class and disadvantaged women. The marriage plot presents a woman’s role as someone who is to marry and take care of her family, whereas the adventure plot presents a woman’s role as the service provider for the community as well as her own professional career path. In dealing with these challenges and trying to move “in between the two plots”, women constantly search for an ideal balance, which seems to be impossible to find.

Most of the scholarship is based on investigating the lives of women in two extreme cases, either “advantaged or disadvantaged”. In line with this argument, Shulman (2005) criticizes the working conditions of low wage workers for working in irregular and inhumane working schedules with low wages in addition to having limited or no family supportive policies. Challenges women face could be diverse and more intense when the factor of immigration is considered. Deriving from this assumption, this study focused on the lived experiences of immigrant female mothers and their daughters from the basis of balance with the assumption that mothers have critical roles in their children’s lives.

There has been scarcity of empirical evidence as well as qualitative data to reveal the influence of mothers on their daughters from the basis of balance. This study focuses on stories of balance through an in depth analysis of female high school students’ and their mothers’ stories of “balance” during their first year in the new culture. Therefore, this study is unique in a way, because it incorporates the experiences of balance from the basis of gender and immigration.

This study is based on Guest’s (2002) four models of balance. In the segmentational model of balance, there is no relation between work and other areas of an individual’s life, in compensational model an individual uses one sphere to make up for what is lacking in other spheres, whereas in the conflict model, personal and professional spheres conflict with each other in an antagonistic way. In the model of instrumentality, one sphere

facilitates the other’s success (cited in Hacifazlioglu 2010). The ways in which immigrant female youth and mothers experience “balance” in their lives could be influenced by their personality, family background and their previous socio-cultural and educational experiences. This paper presents the findings of a qualitative study conducted with 15 female students, and their mothers. It begins with the core literature on work-life balance. The researchers then interpret the stories of female participants through the prism of four types of balance: “segmentational, compensational, instrumental and conflictual”. This is a unique study that provides a snapshot of immigrant female youth and their mothers from the basis of balance.

Weight and Solomon (2008) assert that there has been limited exploration of the distinct ways in which social class organizes the experiences of individuals in terms of managing family and work demands in the United States of America. Most research on work-family investigates issues either from the samples of professional employees, faculty members or working class families (London et al. 2004; Perry-Jenkins and Gillman 2000; Tausig and Fenwick 2001; Shulman 2005; Hill et al. 2001; Shirley and Wallace 2004).

The issue of immigration has been on the agenda of countries such as United States. Latino families and Latino youth have been the concern for scholars working in the fields of education and women studies. Since 1991, the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS) has shown that “the rates of suicide ideation, planning and attempts by adolescent Latinas are higher than those of adolescents of other ethnic and racial groups” (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2010). Zayas (2011) found that “higher adolescent Hispanic cultural involvement was associated with greater mother-daughter mutuality and thus led to reduction in the likelihood of suicide attempts” (p.1). In parallel with this finding, Coatsworth et al. (2000) asserts that “low levels of family support and high levels of family conflict” are associated with more internalizing behaviors towards giving individual harm in their study on Latino adolescents. Njue and Retish (2010) assert that although there are common factors related to the school experiences of immigrant students, there are also unique experiences influenced by factors local to the school and immigrant community. “*Such factors as*

community cultural beliefs about schooling, family socioeconomic status, time constraints, and so on make for a unique experience" (348). Ellis et al. (2015) investigated underlying reasons that may lead to suicide among immigrant females and males in the United States. There is the need to examine immigrant students both from an individualistic perspective and from a family and community perspective. Transition to a new culture and overcoming the challenges that come along is also shaped by the experiences students have within the family setting.

Scholarship of family studies revealed results in line with these problems. Pyke (2004) underlines the importance of "familism to refer to a strong commitment and obligation to family over the individual" (p.255). In traditional families, females are expected to live with their husband's family as well as to serve them. This picture is projected in the lives of women in many traditional cultures. In cases of immigrant families, conflicts could be experienced between a woman and her husband as well as a woman and her in-laws. However, the intensity of conflicts could be more intense for daughters since they "tend to acculturate faster than their parents, which can even lead to greater generation gaps" (Kibria 1993; Pyke 2004). In cases where both man and woman work, conflicting opinions might occur regarding the domestic tasks within the house, parenting responsibilities and financial management. In such an unclear family setting, the meaning of "immigration and balance" is redefined.

In the above-mentioned studies, problems encountered by women were investigated from the lenses of either economic indicators or psychological factors. The common theme in all these studies is that immigrant families struggle with a myriad of economic, social and cultural difficulties in their new landscapes. Challenges could be experienced more in the later lives of women especially after marriage and taking the responsibility of being a mother. There have been several studies emphasizing barriers encountered by women however there has been limited number of studies concerning the stories of immigrant female students and their mothers in ways of dealing with the challenges in the new culture. The purpose of this study is to investigate immigrant female high school students' and their mothers' stories of "balance" during their first year in the new culture. This study draws on Guest's (2002) work-life approach to the notion of balance, which developed four models of balance,

namely, "segmentational, compensational, instrumental and conflictual".

As could be seen in the related scholarship in male dominated societies, females appear to be more disadvantaged. Therefore, in an immigrant population female students and their mothers are assumed to be disadvantaged when compared to their male counterparts. It is from this assumption therefore, that the focus of this paper is derived.

Purpose of the Study

This study seeks to collect the stories of female students and their mothers in terms of maintaining balance. Using lived experiences it attempts to examine the influence of the various types of balance used by the participants and its impact on their school engagement as well as family dynamics. The study does not aim at making generalizations, instead it provides snapshots of immigrant female students' and their mothers' unique experiences with the aim of channeling those experiences to school administration.

METHODOLOGY

This study focuses on female voices of balance in the transitional phase to a new culture. The research employed a qualitative research design, whereby female voices are heard throughout while seeking to draw out such voices because, as Seidman (1998) notes, when participants are encouraged to tell their stories, they talk about their experiences in an illuminating and memorable way. Lindlof and Taylor (2002) emphasize the fact that adequately understanding the complex lived experience of humans is one of the defining goals of qualitative research. Researchers interview five mothers and 10 daughters for this exploratory study. Although they had the objective stance, there happened to be times, when the researchers found themselves asking specific questions to participants to clarify some unclear responses. There were other times a participant asked a question, which led to another series of questions that the researchers had never thought of asking. Their experiences as researchers helped them channel these conversations in a way that more vivid stories could be heard. The procedures used to collect and analyze the data were put in place to address the issues of bias and validity. In order to minimize the researchers' bias, they allowed participants to review their own interview transcripts,

as was suggested in Yildirim and Simsek (2008). Interviews were conducted at school offices, where they appeared to feel more comfortable and confident. These offices were allocated by the school administration.

Participants

In line with the purpose of the study, 15 narrative stories were collected from the female students and their mothers. These students and their mothers were first generation immigrants, who moved to Istanbul from other countries. The researchers had stories from 10 female students: 1 from Russia, 1 from Azerbaijan, 1 from Syria, 1 from Turkmenistan, 1 from Afghanistan and 3 from Germany and 2 from Belgium. They also had stories from 5 mothers: 1 from Afghanistan, 1 from Turkmenistan, 1 from Russia, 1 from Azerbaijan and 1 from Germany, respectively.

Data Collection

The researchers followed all the ethical and legal procedures when sending the invitation letters. Invitation letters were sent to foreign immigrant female students and their mothers through the school administration. Participants were sent invitation letters asking them for their voluntary participation. To interview participants, researchers contacted them through the school's counseling and guidance services. The researchers reassured the participants that their identities would remain confidential. No real names were listed on any documents or data related to this research unless permission was given by the participant. Pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of the participants. A total of 15 females participated in the study. The experiences and reflections of participants were collected during the face-to-face interviews. After giving a brief explanation about the concept and types of balance the researchers hope to achieve, participants were asked the following questions during the interviews:

- ♦ How do you maintain balance between your home and the school?
- ♦ Can you allocate time for your professional development as well as other social activities? What sorts of things do you do when you are with your family/friends?
- ♦ What is your relationship like with your in-laws? (If living with...) Have you and your husband ever thought of living apart from your in-laws?

- ♦ Which types of balance do you find yourself using? (Researchers asked additional question to determine the types of balance used by the participants)
- ♦ What sorts of strategies do you seek in improving balance? (Researchers asked additional questions such as sports, social, and cultural activities)
- ♦ If you could change anything that you wanted about your life, what would you change?

Data Analysis

All the interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Participants were allowed to review their own interview transcripts (Yildirim and Simsek 2008), so that researchers can avoid the researcher bias. Analysis of the interviews was divided into five phases suggested by Marshall and Rossman (1999), the data was first organized, then themes were identified, the emergence hypothesis against the data was tested as well as searching for alternative explanations related with the data. Selected anecdotes and quotations were used to illustrate the lived experiences of the students and mothers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The themes that emerged included the following. The first theme is "Maintaining balance in social life: Shifting from conflicting/segmentational balance to instrumental balance", the second theme is "Maintaining balance between family and school: Shifting from conflicting balance to compensational balance", and the third theme is "Maintaining balance between work and family: Shifting from compensating to instrumental balance".

Table 1: Immigrant daughters' and mother' themes of balance

<i>Themes and sub-themes</i>
Theme 1. Maintaining balance in social life: shifting from conflicting/segmentational balance to instrumental balance.
Theme 2. Maintaining balance between school and family: shifting from conflicting balance to compensational balance.
Theme 3. Maintaining balance between work and family: shifting from compensating to instrumental balance.

As can be seen in Table 1, the theme of "maintaining balance in social life: shifting from conflicting/segmentational balance to instrumental

balance” showed that some of the female students experienced difficulties in establishing effective communication channels with their peers, teachers and administrators. This is especially the case for domestic immigrants, who came to Istanbul from Germany or Belgium. They defined an in-between culture. They felt connected neither to their home culture nor to the culture where they were raised. In both countries they were perceived as “foreigners”. They noted that it took them some time to establish that connection. Therefore, they used “segmentational balance” especially in the first 3-6 months that they moved to a new city and a new country. Female students also indicated that some of their friends’ approach was based on certain stereotyping notions. They were not happy to be judged by their appearances and behavior. This concern was managed by their school administrators whether in a constructive or a destructive manner. They emphasized the support given by their school counselors and school administrators in most of the cases as facilitators of their academic and social integration. Therefore, it could be said that their approach is the determining factor that leads students to be fully “engaged or disconnected” with the school process as a whole. In some cases (4 out of 12 schools) wherein school administrators and the school counselors visited students in their apartments, both parents and students felt happy about being cared for. In these cases, there was strong parent-school interaction and student-school interaction.

It was revealed in the stories that social integration is related to academic integration and female students’ integration is influenced by the proactive behaviors of school leaders and school counselors. It should be noted that the students’ individual effort could be meaningless unless it is supported by the parents and the school leaders. In three schools visited as a part of this research, it was observed that principals and counselors play active roles in creating communities of practice for immigrant students. The principals’ office is perceived as a place where students could go and discuss their concerns in many aspects. Students in these three schools asserted that having “tea talks” in the principals’ offices gives them confidence knowing that they are “cared for”. Therefore, “sense of commitment to the school culture” could be created through the efforts of the school principals and the counselors as well as the teachers. In this

way, immigrant students will have a sense of belonging, and they will feel that they are a part of the school culture and that their presence contributes to the school’s integrity and unity as a whole. The interaction between immigrant students and non-immigrant students also emerged as an important issue in the conversations of the students. When some students are given special treatment it may have negative setback on others, as they will start to feel different and disadvantaged. Immigrant students noted that they want to be a part of the school rather than being seen as quests, newcomers, troublemakers or foreigners. The ways in which each school principal and the teachers handle this issue of integration varies from one school to another. Moti-Stefanidi and Masten (2013) noted that “since the future of immigrant youths is inextricably linked to that of the receiving society, the success of their trajectory through school becomes a high stakes issue both for the individual and society” (126). For both immigrant and the non-immigrant youths, findings of the mentioned study showed that, school engagement and school success have been based on bidirectional relations, which affect each other.

Berry et al. (1987) underline the importance of the refugee students’ gradual integration into the socio-cultural adaptation process. Fazel (2012) highlights the risk factors that affect the refugee children’s lives from many perspectives and presents a model that contributes to the development of children based on the collaboration among family, community and society. Along with theme 2, which is “maintaining balance between family and school: shifting from conflicting balance to compensational and instrumental balance”, it was revealed that except for the Turkish participants who came from Germany and Belgium, all the others came either for economic or for marriage reasons. Mothers indicated that they moved to Istanbul because they got married to a Turkish man. In these stories it was found that women not only deal with adjusting to a new culture and a landscape, but also to a new way of life with a man from another culture. They noted that coming from a similar Muslim background helped pass the transition process in a smooth manner.

In this study, some of the female students (7/12) asserted that “*early experiences*” affected their forms of integration with their families and

with their schools. In first generation immigrant families, females appear to take on many roles at once because of the feminine roles attributed to them from the very early ages. This cultural tradition seems to make contributions in the personal qualities of some female students. She says she helped her mother in the house and took some additional responsibilities at home so that her mother could work outside and bring “money”. From another perspective, Betül’s story about her childhood supports the same idea about early experiences. She believes in the fact that her close relations with her cousins, nephews and elderly people in the family and neighborhood helped her a lot to establish and create an effective communication in her professional life both as a student and as a member of her extended family. She also helps the elderly people in her neighborhood by doing their shopping and by taking care of the younger kids when their parents are away. In the following words, the signs of collaboration and teamwork are evident. There is a sense in which Elif’s story echoes Ayşe’s story. Elif considers herself as a ‘quiet person’, who does not promote herself by putting herself in highly visible places. She and her friends consider her as a shy person. She believes that she can get things done in a quieter manner. She attaches so much importance to teamwork and connectedness. She relates her being collegial to her experiences in the high school with the following words:

“...There is always this notion of being part of a group, part of a team... I am part of the team, a leadership group...” (Interview with Elif, December 2013)

In the stories of first generation female students there is the sense that they are struggling with the conflicting balance. However in time, they seem to maintain instrumental balance through trial and error. It should also be noted that from the very early ages of their lives, they learned to compensate. This compensation is mainly from their own preferences such as sports and entertainment. School principals asserted that they observed the difficult lives of those teens and tried to help. It was revealed in the stories that although all the female students were raised in a different culture, their ancestors’ manner and approach determined the way they helped their children to grow. Some of the female students seemed to be stuck in a totally different culture. Two female students are unhappy to

shoulder feminine responsibilities because of their belief in gender equality. The following excerpt reflect their concerns and dilemmas: *“...Why do I have to help my mother not my brother? ...I wish I lived in a smaller family. In this way I can allocate more time to my own development as well as my school work...”* (Interview with Hatice, November 2013)

The researchers observed in the interviews that some of the female students have stories of support from their family members and their stories show how they are motivated and encouraged to follow the path in their academic careers. One of the mothers, who works as a cleaning support staff at one of the high schools shared her ideas and dreams for her daughter with the following words: *“...We came from Azerbaijan 20 years ago... We lived as Muslim people live... We come from a very conservative culture... I lost my husband to cancer and then I had to work to earn my living. I never let my daughter work. I compensated throughout my life but I do not want my daughter to live these... People wanted me to marry again. I resisted this because I wanted to raise my daughter as I want it to be...”* (Interview with Meryem, January 2014)

As it can be seen in the above excerpt, some women leaders’ stories are full of resistance from their family members. It seems as if they followed their routes by jumping those barriers. In both cases none of them ended up with disappointment, rather they found alternative solutions for their ends with the most effective means and created alternative paths for their daughters. This is also the case for a mother, who came from Afghanistan 8 years ago. Her daughter was always treated as an adult and she was giving an opportunity to use her own initiatives as an adolescent. Their story highlights the way an adolescent could be proactive to take actions in her career as well as in her family: *“One day my daughter called the name of the Prime Minister and she was allowed to talk in front of a crowd of people at a festival in Eyüp [a historical and cultural location in Istanbul]... She was able to make herself visible in the crowd... Security tried to stop her at first then she was allowed to talk. My daughter said, “Give us a residence permit. We do not want to be the ghosts here”. Then we took our residence permits and work permits.”* (Interview with Fatma, January 2014)

Taking snapshots of the participants showed how school leaders could serve as facilitators of instrumental balance. It was revealed during the

interview segments that school leaders use compensational balance most of the time, in order to encourage female students and their mothers to use instrumental balance. The study also reveals the experiences of school leaders and how interpersonal relations are based on “trust”. In cases where there were trust and sincerity, female students and their mothers feel more belonging to their schools as well as having a smooth transition to a new culture. The researchers were impressed by the determination of some of the mothers and the female students as shown in the way they worked hard to pursue their various careers, even when their ideals were underestimated or misunderstood. In some leaders’ stories the influence of their friends and school administrators play a very important role. In this context, Bateson (1989) asserts that education is unfinished. ‘Building and sustaining the settings in which individuals can grow and unfold, not kept in their place, but empowered to become all they can be, is not only the task of parents and teachers but the basis of leadership, political leadership and simply friendship’ (p. 56). It was observed during the experiences that family-school and family-work balance are big challenges for both the female students and their mothers. It is obvious that they need support to get over the roadblocks they encounter to keep up with the challenges of balance. The way they define balance and the way they are satisfied with the balance is also a relative term. It is also related with the idea of Vroom and Deci’s *Expectancy Theory* (1983) and Bandura’s (1977) *Theory of Self-efficacy*. “Self-efficacy is the belief a person has that they possess the skills and abilities to successfully accomplish something”. Immigrant female students’ family and social backgrounds seem to have an influence on the way they perceive their skills and abilities. Their definition of success in school and life seems to differ in relation with their family background and expectancy from life. In cases where there are role models within the family, both students and mothers feel they can follow the same career path. This role model could be a teacher or a businessman at certain times. Therefore, how participants defined success and happiness varied from one to another.

This also aligns with their expectancy of work-life balance or home-school balance. In these struggles, mothers and daughters need the

mentoring role both from their local settings and the school. In this context, teachers and school leaders serve a crucial role in which they mentor both students and parents. Their attempts to help them adjust and move on may leave positive traces as well as negative ones on the lives of these children. Therefore, whatever they do and whatever they say could contribute positively or impact negatively on their children. However, there may be times they could give harmful signals without being aware of their behaviors. In line with this finding, Nijue and Retis (2010) who researched on African students studying at an American high school, showed that no matter how innovative ideas the school may bring in order to meet the various expectations of the students, there is always the possibility that those attempts could create tensions between different student groups. In line with these studies, Ellis et al. (2015) analyzed “thwarted belongingness and perceived burdensomeness” from the basis of personal and post immigrant factors (p.43). Results showed that for men, money related issues and for women, illiteracy and family related problems appeared to have an influence on their stress, which may lead to suicide in some cases. Post immigrant related problems have been a high stakes issue that has been under discussion in many parts of the world. Schools serve as places that help children of immigrant families to socialize and interact. It is inevitable that post immigration problems will be reflected on the school as well as the students. These challenges that the school administrators and teachers face could be eliminated through an ongoing training program specifically designed to implemented at schools accommodating immigrant students.

The theme of balance between work and family highlights the impact of cultural roles on immigrant, working women’s career. From the perspective of immigrant mothers, career expectancy seems to align with their daughters’ career. It was revealed in their words that mothers have the tendency to associate their careers with their daughters’. Through compensation and sacrifice, they believe that they could build a career path for their daughters. In their worlds, they are not aware of the fact that there could be an alternative career path for themselves as working mothers. Their only focus is to afford their living and support their families. However, Meares (2010) found in her study that working women,

who immigrated to New Zealand, tried to keep a balance between their careers and their home. In the mentioned study, women had to choose between two alternative career paths, either to enter the labor market or to work only part time to shoulder their families' responsibilities, which leads to a disrupted career and an increase in domestic responsibilities. The following excerpt shows the way in which balance is an ongoing struggle not only for women with low socioeconomic status, but also for women from socio-economically advantaged contexts: *"These career changes and losses were accompanied by often painful shifts in identity, from career women or professional women to housewives, and from financially autonomous 'partners' to economic dependents. The increase and/or intensification of housework and childcare gave them both pleasure and pain: joy in the increased intimacy they shared with their..."* (Meares 2010: 479).

Roche and Kuperminc (2002) found in their study on immigrant youth that increasing a sense of school belonging and minimizing experiences of discrimination have significant roles in students' academic achievement. It was also noted in the mentioned study that the longer Latino students had spent in the United States, the less immigration stress they reported. Gong et al. (2015) investigated the influence of family related factors on immigrant students' academic achievement. Their study on Asian and Hispanic immigrant students showed that "family income and parent-child conflict predicted Hispanic immigrant students' academic performance, whereas parent education, aspiration and family income predicted Asian immigrant students' academic performance."

Theme 3 reveals the ways in which female students and their mothers maintained a balance between work and family. It was revealed in the study that female youth encounter challenges in terms of maintaining balance between their school and their homes. Half of the participants asserted that they work temporary jobs to help their families financially. They are also given additional duties within the house such as cooking, cleaning and looking after their siblings when their mothers work outside. In spite of their young age, female students appeared to put a burden on their shoulders to support their families. Some of the students shared their stories in which carrying such a burden affects their school attendance and their school success. Stories of the

mothers also showed that almost all of them use "compensational balance" in their lives. None of them finds a suitable time for their own professional, physical and psychological development activities. Being aware of such constraints they feel stressed and demotivated. One of the mothers said they had to stay out late and get up early to do certain things. Although she tried not to neglect her family, maintaining that balance caused a certain amount of stress. This is also the case for almost all the mothers of the participants, they either work at home or outside. It appeared in their conversations that they continue the "neighborhood culture" even though they moved to a big city. As they used to do, women sit in front of their houses to share their daily routines with their friends and relatives. Generally, you could see women sitting, knitting and talking. Men generally go to coffee houses to gather with other men for talking, playing cards and games. First generation immigrant mothers generally present this picture and they are happy to continue their traditions in Istanbul. They said they have the tendency to sit in the same neighborhood with the people from the same homeland. These behaviors could be interpreted with the generational attributes. In line with this finding, Katsiaficas et al. (2013) noted that the first-generation adults are determined to be at a lower risk for anxiety when compared with their second-generation peers (Chang et al. 1995; Vega et al. 2004; Takeuchi et al. 2007; Gonzales et al. 2008).

During the interviews aspirations for career appeared to be one of the most significant themes mentioned as a recommendation. Almost all the participants interviewed underlined the importance of motives leading one's desire to be successful in her career. Private and family lives appear to have crucial importance in females' lives. In the 'puzzle of composing a life, the interdependence of one's own work with that of someone else' is a major complication'. As it was revealed by Hacifazlioglu (2010), there is no explicit prescription for balance. Females will "mix and match balancing styles depending on the specifics of their situation" (p. 59).

CONCLUSION

This study shows four themes running through balance in all women's lives although families and other problems are diverse. It is clear that they all need collegial support from their families, teachers, school administrators and

friends. In any case, they have the tendency to work in cooperation rather than in conflict. It is evident that as female students and mothers, they will have to seek for a new balance that is more appropriate to the new circumstances as they face new responsibilities. This became more urgent in the case of immigrant families. This study focused on the experiences of female students, further studies could focus on the experiences of male students and their fathers. Furthermore, analyzing the relationships between female students and their fathers could also bring unique insights into the notion of balance. Investigating balance from a multidisciplinary approach may open new paths in the scholarship of school leadership from the basis of community leadership. Stories collected in this research are expected to give inspiration for further studies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Participants were asked to give recommendations to female students, who tried to integrate into a new culture during the interviews. This paper does not intend to provide a list for the audience. Instead, through their experiences and insights, school leaders and school counselors are expected to tailor their own strategies that could meet their own circumstances. Although themes determined through the conversations are unique in their own cases and the characters involved, they could be used as a lived experience, and adopted regarding one's own setting. These experiences could give insights to school leaders in ways of collaborating with immigrant families. Further studies could explore strategies used by school administrators and how they integrate students and families to a school setting.

Findings showed that problems in maintaining balance could be a mechanism for the association of low school belonging and low academic and social integration. Future research should explore the ways in which a school belonging could be increased through minimizing negative experiences with regards to immigration. Strategies could be developed based on the experiences of school counselors and school leaders.

This paper provides insight that supports the importance of social support networks with open paths for better psychological and academic ad-

justment for immigrant students. Quantitative data could be collected in further studies to determine students' academic and social integration as well as adjustment process. In this way demographic factors could be examined based on empirical evidence. The use of mixed qualitative and quantitative methods would enable researchers to have a deeper understanding of the impact of balance on social and academic integration not only for immigrant female and mothers but also for all immigrant students.

Data in this paper showed that social support networks help students integrate with their school. Based on these anecdotes, further studies could be developed to test the role of social support networks on students' and families' lives. Social support networks and networks created at the schools could be explored to examine the degree to which they serve as mediators of creating a positive sense of school belonging. An individual's cultural identity is shaped at the period of adolescence, and this study showed stories of female students and how their cultural identity is formed when striving to maintain a balance in their lives. Further studies could investigate the formation of cultural identity starting from earlier phases of development in one's lifespan. The complex and dynamic nature of the identity formation process could be analyzed by using a longitudinal design.

The results of this study can inform how school counselors consider the presenting issues of immigrant students and families at a certain point when trying to find suitable tailor made interventions that aligns with students' specific situation. However, these interventions are mostly conducted in an ad hoc manner and school counselors need to have support mechanisms that will enable them to make a change in the lives of these families. Over the past decade, immigrant and refugee populations have increased significantly and there has been an estimation that these populations will continue to increase in the following years. In-service training modules need to be developed to meet the needs of the society and the schools. School leaders, school counselors and teachers are expected to be supportive, competent and to interact with the new profile students and their families. The issue of refugee students and their parents should be examined from a multidisciplinary perspective, and researchers and teachers educators are expected to work in collaboration to tailor

niche programs that meet the increasing demands of the society.

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