AN EXPLORATION OF THE CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED BY MUSLIM MEN IN THE UK:

AN IDENTITY PROCESS THEORY (IPT) AND MASCULINITIES APPROACH ON MUSLIM MEN

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Abstract

Muslims constitute the second-largest and fastest-growing religious group in the UK. In the post-9/11 and 7/7 climate, existing research suggests Muslims in the UK encounter significant challenges in the form of discrimination, racism, and Islamophobia. Academic studies investigating the experiences of Muslim women from multiple perspectives have revealed that their lives are affected in a negative way by such challenges. Meanwhile, research into the difficulties confronting Muslim men has been minimal.

Utilising intersectionality, Identity Process Theory (IPT - a socio-psychological approach to identity and identity threat) and Masculinities Theory, this study examines the challenges experienced by Muslim men from three distinct groups; i.e., Pakistani, Algerian and Somali. However, the aim of this research is not to draw broad conclusions about the challenges facing Muslim males in the UK; rather, the intention is to comprehensively represent the lived experiences of a cross-section of British Muslim men.

Drawing on qualitative data elicited through in-depth individual interviews with 21 Muslim men from Pakistani, Algerian or Somali descent, this research illuminates the challenges that impact on their lives in the UK. The study reveals Muslim men's various intersecting identities (Muslim, immigrant, man, black, low social class, etc.) exacerbate their difficulties, and that the experiences of Pakistani, Somali, and Algerian men differ. It further demonstrates that the challenges Muslim men face in the UK influence the various components of their identity, and their overall identity constructs. Notably, the challenges they encounter affect their motivational identity principles (continuity, self-esteem, self-efficacy, distinctiveness, belonging, meaning and psychological coherence), their masculinity identities (as father, breadwinner, family leader, protector, pride/honour in their hegemonic masculinity). It emerged that Pakistani men appear more settled in the UK and encounter relatively fewer challenges than those in other groups. By contrast, Somali men seem to have more challenges,

with social class most frequently emphasised as one of their biggest. For Algerian men, issues mentioned focused more on their perceived masculinity identification. Interestingly, some of the second and third generation Muslim men interviewed reported not seeing a future for themselves in the UK, and shared plans to move to other countries such as Qatar or the UAE. Ultimately, the study suggests a socio-psychological approach to identity and identity threat (IPT), and masculinities approach could be utilised to clarify the issues affecting men in Muslim communities in the UK.

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Table of Contents

LIST OF TABLES

Chapter 1

Introduction

1. Introduction

The UK has one of the largest Muslim populations in the Western world. However, Muslims in the UK encounter a variety of difficulties arising from discrimination and Islamophobia, as hostility towards Muslims has increased in recent decades (Allen, 2010; Runnymede Trust, 2017). Simultaneously, research into Islamophobia has also expanded greatly, particularly following the 9/11 and 7/7 attacks in 2001 and 2005 respectively. Against this backdrop, this research was motivated by the need to bring to light the often-overlooked perceptions, experiences, and specific challenges faced by Muslim men in the UK. This chapter explains how my personal interest and experience motivated me to focus on Muslim men and the challenges they navigate. It then outlines the research problem identified and the questions posed.

1.1. My Personal Rationale and Experience in Muslim Men Studies

I hold a bachelor's degree in Religious Culture and Moral Education Teaching and have always been interested in the psychology of religion, minority religious groups, and hate crime; however, it was my personal experiences in the UK that led me to focus on Muslim men and the challenges they encounter. When I first arrived in the UK in early 2015, I had the opportunity to meet numerous individuals from diverse backgrounds and observe their various identity practises. I worked for a while as a waiter at a Turkish kabab restaurant in London in 2016 with some other Muslim men from diverse backgrounds. This gave me a chance to observe the behaviour of Muslim men living in a non-Muslim country. I have always believed that workplaces are ideal environments for observing the identity practises of individuals in both individual and group contexts, as individuals spend more time at work than in other settings.

I had Asian, East African, and North African colleagues at the restaurant, and it initially caught my attention that despite all being Muslim men, they had very distinct characteristics. Hussain (the North African waiter) had worked in the restaurant for many years and had developed robust relationships with a number of customers. One day, around midnight, I

overheard him conversing with a group of young white male customers, almost all of whom were drunk. I overheard them making some racist Islamophobic jokes to him, which provoked loud laughter from both he and them. I found this strange because he was so passionate about his ethnic and religious heritage, and so I later asked him why he had allowed them to make Islamophobic jokes about him that night. He explained to me that he generally has zero tolerance for racism and Islamophobia, but that in the workplace we (all immigrant workers) must tolerate such jokes because we all need a job to make money. Furthermore, he informed me that he had a family to care for, and that it would be difficult for him to find another better job.

While giving his brief explanation, Hussain referenced numerous academic topics and debates, inspiring me to concentrate my own PhD research on identity, Muslim men, masculinity, intersectionality, psychological motivations, and emotions. The accounts shared by my colleagues convinced me that there is a need for academic research to uncover and inform a deeper understanding of how Muslim men experience and perceive the challenges they must navigate in contemporary British society.

1.2. Background to the Problem

1.2.1. Muslims in the UK

The UK has one of the largest Muslim populations in the Western world. Muslims constitute the second-largest and fastest-growing religious group in the UK. According to the most recent Office for National Statistics (ONS) census data, the number of individuals identifying as "Muslim" increased from 2.7 million, 4.9% in 2011 to 3.9 million, 6.5% in 2021 in the UK (Religion, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics, 2022). Moreover, it is important to also note that the soaring Muslim population in the UK is not only a result of the massive Muslim immigration and relatively high birth-rate among Muslim groups; there is also an increasing number of people choosing to convert to Islam in the UK (Runnymede Trust, 1997: 31).

Over the past several decades, the Muslim population in the UK has experienced significant growth. This demographic has a very youthful median age, with over half of its members born in the UK. Furthermore, during the past several decades, Muslims in the UK have gained increased prominence in various aspects of public life, including the arts, sports, media, and politics. This may be attributed to the high level of education attained by Muslims who were born and raised in the UK, particularly those belonging to the second, third, or subsequent generations of Muslims (Elahi & Khan, 2017).

1.2.1.1. Generational Positions of the Muslims in the UK

An in-depth comprehension of generational differences is essential for researchers and policymakers in the field of migration studies. This understanding enables the analysis of integration processes over extended periods, intergenerational interactions, and the transfer of cultural and social assets. Each generation may have unique obstacles and advantages for the development of their sense of identity, education, acquiring language skills, finding work, and integration. The generational positions of Muslims in the UK appear to exert a significant influence on the lives of Muslims. This present research focuses on three distinct groups of Muslims, namely Pakistanis, Somalis, and Algerians, who have different generations residing in the UK. Therefore, it would be advantageous to first examine the conceptualization of generation and the generational position of Muslims in the UK.

The term of “generation” refers to the vertical aspect of kinship relationships, namely the relational distinction between parents and children (as well as grandparents and grandchildren) that serves as a universally applicable social categorization in all cultures and communities. In the field of migration studies, the term "generation" is used to classify people or groups according to their connection to the migration experience. Generations are frequently employed to categorise distinct groups of migrants or their offspring and to comprehend the ways in which migration influences different facets of their lives, identities, and assimilation into the receiving community (Schneider, 2016).

The key generational categories in migration studies include, first generation, second generation, third generation and beyond. The term "first generation" often denotes people who were born in their nation of origin and then migrated to a different country. They are the primary cohort of migrants who immediately encounter the difficulties and possibilities linked to the process of migration (Rumbaut, 2004). The “second generation” refers to the children of the first-generation migrants who are born in the host country. These individuals are often referred to as the "children of immigrants" or the "native-born" generation. The second generation has the potential to develop a dual cultural identity by integrating elements from both the culture of their parents and the culture of the host society (Schneider, 2016). The “third generation” refers to those who are born in the host country to parents who were also born in the host country (Pottie et al., 2015). With each next generation, there is a greater possibility of cultural assimilation and integration into the larger community. There is also the concept of the "1.5 generation,"(mostly used in US studies) which refers to individuals who migrated to a new country during their childhood or adolescence. They share characteristics of both the first

and second generations, as they have experienced both their country of origin and the host country during their formative years (Holloway-Friesen, 2008).

1.2.1.2. Pakistani, Somali and Algerian Muslims in the UK

Muslims in the UK come from a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds. Pakistanis are the biggest Muslim group in the UK and constitute 40% of all Muslims in the UK (Population of England and Wales - Office for National Statistics, 2022). According to the 2011 Census, Pakistanis accounted for 38% of the total Muslim population in the UK (The Muslim Council of Britain's Research & Documentation Committee, 2015). The UK is home to around 1,570,285 individuals of Pakistani origin, making them the second-largest ethnic minority group in the country, according to the 2021 Census. This signifies a substantial surge compared to the 1,174,983 Pakistanis documented in the 2011 Census. The Pakistani community is predominantly centred in England, constituting 2.7% of the all UK population (Population of England and Wales - Office for National Statistics, 2022).

Pakistani Muslims have a long history in the UK relative to Muslims from other backgrounds, and are currently the largest Muslim population in the UK. Pakistanis have a significant and well-established presence in the UK mostly due to their historical ties with British colonialism. Following the partition of British India in 1947, a significant number of individuals from the newly formed Pakistan migrated to the UK. The influx of Pakistani migrants to the UK started throughout the 1950s and 1960s, driven by the need for labour during the post-war reconstruction period (Ben-David, 2009). Over time, mostly due to their historical ties with British colonialism, the Pakistani population in the UK has achieved political and social integration, actively engaging in several spheres of British society such as politics, business, academics, and the arts (Heath et al., 2013). Today, the second, third, fourth, and even fifth generations of Pakistanis reside in the country in a setting that is relatively established and settled.

In terms of Somalis, in 2021, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) reported a population of 108,921 individuals born in Somalia residing in England and Wales. This accounts for 0.2% of the total population. According to the 2021 Census, a total of 176,645 individuals residing in England and Wales self-identified their ethnicity or national identification as Somali. This category has a wider range of individuals compared to only Somali-born immigrants, since it includes individuals who were born in different countries but have Somali lineage or who associate themselves with Somali culture. So, Somalis account for 0.3% of the total population in the UK (Somali individuals in England, Wales and the UK - Office for National Statistics,

2022). By contrast to Pakistanis, the history of Somalis in the UK is much briefer, and their relative populations are considerably smaller than that of Pakistanis.

The migration of Somalis to the UK has historical origins, with initial migrations taking place throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries. However, there was a notable increase in Somali migration to the UK throughout the last decades of the 20th century. The political unrest and violence in Somalia, which have played a significant role in migration, have driven significant growth in the Somali diaspora in the UK over the past few decades. The political instability, conflict, and human rights violations in Somalia have resulted in the forced displacement of several Somalis, prompting some to seek shelter and asylum in the UK. A significant number of Somalis in the UK first migrated as refugees and were subsequently given asylum (van Heelsum, 2011). On the other hand, many Somalis moved to the UK from other Western countries in the last few decades. From 2000 onwards, an estimated 10,000 to 20,000 Somali immigrants have emigrated from the Netherlands to the UK (van Liempt, 2011). Thus, the Somali community has gradually expanded, and successive generations have been born in the UK.

On the other hand, the visibility and recognition of Algerians in the UK continue to be comparatively limited, potentially attributable to their lack of association with British colonial history. It is noteworthy that the Algerian community in the UK is considerably smaller in comparison to some other Muslim populations in the UK. The 2011 census documented that there were 23,601 individuals residing in England, 328 in Wales, 895 in Scotland, and 132 in Northern Ireland who have Algerian origins (Stokes, 2013). Algerian immigration to the UK began in the 1990s, and continues to increase despite more than a decade of political unrest in Algeria. The Algerian population in the UK is primarily composed of males, with a limited number of second- or third-generation Algerians. Furthermore, there is a substantial community of Algerian students and professionals, which includes women. Additionally, there is an indeterminate quantity of undocumented Algerian migrants residing within the community. Based on the census data and responses from participants, a significant majority of Algerians residing in the UK are located in London (Hopkins & Fiaz, 2009).

Pakistani, Somali, and Algerian Muslims in the UK have unique demographic characteristics, migration patterns, and durations of group presence in the country, as previously discussed. In addition, Pakistanis, Somalis, and Algerians have distinct geographical backgrounds (South Asian, East African, and North African, respectively), and their cultural backgrounds, lifestyles, and levels of social participation vary, which affects their experiences and the challenges they face in the UK. In terms of religion, although Pakistan,

Somalia, and Algeria are predominantly Sunni-majority countries, they have different schools of thought in their Sunni understanding of Islam.

1.2.2. The Challenges of Muslims in the UK and Islamophobia

There has been a significant increase in Islamophobic hostility, public and political scrutiny, and discrimination against Muslims in the UK, specifically since the 9/11 and 7/7 attacks (Runnymede Trust, 2017; Allen, 2010). Academic research (e.g., Runnymede Trust, 1997; Allen, 2004; Rahman, 2007; Zempi and Chakraborti, 2015; Garner and Selod, 2015; Zempi and Awan, 2017) has demonstrated that the lives of Muslims in the UK are complicated by numerous challenges and difficulties. According to Allen and Nielsen (2002: 35), the visual identifiers of Muslims may make them more vulnerable, increasing the likelihood of their being targeted or attacked. Similarly, the visual identifiers of Muslim women may also result in their experiencing challenges in a non-Muslim country. Indeed, the victims of Islamophobic assault are predominantly Muslim women, due to the identifying headscarf or veil they wear, which is an important symbol of Islam, affirming their identity (Sheridan, 2006: 319). However, Muslim men also encounter challenges and are victims of Islamophobic attacks.

1.3. Problem Statement and Significance of the Study

When considering the aforementioned issues, it is vital to understand the challenges Muslims encounter when living in an environment where discrimination and Islamophobia are on the rise. The challenges experienced by Muslims not only inform their economic, social, and public lives, but also negatively impact their mental health, familial relationships, and other aspects of their daily lives. Examining this topic from a socio-psychological standpoint is crucial to illuminate the concerns of the Muslim population in the UK.

Formerly, researchers have directed attention towards comprehending and evaluating the challenges negotiated by Muslim women. As stated above, in today's society, because Muslim women stand out visually they are more likely than men to be the victims of racist or Islamophobic attacks, whether physical or verbal. However, although understandable, this research bias means there is a dearth of evidence regarding the potentially more severe and unbearable challenges Muslim men face. For example, after encountering Islamophobic attacks, Muslim women may choose to remain in their homes as a coping strategy in order to feel safe while processing the negative effects of the attack (Zempi, 2014). Although it is completely unacceptable that victims of Islamophobia become prisoners in their own homes,

remaining inside can be a viable mechanism for coping with trauma. However, Muslim males generally do not have the option to employ this coping mechanism, because, as observed by my colleague Hussain, Muslim men are directly responsible for providing financially for their families. Thus, they are forced to tolerate occasional racist and Islamophobic abuse. This need to provide is closely related to their masculine identity, and no Muslim male would want to place himself in a position where he is perceived as having failed to provide for his family. Similarly, as a result of traditional perceptions of masculinity, Muslim males may choose to conceal the challenges they experience, not disclosing them to anyone, even their families, for fear of being perceived as lacking masculinity. The enormous pressure exerted on Muslim men by the traditional perceptions of masculinity can result in severe psychological issues. Thus, this study seeks to reveal the multidimensional and complex challenges Muslim men encounter in the UK context. While doing so I aim to provide greater insight and understanding by examining participants' accounts from a socio-psychological and masculinity perspective.

1.4. Study Aim

Drawing on the above, the purpose of this phenomenological research is to explore the challenges Muslim men face in the UK, by focusing on their lived experiences in the context of Islamophobia's dramatic increase. According to Garner and Selod (2015: 10), there is a lack of research on Islamophobia conducted through fieldwork including interviews with Muslims and/or ethnographic content. Although being a Muslim affords many advantages and benefits to Muslim men in the UK, this current research will focus on the unique challenges they encounter. In this phenomenological study, conducting individual semi-structured and in-depth interviews with Muslim men from diverse backgrounds allows the researcher to identify and explore the significant challenges they must negotiate in the UK today. As well as identifying and exploring the factors that create challenges in Muslim men in their lives, it also examines how they respond to difficulty. It is anticipated that the findings will advance cultural understanding of the challenges and needs of Muslim men in the UK, prompting policymakers to consider previously neglected realities and associated variables.

1.5. Disciplinary Position of the Study

Muslim minorities in the Western world have been extensively studied in the field of social sciences, as well as in relation to disciplines such as psychology, social psychology, sociology,

history, geography, politics, criminology, migration studies, minority studies, religious studies, gender studies, men's studies, etc. Here, the researcher adopts an interdisciplinary approach, constructed around social psychology and masculinities, also benefitting from the domains of sociology, criminology, migration studies, minority studies, and politics.

1.6. Research Questions

The research method selected to answer the research questions was semi-structured individual interviews. The purpose of the study is to elicit information about the experiences of Muslim men in contemporary Britain and explore the challenges they navigate. In preparation for this research project, I investigated the general challenges faced by Muslim men in the UK by conducting a pilot study (involving four semi-structured interviews) with Muslim men from diverse backgrounds to identify specific issues to target. The pilot study's objective was to determine the feasibility of the project, and to select the most applicable theoretical lenses.

The results of the pilot investigation were as follows: 1) The majority of the challenges Muslim males encounter in the UK are "identity"-related; 2) the difficulties multiply because of the ways in which their identities overlap; 3) their masculine identities appear to confer enormous responsibilities on them; and 4) their identity-related challenges also have a significant psychological impact.

Accordingly, research questions were refined as follows:

1. What are the challenges Pakistani, Somali and Algerian Muslim men experience in the UK?
2. How do the intersecting identities of Pakistani, Somali, and Algerian Muslim men (such as their race/ethnicity, gender, class, migrant status, and religion) impact their experiences?
3. How do Pakistani, Somali, and Algerian Muslim men in the UK experience challenges (e.g., threats to one's identity) that affect their motivational identity principles as defined by Identity Process Theory (continuity, self-esteem, self-efficacy, distinctiveness, meaning, belonging, and psychological coherence)?
4. How do Pakistani, Somali, and Algerian Muslim men in the UK construct their masculine identities? How do their experiences and challenges impact their construction and practice of masculine identities?

1.7. Theoretical Framework

Intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1994) is adopted as the key approach in this research, because of its ability to focus on the complexities inherent in the challenges Muslim men face, arising from their overlapping disadvantaged identities and racialisation through Islamophobic discourses. The term "intersectionality" was coined by Crenshaw (1994) to describe the experiences of Black women, who have been subjected to both anti-Black racism and sexism throughout history. This theory can also be helpful for addressing the unique disadvantages faced by Muslim men, who are variously racialised as immigrants, blacks, or Muslims in Islamophobic discourses. It is especially useful because it recognises that the combination of two minority characteristics creates a new single minority entity, giving rise to unique positioning and disadvantage (Anthias, 2014: 157). Although intersectionality forms the basis of the key approach taken here, Identity Process Theory (IPT) and masculinities were the predominant theories adopted for the proposed study. The pilot study revealed that Muslim men in the UK encounter unique difficulties, and its results indicated considerations raised by IPT and masculinities as potential causes.

IPT was conceived by Breakwell (1986) to 'clarify and predict how individuals and groups react to psychological threats, particularly threats to identity' (Cinnirella, 2014: 255). According to IPT, motivational identity principles, which refer to the motivational underpinnings of identity and specify ideal end states when structuring identity, motivate individuals to engage in accommodation/assimilation and evaluation processes when developing a sense of self (Breakwell, 1993; Vignoles, 2011; Breakwell et al., 2022). According to Vignoles et al. (2006), motivational identity principles are significant across cultures, despite appearing to manifest differently in various communities. Motivational identity principles are "continuity", "distinctiveness", "self-efficacy", "self-esteem", "belonging", "meaning" and "psychological coherence" (Breakwell, 1986: 114; Vignoles et al., 2002; Jaspal and Cinnirella, 2010). As mentioned, above, as the pilot study revealed the majority of Muslim men's experiences and challenges in the UK are perceived as identity threats, and have a psychological impact on them, and IPT is an ideal tool for developing an understanding of Muslim men's lived realities in the UK.

The pilot study further demonstrated that Muslim males in the UK have different experiences and responses to challenges, depending on their own conceptions of and adherence to masculinity. Through a critical feminist lens, masculinities theory examines the evolution of masculinities over time and the varying roles played by men to ensure their preservation

(Connell, 2005; Wedgwood, 2009). Connell (2005: 71) argues that 'masculinity is simultaneously a place in gender relations, the practices through which men and women engage that place in gender, and the effects of these practices in bodily experience, personality and culture'. Muslim men in the UK encounter significant challenges constructing and practising their masculinity, because they adhere to Muslim perceptions of masculinity while living in a non-Muslim majority country. Consequently, this research is constructed around masculinities theory and IPT to effectively demonstrate and comprehend the nature of the challenges navigated by Muslim men in the UK. In addition, I had the opportunity to investigate Muslim masculinities from the perspective of IPT, which enabled me to comprehend the social-psychological dimension of Muslim masculinities, which is one of the genuinely novel contributions of this study.

1.8. The Structure of the Thesis

The remainder of this thesis is structured as follows:

Chapter 2 comprises a comprehensive literature review pertaining to the context of the study. It details the theoretical constructs utilised, and explicates the proposed theoretical framework. The chapter consists of four sections. The first section introduces the concept of Islamophobia, and discusses its historical origins, definitions, prevalence in the UK, and relationship to gender. It addresses the significance of intersectionality theory as it relates to the challenges experienced by Muslim men, and explains how the theory functions as an overarching framework for the current research. It then takes a critical look at the concept of "identity," the relationship between identity and religion, various theories of identity, and the Identity Process Theory. Finally, literature that critically examines the gender question in the context of the challenges faced by Muslim men through the lens of masculinity theory is presented.

Chapter 3 introduces the research methodology of the study and describes the nature of qualitative research. First, the research questions, the research paradigm and philosophy, the research methodology and the nature of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) are introduced. Following this, the research procedures, including the participant recruitment methods, inclusion/exclusion criteria, sample size, and participant profiles, are described in detail. The data collection process, which included semi-structured interviews, pilot interviews and the development of an interview guide, online interviews, and the process of establishing rapport with the participants, is described. In the following sections, the data analysis process,

the credibility and transferability of the research, ethical considerations, the challenges/limitations of the study, and the role of my positionality and reflexivity as researcher are discussed.

Chapter 4 investigates how Muslim men in the UK demonstrate and emphasise their identity principles through their identity construction, as well as how these identity principles are affected by challenges. To demonstrate how Muslim men respond to threats to their identity principles, the research findings concerning each identity principle are presented and then discussed in depth alongside examples from Muslim men's lived experiences.

Chapter 5 discusses the masculine identities of Muslim men in the UK. It first presents the research findings and analysis in relation to the main themes of the research: the construction of Muslim masculinities in the UK, the responsibilities of Muslim men in the UK, and how Muslim men in the UK see in- and out-group men and women. Each theme contains multiple subthemes, which are discussed in depth and illustrated with verbatim excerpts from the interviews. Following this, in the discussion section, the research findings are discussed in reference to the relevant literature.

In Chapter 6, which concludes the study, the main research findings, contributions to academic knowledge, study limitations and recommendations for future research are presented.

Finally, the bibliography includes a list of references used in the production of this project. It is followed by the appendices, which include documentary evidence of ethical approval, the participant information sheets, consent forms, debrief forms, interview questions, and further information regarding the recruitment of the research participants.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

2. Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

The evidence collected in preparation for this research suggested the challenges Muslim men in the UK encounter mostly arise in relation to the "identity" problem. Specifically, their various identities, comprising race, ethnicity, gender, religion, immigrant status, class, etc. influence and shape their lives enormously. Islamophobia, whether obvious or subtle, is an ever present threat that represents the fundamental basis of the challenges to Muslim men in the UK, threatening all components of their identity and targeting every area of their lives. In view of the significance of "identity" issues for Muslim men in the UK, this thesis applies the lenses of Intersectionality, Identity Process Theory (IPT) and Masculinities Theory to their challenges and experiences from diverse identity perspectives. In this chapter, the phenomenon of Islamophobia will be investigated, prior to discussing all three theories as applicable in the context of the current study.

2.2. Islamophobia

2.2.1. Migration, Religion and Islamophobia

For immigrants the psychological processes involved in adjusting to a new country in terms of language, culture, employment, and way of life, combined with homesickness and the desire for familiar social surroundings is extremely challenging (Walsh, Shulman, & Maurer, 2008). Over time accelerated migration and an expanding immigrant population in Europe has heightened awareness of the cultural differences between host nations and immigrants. Consequently, the debate surrounding integration, assimilation, and multiculturalism has attracted considerable public interest. Immigrants have frequently been accused by the populations of the host countries of failing to integrate sufficiently into the host society, actively preserving their own culture in a manner incompatible with Western culture. Moreover, the people of some host nations have started to express loudly that they increasingly feel uncomfortable in their own homes, as if their way of life is under threat. For their part, immigrants have reported that they confront discrimination, inferior treatment, and ethnocentrism, which causes them great stress. Since the majority of discussions about multiculturalism revolve around the differences between cultures, religious beliefs are often

central, as they are an essential component of culture. Taylor (2007) suggests that in recent years concerns associated with multiculturalism issues in the Western world have mostly been associated with the expanding Muslim population and their religion, Islam.

Religion has been a defining element of culture throughout history, shaping culture, traditions, ways of life, and domestic and international relations (Walsh, 1998). Religious wars, wars for conquest with religious motivations, the crusades, proselytising, and the Holocaust are some of the most prominent examples of religion's significance throughout history. Religious motives were seminal in the most devastating and deadly tragedies throughout human history. For example, during World War II, millions of Jews were killed and incarcerated due to anti-Semitism, even though they did not actively participate in the conflict. Religious groups continue to suffer not only during times of conflict, but also during times of peace. Despite all the advances in science and society in the modern era, discrimination and hostility continue with certain religious groups common targets. In recent decades, Islamophobia has characterised attitudes in many Western countries, with the result that Muslims living in non-Muslim countries endure considerable challenges and suffering in their daily lives (The Changing Landscape of Citizenship and Security 6th PCRD of European Commission, 2006).

2.2.2. Islamophobia as a Contemporary Phenomenon

Islamophobia is a widely applied term in contemporary discourse, having gained widespread currency as a result of the highly influential Runnymede Trust Report "Islamophobia: A Challenge for Us All", published in 1997. Conway (Runnymede Trust, 1997: iii) characterised the term "Islamophobia" in the foreword of the report as 'an ugly word for an ugly reality'. Similarly, Bazian (2019: 20) describes Islamophobia as imperfect terminology. Islamophobia represents a real threat for the Western world, not only for Muslim individuals and Muslim communities, but for society as a whole. It threatens social cohesion, social dynamism, social stability, the objectives of multiculturalism, the culture of living with other cultures, and even democracy and human rights (Elahi & Khan, 2017).

At the turn of the millennium, the term "Islamophobia" became rapidly disseminated throughout populations, and subsequent events ensure it will continue to endure for some time. Islamophobia is a widely encountered phenomenon that takes different forms throughout the Western world (Allen, 2010: 53). Although the term has been widely used in the field of social sciences for more than two decades, there is no consensus regarding how best to define

it; indeed, ‘systematic comparative and causal analysis’ of Islamophobia remains extremely limited (Bleich, 2011: 1581).

2.2.3. Definitions of Islamophobia

Defining Islamophobia is not straightforward, and to date there is still no widely accepted definition, despite the fact that it has progressively established itself in the social sciences domain (Borell, 2015: 411). Disagreement over the terms is not limited only to its definition. Its historical roots, theoretical underpinnings, and practical implications are also areas of disagreement (Allen, 2010: 7). It is widely accepted that the first usage of the term in a publication was in the USA in 1991, where it was used in a manner similar to the term ‘xenophobia’, referring ‘to dread or hatred of Islam – and, therefore, to fear or dislike of all or most Muslims’ (Runnymede Trust, 1997: 1). However, there are competing claims concerning first usage of the term, with suggestions abounding both in the social sciences and the public spheres (Allen, 2010: 7). Similarly, as the scope of the term became more comprehensive, it was increasingly used to indicate ‘the history, presence, dimensions, intensity, causes, and consequences of anti-Islamic and anti-Muslim sentiments’ (Bleich, 2011: 1582).

Initial attempts to provide a definition for “Islamophobia” were made in the 1990s, and in the Runnymede Report (Islamophobia: A Challenge for Us All), it was defined as ‘the dread, hatred and hostility towards Islam and Muslims perpetrated by a series of closed views that imply and attribute negative and derogatory stereotypes and beliefs to Muslims’ (Runnymede Trust, 1997: 2). In other words, ‘the term Islamophobia refers to unfounded hostility towards Islam’ (Runnymede Trust, 1997: 4). The recent published Runnymede report (Elahi & Khan, 2017) reformulated their first definition of Islamophobia. ‘Islamophobia is any distinction, exclusion or restriction towards, or preference against, Muslims (or those perceived to be Muslims) that has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life’ (Elahi & Khan, 2017). Some scholars emphasised the historical background to the phenomenon in their definitions. For instance, Weller (2001) considers Islamophobia to be ‘undeniably rooted in the historical inheritance of a conflictual relationship that has developed over many centuries involving the overlap of religion, politics and warfare’ (p. 8). Similarly, Karslı (2013: 80) argues that Islamophobia is typically characterised by ‘fear’, and is a contemporary term for an ancient fear. Elsewhere, it is stated that ‘Islamophobia is considered as no more than a modern epidemic of an age-old prejudice towards and fear of Islam’ (Sheridan & Gillett, 2005: 192). These views about

Islamophobia link the contemporary re-emergence of the phenomenon to historical dynamics of fear and conflict.

In other contexts, scholars have drawn more attention to its socio-psychological dimension. According to Borell (2015: 411) 'Islamophobia, like other prejudices, is an antipathy based on stereotypes – negative overgeneralizations and some Muslims' attitudes, behaviours and acts are attributed to all Muslims'. Similarly, Bleich (2011: 1581) describes Islamophobia as 'indiscriminate negative attitudes or emotions directed at Islam or Muslims', and Sharma et al. (2019: 94) assert that, 'Islamophobia has been defined as exaggerated, irrational fear, hatred, and hostility toward Islam and Muslims perpetuated by negative stereotypes resulting in bias, discrimination, and marginalization of Muslims from civil, social, and political life'. The Oxford Dictionary describes Islamophobia as an 'intense dislike or fear of Islam, esp. as a political force; hostility or prejudice towards Muslims' (Oxford English Dictionary, 2019). There are also additional definitions that emphasise its socio-political nature. For example, Semati (2010: 257) explains, Islamophobia as 'a single, unified and negative conception of an essentialized Islam, which is then deemed incompatible with Euro-Americanness'. Such definitions of Islamophobia can be augmented; however, according to Bleich (2011: 1583), the expression that 'Islamophobia is a social evil' seems to unite almost all definitions of Islamophobia.

Over the course of the last two decades, Islamophobia has been defined in a variety of ways, with recent research increasingly classifying it as a form of racism. In general terms racism has been widely addressed in the literature; however, religious discrimination and religious hate crimes are typically not treated as seriously as racism, despite the claim that 'religious affiliation may be a more meaningful predictor of prejudice than race or ethnicity' (Sheridan, 2006: 317). Nevertheless, there is an increasing tendency to define Islamophobia as a type of racism. As argued by Kalın (2011: 11), 'considering its current forms, Islamophobia has become a form of racism because it targets a group of people and incites hatred against them on the basis of their religious beliefs, cultural traditions, and ethnic backgrounds'. In addition, Sheridan and Gillett (2005: 192) argue that Islamophobia is 'a two-stranded form of racism, rooted in both the 'different' physical appearance of Muslims and also in an intolerance of their religious and cultural beliefs'. Furthermore, Semati (2010: 266) claims that 'Islamophobia is, as a form of racism, an essentialist view of peoples whose culture it deems "different" in an eternal, fixed, and immutable fashion'. According to the most current research investigating Islamophobia, "Islamophobia Defined: The inquiry into a working definition of

Islamophobia" by the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on British Muslims, 'Islamophobia is rooted in racism and is a type of racism that targets expressions of Muslimness or perceived Muslimness' (All Party Parliamentary Group on British Muslims, 2018). This definition has gained some recognition in the political climate of the UK. For example, the Labour Party and the Scottish Parliament adopted the APPG on British Muslims definition of Islamophobia in early 2019, and the ruling Conservative Party and the Prime Minister have also been called upon to adopt this definition. Patently then, recent studies have made it clear that Islamophobia is a form of racism that deserves consideration with the same seriousness as other forms of racism.

2.2.4. The Golden Age of Islamophobia

The last quarter of the twentieth century, and the first years of the twenty-first century witnessed some critical events that reinvigorated historical anti-Muslim sentiments in the Western world. Each incident contributed to erroneous Western beliefs that Muslims and Islam are the source of a variety of violence-related problems throughout the world, opposing progress, development, Western civilization, and Western values (Allen, 2010: 37). Most probably the first striking event to take place in this period was the Iranian Revolution in 1979, which attracted huge attention towards Muslims, creating trauma and shock in communities all around the world. Ayatollah Khomeini's anti-American and anti-Western discourses, along with his black-robed and bearded image in the media, the burning of American flags, the chanting for America's demise in the streets, extreme forms of Shi'a Islam such as self-flagellation, the holding as hostages of 52 American diplomats and citizens for 444 days in Iran, and subsequent events, all contributed to the Islamic Revolution (by extension, Islam and Muslims) being seen as a direct challenge to and threat against the Western world (Allen, 2010: 40). Moreover, the significance of the function of the media in this era cannot be ignored, as it was a powerful force portraying negative images, and the manipulative and unilateral comments made by some commentators played a critical role in shaping perceptions (Allen, 2010: 41). The Iranian Revolution caused Europeans to express heightened concern about Muslims residing in the West. Thus, the Iranian Revolution can be considered a turning point resulting in the emergence of Islamophobia in the modern world, since which time Muslims have been targets of suspicion and negative media attention.

The emergent period of Islamophobia, which began with the Iranian Revolution, continued throughout succeeding decades in various locations and forms. In the UK context, it was with the publication of The Satanic Verses in 1989, and the subsequent fatwa issued by

Khomeini calling for the author, Salman Rushdie, to be executed that concerns arose. The debate over the hijab in France in the 1990s, the Gulf War of 1991 and Saddam Hussain's personification as evil in the media, Samuel Huntington's influential book "The Clash of Civilizations" in 1997, and the Runnymede Trust Report "Islamophobia: A Challenge for Us All" in 1997 all contributed to the phenomenon's continued prominence.

However, it was at the turn of the twenty-first century that a new and disturbing dimension was added to the Western world's understanding of Islam and Muslims. Islam and Muslims became linked with terrorism in the Western discourse surrounding Islam and Muslims (Elahi & Khan, 2017). The "perception" transformed into "discourse" was that Islam and Muslims are linked to the issue of terrorism, which influences all other Middle Eastern issues (Semati, 2010: 259). Policymakers in the UK and elsewhere have increasingly directed their attention on Muslims, mostly viewing them through the lens of terrorism or as a potential danger to civilization (Elahi & Khan, 2017). The 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States had an enormous and irreparable impact across the entire globe. Since al-Qaeda, an Islamic terrorist organisation, was responsible for the attacks, all media attention became concentrated on Islamic groups and, by extension, Islam and Muslims. One of the most significant effects of the 9/11 attacks was the spread of a climate of fear throughout the United States, Europe, and the rest of the world. This fear permeated even those nations with negligible or non-existent Muslim populations. This climate of fear prompted security concerns, and fuelled by xenophobia, "fear" began to evolve into "hatred and hostility" towards immigrants, specifically Muslim immigrants. Studies show that as a direct consequence of the 9/11 attacks, there was a sharp increase (82.6%) in the level of implicit and indirect discrimination against Muslims in the USA (Sheridan, 2006: 317). The Madrid train bombings of March 11, 2004 and the London bombings of July 7, 2005 (known as 7/7) further associated Islam and Muslims with terrorism in the perceptions of Western populations (Elahi & Khan, 2017). As a result of this series of events, people in the Western world were placed on high alert regarding Muslims, and policies relating to security concerns were strengthened (Bazian, 2019: 20), leading to Muslims being treated with suspicion and discriminated against despite having committed no transgressions (Ihsanoglu, 2011).

2.2.5. Muslims in the UK

Contrary to popular belief, Britain has not only hosted Muslims for the last few decades, but also for centuries. However, Muslims became more visible in the public sphere during the last few decades (Runnymede Trust, 1997: 13). Muslims and Britain have a lengthy shared

history, with Muslims having played important roles in British history. During the 18th and 19th centuries and the first half of the 20th century, the British navy was staffed by a considerable proportion of Muslim seamen who were known as lascars; many of these men remained in the UK following World War II (Runnymede Trust, 1997: 13). This time period also coincided with the initial migration of Pakistanis and Bangladeshis to the UK. In the 1950s, many Muslims, overwhelmingly youths, migrated to the UK for economic motives such as to raise money to send to their families back home. This migration was also welcomed by the UK, as immigrants helped to reduce the huge employee shortages throughout the country (Runnymede Trust, 1997: 14).

In the 1960s, Muslim communities began to become more organised, especially through the efforts of Pakistanis and Bangladeshis who emphasised their distinct identities, specifically their religious identities. Central to their motivation was the objective of establishing a corporate identity, cooperating economically and socially with other Muslims, transmitting traditional values to the younger generations, eliminating the pressure of prejudice, and avoiding modernity and those aspects that posed a threat to their culture (Runnymede Trust, 1997: 15). In the early 1960s, the number of mosques in the UK was so small that it could be counted on the fingers of two hands; however, in the decades that followed, the number rose rapidly, eventually reaching 613 by 1996 (Runnymede Trust, 1997: 16). According to more recent statistics, the total number of active mosques, masjids, and prayer rooms had risen to 1,743 in 2015 and 1,975 by 2017 (Naqshbandi, 2017). As of April 2023, the United Kingdom is home to 2,144 registered masjids/mosques, prayer rooms, and shared places, including rented halls and chaplaincies (Naqshbandi, 2023). As the number of mosques increased dramatically, so did the number of cultural and educational institutes run by them (Runnymede Trust, 1997: 16). According to the Office for National Statistics (ONS) census data, the Muslim population in the UK was 2.7 million (4.8% of the population) in 2011, rising from 1.54 million (3.0% of the population) in 2001 (Office for National Statistics, 2019), and by 2016 the estimated size of the Muslim population in the UK was 4.13 million (6.3% of the population) (Pewresearch.org, 2019). According to the most recent Office for National Statistics (ONS) census data, the number of individuals identifying as “Muslim” increased from 2.7 million, 4.9% in 2011 to 3.9 million, 6.5% in 2021 in the UK (Religion, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics, 2022). Moreover, it is important to also note that the soaring Muslim population in the UK is not only a result of the massive Muslim immigration and relatively high birth-rate among Muslim groups; there is also an increasing number of people choosing

to convert to Islam in the UK (Runnymede Trust, 1997: 31). Lastly, the Muslim population of the UK has become considerably more organised over the past few decades, with a diverse array of public, private, and civil society representatives in fields such as sports, politics, the arts, and the media (Elahi & Khan, 2017).

2.2.6. Islamophobia in the UK

Prior to the Satanic Verses affair in 1989, despite the fact that a substantial number of Muslims had been residing in the UK for decades, their presence had received limited attention, as no significant conflict with them had occurred. When the Iranian Revolution drew considerable attention to Muslims around the globe, in the UK it was generally believed that there was a conceptual and physical distance between Muslims and the UK, with Muslims considered "out there," not "here" (Allen, 2010: 41). After the first publication of the book Satanic Verses by Salman Rushdie, many protests were organised by Muslims in the UK, as the book and its author were harshly criticised. Copies of the book were burned on the streets on the grounds that the book defamed Prophet Muhammad and his prophethood. Worse yet, when Khomeini issued a fatwa calling for Rushdie's death and Muslims reacted, these events were repeatedly broadcast in the UK and around the globe. These incidents shocked the British public and served as a warning that Muslims and Islam were not a distant foreign threat, but rather included individuals who were also members of British society (Allen, 2010: 41). The Rushdie protests were associated with a fundamentalist form of Islam and viewed as a direct challenge to Western values, such as freedom of expression; consequently, Islam and Muslims in the UK were brought into the public and political spotlight (Allen, 2010: 42). In the aftermath of the Satanic Verses scandal, anti-Muslim sentiment in the UK rose dramatically during the 1990s, continuing to do so after the 9/11 and 7/7 attacks in the 2000s. This period also coincided with the rapid expansion of the Muslim population, and with second and subsequent generations of Muslims became more visible in the public sphere occupying more space in education, the professions, society, economy, and even politics. The growing visibility of British Muslims in public spheres has not only attracted attention but also triggered additional religiously motivated prejudice and discrimination.

Already at the end of the twentieth century, the Runnymede reported (1997: 1) that Islamophobia has gradually and steadily increased in the UK, and its manifestations have become more extreme and threatening. In the wake of horrific attacks on 9/11 in the United States and 7/7 in London, the perception that Muslims are "different" or "other" and hence represent a threat to or at least question the British way of life became more widespread (Allen,

2010: 87). Many Islamophobic attacks occurred in the UK in this climate, as a result of this widespread misperception, and numerous studies have concluded that Muslims were disproportionately affected by rising religiously motivated prejudice and discrimination (Sheridan & Gillett, 2005: 195). In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, Muslim minority groups in the UK, as in the US, reported experiencing a sharp rise in discrimination and prejudice targeting their race and religion (Sheridan, 2006: 330). For instance, they highlighted how their religious and racial identities were assumed to be more significant than their abilities and professions when making employment applications, attending job interviews, and applying for housing, education, and engaging in government-related matters. They also indicated an expectation that the government should take immediate action to tackle the discrimination they were forced to confront (Sheridan, 2006: 330).

2.2.7. Islamophobia and Gender

The construction of gender identities and historical gender relations is thought to play a role in hate crimes. According to Connell (2005: 6), the gender dynamics in a culture need to be investigated first before we can fully comprehend issues of social class, racial discrimination, or global inequality. Hopkins (2016: 187) argues that, in the case of Islamophobic attacks, the majority of victims are women, while the majority of perpetrators are men, particularly white men, whose 'racially and religiously motivated violence is first motivated by racism that is partially shaped by patriarchy and sexism, with the victims being targeted as a result of these racist interpretations of the intersections of gender, ethnicity, and religion.'

Muslim women's and men's bodies are both recognised as significant sites for the construction of identity and otherness when discussing gender-related issues in Islam and the experiences of Muslims (Culcasi & Gokmen, 2011: 85). Repeatedly, debate on Muslim women's headscarf or the veil contends that it symbolises religious oppression. Such discussion exacerbates Islamophobia and discrimination, and draws more negative attention towards Muslim women. Muslim women are frequently discriminated based on their headscarves, veils, and hijabs, and their bodies are viewed as symbols of otherness and difference (Culcasi & Gokmen, 2011: 85). Meanwhile, Muslim men are discriminated against for being either bearded, dark-skinned, or turban-wearing terrorists (Sharma et al. 2019: 99), and their bodies become the site 'where identities are created, symbolised, performed, and even contested' (Culcasi & Gokmen, 2011: 92). In the Orientalist tradition, for example, a beard is

viewed as a sign of backwardness, while shaving it off is perceived to denote modernity and liberation.

2.2.8. Muslim Men

The academic, public, and political attention focused on Muslim men largely resulted from the negative and racially stereotypical depictions in the media. In particular, their masculine identities, hegemonic masculine practises, and relationships with women have attracted a significant amount of attention. Interestingly, Muslim men are typically treated as a homogeneous group from a holistic perspective, with their diversity often neglected. However, the construction and practises of Muslim masculinities are multifaceted, and Muslim 'men are not born; they are made; they construct their masculinities within particular social and historical contexts' (Ouzgane 2006: 2). There has been relatively little research on how Muslim men understand their masculinity, or the extent to which Islam has an impact on how they interpret masculinity (Chaudhrey, 2020). Similarly, the majority of research on Islamophobia to date has focused on the victimisation of Muslim women. Muslim women, and particularly those who choose to cover their heads with a hijab or niqab, are at heightened risk of Islamophobic violence and harassment (Sheridan, 2006: 319). However, this does not imply Muslim men are not at risk of Islamophobic attacks or that their experiences as victims are not valid or important. Specifically, Muslim men who have visible identifiers such as beards appear to be just as vulnerable as veiled Muslim women, and are also likely to be targeted. Thus, this often-neglected issue, i.e., the challenges of Muslim men in the UK, specifically arising from Islamophobia, demands further and deeper consideration.

2.3. Identity

The concept of "identity" is probably one of the most debated in the modern world. Concerns associated with "identity" are central to psychology, sociology, politics, history, international relations. In Erik Erikson's (1902 – 1994) significant body of work on "identity", he describes identity as a fundamental organizing principal which develops constantly throughout the lifespan (Erikson, 1968). According to Erikson (1968), identity is always evolving and develops continually throughout one's lifetime. While individuals may not be consciously aware of it, their identities are constantly shifting and developing.

Fearon (1999: 1) describes identity as:

> [E]either (a) a social category, defined by membership rules and (alleged) characteristic attributes or expected behaviours, or (b) socially distinguishing features that a person

> takes a special pride in or views as unchangeable but socially consequential (or (a) and (b) at once); in the latter sense, "identity" is modern formulation of dignity, pride, or honour that implicitly links these to social categories.

Here, Fearon (1999) emphasises both the social and personal aspects of identity, which are constructed and expressed in a variety of ways. Identities are typically constructed within discourses, indicating that they are produced. Thus, to grasp the origins of identities, it is essential to comprehend the specific historical, institutional and social contexts that inform a particular discursive formation (Hall, 2000: 17). Throughout the course of history, identity has been a contentious topic due to its influence on politics, interpersonal dynamics, and cultural phenomena. Moreover, factors such as gender, religion, ethnicity, and race have dominated identity concepts throughout history and continue to do so today (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000).

It is the role of associated factors, such as racial or ethnic background, socioeconomic status, job, religious affiliation, national identification, that make the concept of "identity" a popular research topic within the social sciences (Tilly, 1995). Identities are generally conceptualised and contextualised with reflection upon gender, religion, ethnicity, race, and other phenomena (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000). According to Breakwell (1986: 19), 'identity is treated as a dynamic social product, residing in psychological processes, which cannot be understood except in relation to its social context and historical perspective'. Many specific academic disciplines and fields have conducted research on the dimensions that contribute to the formation of identity. Thus, this study seeks to concentrate on several of these dimensions; i.e., male participants are the target group (gender), only Muslims are the area of interest (religion), the participants are from three different ethnic backgrounds only (Pakistani, Somali, and Algerian) (ethnicity), and only South Asian (Pakistani) and black African (Algerian and Somali) participants are included (race).

2.3.1. The Intersectionality

Intersectionality is a term coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) 'to describe how race and gender interact to form the multiple dimensions of black women's experiences at work', as their multiple intersecting identities result in discrimination (Alkhammash, 2020: 93). Crenshaw (1990: 1265) uses intersectionality 'as a way to articulate the interaction of racism and patriarchy generally', and she describes the position of women of colour, both within intersecting systems of subordination, and on the peripheries of feminism and anti-racism.

More recently, Hankivsky (2014) provides a comprehensive definition of intersectionality as follows:

> Intersectionality promotes an understanding of human beings as shaped by the interaction of different social locations (e.g., 'race'/ethnicity, Indigeneity, gender, class, sexuality, geography, age, disability/ability, migration status, religion). These interactions occur within a context of connected systems and structures of power (e.g., laws, policies, state governments and other political and economic unions, religious institutions, media). Through such processes, interdependent forms of privilege and oppression shaped by colonialism, imperialism, racism, homophobia, ableism and patriarchy are created. (Hankivsky, 2014: 2)

When this definition is applied to the challenges faced by Muslims in the Western world, the interaction of their social locations and intersected identities (such as their race/ethnicity, gender, class, migration status, and religion) can result in overlapping disadvantages resulting in additional obstacles. For example, Alkhammash (2020) asserts that gender and race are significant components of the construction of identity for contemporary Muslims in the UK, and that the lived experiences of British Muslims may be further gendered, classed, and racialized creating specific Muslim identity-groups. Baker and Levon's (2015) study argues that black and Asian (mostly Muslim) working- and upper-class males are marginalised not only directly due to their race or social class, but also because of gendered connotations regarding these racial and class positions. For instance, they (2015: 122) found out that the "beard" is used in the UK print media as part of a more subtle discourse around (Islamic) terrorism (or at least suspicion), and beard is referenced in the media both as an indicator of likely guilt and when racially profiling potential terrorists. Black and Asian (mostly Muslim) masculinities dominate within the ideological field of masculinity as a whole (Baker & Levon, 2015: 135). Therefore, to explore the challenges experienced by Muslim men, their multiple and overlapping intersected identities should be considered. Intersectionality theory can provide a comprehensive and detailed understanding of how Muslim men are gendered, classed, and racialized (and how these overlap) in the UK context, as well as how these aspects simultaneously bring enormous challenges to their lives.

Intersectionality theory may be used to obtain a more nuanced comprehension of masculinity, more specifically hegemonic masculinity. In their research, Hopkins and Noble

(2009: 812) argue that masculinities are shaped through greater engagement with how gender intersects with other social categories, particularly when associated with racial and cultural diversity. An intersectional analysis of masculinity can serve to identify the various vectors of power generated by particular configurations of gender, ethnicity, and social class (Baker & Levon, 2015: 135). To comprehend the ideological organisation of masculinities in a given social context, it is vital to adopt a genuinely intersectional perspective (Baker & Levon, 2015: 134). For example, Hopkins and Noble (2009: 813) assert that there has been a shift from a sociological to a cultural emphasis within masculinity studies, highlighting the intersections between masculinity and other vectors of identity, such as class, sexuality, race, and ethnicity. This shift has the ability to shape the very experience of masculinity. In this study, the researcher employs intersectionality theory as an overarching framework when investigating how participants perceive and construct their intersecting identities. The researcher wishes to comprehend how Muslim men's intersected identities threaten their motivational identity principles of IPT, and how these intersected identities further influence the formation of their masculine identities.

2.3.2. Religion and Identity

Religion, as an essential aspect of identity, has long been a defining aspect of culture and societies, shaping culture, tradition, way of life, and politics (Walsh, 1998). Maslow considers religious inclination an integral security need, because it can create an ordered and safe space for people by affording resistance to life's unpleasant shocks and disruptions (Griffin, 2003: 127). Similarly, Loewenthal (2014: 330) argues that religion and identity are inseparable, and "religion" and "religious identity" have frequently been evaluated and expressed predominantly through self-definition.

Many religious groups have continued to suffer due to their beliefs, becoming the target of both discrimination and hostility. The subject of this research, Islamophobia, has been a contemporary phenomenon in Western countries for several decades, creating challenges for Muslims living in non-Muslim nations (The Changing Landscape of Citizenship and Security 6th PCRD of European Commission, 2006). According to Cinnirella (2014: 254), in its current form, Islamophobic prejudice is arguably one of the fastest-growing prejudices in the UK and many other Western nations. Typically, religiously and racially motivated assaults target people's personality, identity, and perception of "who they really are". These kinds of attacks are perceived 'as attacks on the values, loyalties and commitments which are central to a person's sense of identity and self-worth, -their family honour, their friends, their culture,

heritage, religion, community, history' (Runnymede Trust, 1997: 39). A person's mental and physical health are thereby profoundly affected by threats of this nature, including those targeting religious identity (Loewenthal, 2014: 318).

The migration process and immigrant status are already difficult and challenging due to the vast societal change, and pose a threat to identity definition (Timotijevic & Breakwell, 2000: 355). Consequently, any attack that targets individuals' religious and immigrant identities may generate more destructive effects arising from the substantial threat to their identities. Muslims may also respond more strongly by safeguarding their identities and developing an attitude of vigilance with regard to probable attacks, which may cause serious psychological discomfort, including paranoia, in many cases (Awan & Zempi, 2015: 27).

2.3.3. Identity Theories and Islamophobia

In the psychoanalytic tradition, crisis and consecutive identifications in social interaction and relations generate a global self-awareness, which is described as "identity" (Erikson, 1968). According to symbolic interactionist researchers, a person can have multiple identities associated with the number of roles they adopt; these identities are negotiated based on the roles people perform which are in turn shaped by their social positions (McCall & Simmons, 1982; cited in Breakwell, 1986). According to Breakwell (1986), when assimilating and accommodating a social identity a permanent residue arises, which can be considered a component of personal identity. This assimilation/accommodation process is highly dynamic and regulates the structure of identity (Timotijevic & Breakwell, 2000: 355). The assimilation/accommodation process arises in response to any new situation, incident, subject, or object, and can be either difficult (leading to resistance) or easy (leading to adaptation). In both instances, the individual's identity undergoes change. Muslims may experience an assimilation/accommodation process as a result of being subjected to novel "things" (that mostly cause challenges and psychological discomfort), including as a result of moving to a new environment and being perceived as "immigrants" among others that hold different religious beliefs or none (Loewenthal, 2014: 330).

Referring to Islamophobia specifically, Cinnirella (2014: 254) suggests that its psychological antecedents arise at multiple levels of understanding, from the intrapsychic through to the interpersonal, intergroup, and societal levels of IPT (Breakwell, 1986, 1993, 2000), meaning it offers an excellent and comprehensive model. He (2014) addresses broader theoretical issues regarding the socio-psychological nature of prejudice, evaluating how

psychological antecedents and motives arising from any threat perception to identity strengthen "self" and "identity", in turn, exacerbating prejudice and discrimination. He (2014) concludes that some perceived threats (e.g., fear of terror exacerbated mostly by media representations and portrayals of Muslims) to identity (both individual and group, including national identity) and some significant identity principles (in particular continuity, self-esteem, self-efficacy, and distinctiveness) may be responded to by creating prejudice and discrimination as personal or collective coping mechanisms. Finally, Cinnirella (2014) develops and proposes a new model, the Identity and Representations Model (IRM). IRM represents an attempt to synthesise predictions and observations from a number of separate theories within social psychology; e.g., Intergroup Threat Theory (ITT), Social Identity Theory (SIT), Terror Management Theory (TMT), and Social Representations Theory (SRT), with the specific aim of revealing the antecedents of Islamophobic prejudice.

In this research, I argue that IPT can also provide an excellent and comprehensive model, as it offers an elegant approach to understanding the psychological antecedents of Islamophobia, in order to explore and understand the challenges faced by Muslim men. Loewenthal (2014: 330) emphasises that IPT provides unique explanations for the connection between religion and identity, and that any situation threatening this link can engender difficulties, psychological distress, or mental health issues. In view of these ideas, the present study employs IPT to learn how Muslim men's identity principles (continuity, self-esteem, self-efficacy, distinctiveness, belonging, meaning, and psychological coherence principles) are impacted by their challenges, specifically Islamophobia, and the coping mechanism they develop to respond to these threats.

2.3.4. Identity Process Theory (IPT)

As stated by Cinnirella (2014: 255), 'Identity Process Theory (IPT) was conceptualized with the goal of elucidating and predicting how individuals and groups respond to psychological threats and especially threats to identity'. According to this understanding, although identity resides in psychological processes, it manifests itself through thought, action, and affect. Individuals can actively observe and monitor their identity status as self-aware constructors of the self, with the ability to renovate, replace, revise, and remove necessary identity components (Timotijevic & Breakwell, 2000: 355). IPT considers that,

> [T]he structure of identity is a dynamic social product of the interaction of the capacities for memory, consciousness and organised construal (that are characteristic of the

> biological organism) with the physical and societal structures and influence processes which constitute the social context. (Timotijevic & Breakwell, 2000: 355)

Exponents of IPT are especially interested in how processes of societal change influence the construction of an individual's identity (Breakwell, 1986; Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2012: 506).

According to IPT, 'identity structure should be conceived in terms of its content and value/affect dimensions, as this structure is governed by two universal processes, namely the accommodation/assimilation process and the evaluation process' (Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2012: 505). Breakwell (1986: 34) argues that accommodation/assimilation and evaluation are universal psychological processes that are also highly dynamic and regulate identity structures. 'As components of the same process; assimilation refers to the absorption of new components into the identity structure; accommodation refers to the adjustment which occurs in the existing structure in order to find a place for new elements' (Breakwell, 1986: 34). The evaluation process contributes allocation of meaning and value to both new and old identity content (Breakwell, 1986: 34). Accommodation/assimilation and evaluation processes work together to generate uniqueness or distinctiveness for an individual, as well as continuity across time and situation, and a feeling of personal worth or social value. These three principles are referred to as distinctiveness, continuity, and self-esteem (Breakwell, 1986: 34; Timotijevic & Breakwell, 2000: 355). Individuals engage in both processes when developing a sense of identity, and they are driven by identity principles, which refer to the motivational underpinnings of identity and specify the end states that are regarded as ideal for the structure of identity (Breakwell, 1993; Vignoles, 2011: 410; Breakwell et al., 2022). A threat to identity emerges when processes of assimilation/accommodation become impossible, and fail to comply with the principles of continuity, distinctiveness, self-efficacy, and self-esteem (Timotijevic & Breakwell, 2000: 357). Otherwise, the evaluation process generates a method for coping with the new situation. For instance, the exercise of 'self- efficacy' can be engaged in order to regain self-esteem, when self-esteem is being threatened (Breakwell, 1986: 114). Belonging, meaning, and psychological coherence are additional motivational principles that were proposed in later works (Vignoles et al., 2002; Jaspal and Cinnirella, 2010). These identity principles proved significant throughout cultures, despite presenting themselves differently among different communities (Vignoles et al., 2006). On the basis of IPT, Muslim men's experiences challenging continuity, distinctiveness, self-efficacy, self-esteem, belonging, meaning, and psychological coherence can be perceived as threatening, which also affects their responses to threat.

Some of the most important discussions surrounding ethnic identity centre on how it affects the self, how people respond to challenges to the self, and what drives people and groups to preserve their ethnic identities. Notably, IPT has considerable heuristic value when applied to such problems, given its focus on the motivational concepts connected to identity processes (Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2012: 505). Indeed, 'IPT is very well suited to provide insight into the motivational principles underlying the construction of complex multifaceted ethnic identities' (Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2012: 520). IPT can also be a very useful instrument for understanding the way challenges, in this case Islamophobia, might affect the motivational identity principles of Muslim men. Since it offers a broad and integrative theoretical framework, Jaspal and Cinnirella (2012: 506) argue that IPT serves as a particularly useful theoretical framework when analysing the development of potentially complex ethnic identities, such as those of British South Asians (BSAs) and possibly other groups. Loewenthal (2014: 323) argues that identity content is continuously shifting, and that IPT provides interpretations and even predictions regarding the motivational dynamics that underly identity shifts. IPT can therefore provide a comprehensive framework for exploring the challenges (including identity threats, particularly Islamophobia threat) Muslim males navigate.

2.3.4.1. Motivational Identity Principles

During accommodation/assimilation and evaluation, a sense of identity is sought. The two processes are driven by identity principles, which refer to the motivational underpinnings of identity and specify the end states that are regarded as ideal for structuring identity (Breakwell, 1993; Vignoles, 2011: 410; Breakwell et al., 2022). Identity principles are significant across cultures; however they present differently in different cultures (Vignoles et al., 2006). Breakwell (2021: 579) explains how the identity principle can be operationalised in three different ways:

> First, in terms of how much the individual desires (is motivated) to achieve a specific identity state that is an expression of the principle (for instance, ability to overcome barriers acting as an expression of self-efficacy). Second, in terms of the level of effort that is being expended to gain the desired identity state (e.g. the amount of persistence shown in seeking to find ways of overcoming barriers). Third, in terms of the extent to which the desired identity state has been achieved (e.g. the self-assessed ratings of self-efficacy). Essentially, these distinctions are between motive strength, goal-oriented action, and identity state. (Breakwell, 2021: 579)

Additionally, identity principles have three major effects on the processes involved in how a person responds to identity threats: (i) they raise awareness of the threat and pinpoint which aspect of the identity configuration is at risk; (ii) they guide the selection of appropriate coping mechanisms; and (iii) they influence how the identity structure is reconstructed or reorganised to compensate for the perceived risk (Breakwell, 2021: 579). One of the key hypotheses of IPT is that when one identity principle is threatened or under pressure, other identity principles may be drawn upon to develop a coping strategy (Breakwell et al., 2022:178).

Continuity, self-esteem, and distinctiveness were the first three identity principles identified by Breakwell (1986); along with further research resulting in the addition of self-efficacy (Breakwell, 1993), meaning, belonging (Vignoles et al., 2002), and psychological coherence (Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2010).

2.3.4.1.1. Continuity

The continuity principle refers to continuity across time and situation. Typically, accommodation/assimilation and evaluation processes work together to ensure continuity across time and situation (Breakwell, 1986: 34; Timotijevic & Breakwell, 2000: 355). Any new situation, development, or threat is assessed through accommodation/assimilation and evaluation processes, as people (identities) seek out a way to maintain continuity. Breakwell (1993: 8) explains the continuity principle quoting Erikson's (1980) view that 'the individual seeks what neatly called persistent sameness with oneself'. Although the continuity principle describes the necessity of maintaining an identity connection through time and in multiple contexts, there is a conceptual thread connecting past, present, and future, and continuity does not always denote the absence of change (Breakwell, 1987).

2.3.4.1.2. Self-esteem

Individuals constantly strive to maintain high self-esteem, as feelings of personal worth or social value are among the most significant components of identity construction (Breakwell, 1986: 34; Timotijevic & Breakwell, 2000: 355). Self-esteem is also accepted as a fundamental principle of all identity theories (Breakwell, 1993). According to IPT, accommodation/assimilation and evaluation processes work in unison to produce feelings of personal worth or social value (Breakwell, 1986: 34; Timotijevic & Breakwell, 2000: 355). IPT research suggests people's need to maintain their self-esteem is amplified in the face of any threat or challenge (Vignoles et al., 2006; Breakwell, 2021).

2.3.4.1.3. Self-efficacy

The self-efficacy principle refers to the motivation to maintain feelings of competence and control (Breakwell, 1993). Moreover, IPT was in part 'influenced by Bandura's (1977) Self-Efficacy Model. Bandura (1995) defined self-efficacy as the belief in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations' (p.2). People's sense of self-efficacy is significantly more dependent on their perceived accomplishments than on their actual achievements (Jaspal, 2014). In the case of IPT, the individual's own perception of their self-efficacy is considered a strong determinant of decision-making and action, and is generally acknowledged to guide choice of coping strategies (Breakwell, 2021: 577-8).

2.3.4.1.4. Distinctiveness

The distinctiveness principle serves 'as a motive pushing toward the establishment and maintenance of a sense of differentiation from others, with implications for cognition, affect, and behaviour' (Vignoles et al., 2000: 338; Vignoles et al., 2002: 203). When combined, accommodation/assimilation and evaluation processes work together to generate personal uniqueness or distinctiveness (Breakwell, 1986: 34; Timotijevic & Breakwell, 2000: 355). Individuals (identities) frequently strive for uniqueness, both personally (having distinguishing traits that afford them a sense of pride) and socially (belonging to a social category with distinguishing norms and standards that set them apart from other groups) (Fearon, 1999: 2). Vignoles et al. (2000: 337) suggest that 'on a social level, people will act especially in ways that show their distinctiveness to others'. Individual distinctiveness may prove unique to Western or individualistic cultures, whereas group distinctiveness may be more significant than individual distinctiveness in the context of collectivist societies (Breakwell, 1987; Vignoles et al., 2000: 342). Thus,

> Distinctiveness may be constructed in multiple ways with different implications for identity and behaviour, using dimensions of "position", "difference", and "separateness" on both individual and group levels, and, basically, "difference" refers to intrinsic qualities of the individuals and defined criteria for groups; "separateness" signifies distance from others and the negation of the relationship; and "position" refers to one's place within social relationships. (Vignoles et al., 2000: 347)

2.3.4.1.5. Belonging

People wish to belong, which involves developing a sense of affinity and closeness with and acceptance by other people (Vignoles, 2011: 419). According to Easterbrook and Vignoles (2013), a sense of belonging is essential to maintain optimal psychological functioning. IPT argues that multiple group memberships may apply, allowing individuals to maintain their sense of belonging (Jaspal, 2012). People frequently adopt a variety of coping mechanisms in response to threats to their sense of belonging, with enhanced group affiliation being one of the most notable coping mechanisms (Picket et al., 2002; Vignoles, 2011).

2.3.4.1.6. Meaning

The meaning motive refers to the desire to seek importance or purpose in one's own existence (Baumeister, 1991). Meaning-seeking is a crucial facet of human nature, and the search for meaning helps individuals to maintain and enhance their psychological well-being (Vignoles et al., 2006: 311). Essentially, individuals in various societies pursue a sense of meaning in a variety of ways, and the meaning motivation has a significant and pervasive effect on definitions of identity (Vignoles, 2011: 417). Maintaining a sense of meaning is crucial to avoid 'descending into paralysing feelings of dread or despondency,' as no one wishes to view the events in their lives as random and arbitrary (Vignoles, 2011: 417).

2.3.4.1.7. Psychological Coherence

Another motivational identity principle is psychological coherence, which 'refers to the necessity for compatibility and coherence across pre-existing identities' (Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2010: 865). Jaspal and Cinnirella (2010) proposed this as an additional identity principle, distinct from Breakwell's (1986) continuity principle. While their sexual (gay) and religious (Muslim) identities were perceived as incoherent and contradictory, Jaspal and Cinnirella (2010) found many Muslim participants seem able to reconcile any incoherences with pre-existing identities. Thus, Jaspal and Cinnirella (2010) attribute a specific meaning to the psychological coherence principle; 'it refers to the individual's subjective perception of compatibility between their identities' (p. 865).

2.3.4.1.8. Coping Methods

Any threat to identity is undesirable, as it has significant implications for well-being. Therefore, identity responds to threats to self-esteem, self-efficacy, distinctiveness, or continuity by adopting coping strategies (Loewenthal, 2014: 318). A coping strategy refers to any activity at the level of thought or action designed to remove or modify a threat to identity

(Timotijevic & Breakwell, 2000: 357). ‘A coping strategy is defined as any activity, in thought or deed, which has as its goal the removal or modification of a threat to identity’ (Breakwell, 1986: 78). An identity threat may arise from various factors or changes in social and personal circumstances. Individuals may endeavour to respond to identity threats by adopting coping strategies to alleviate them (Breakwell, 1986; Jaspal, 2012). IPT suggests that when identity processes fail to satisfy identity principles, identity principles are undermined or become insecure. This results in the individual experiencing identity threat, which can be perceived as unpleasant and even prove detrimental to psychological health (Breakwell, 1986; Jaspal, 2012; Vignoles, 2011; Breakwell et al., 2022).

IPT emphasises the significance of self-esteem, self-efficacy, distinctiveness, and continuity when discussing individual coping processes, as identity develops from shifting social contexts (Loewenthal, 2014: 318). According to Breakwell (1986: 52), short-term, unstable and internal threats might be navigated by employing re-evaluation tactics, while long-term, stable, and external threats entail engagement of strategies of social change. For instance, enhancing religious identity is a widely applied coping method when responding to any threat that targets ethnicity and race. Loewenthal (2014: 321) cites Coates’ study (2011), which reported that as a coping method against racial stigma, black students identify more strongly with religious communities than with achievement values. She further claims that religious identity is often developed as a strategy for protecting (in particular continuity, meaning, and belonging) and enhancing well-being.

Members of religious–cultural minority groups are hesitant to seek professional assistance to address their psychological difficulties (Chaudhrey, 2020). In small religious-cultural settings, disclosure of a group member’s psychological problems may result in stigmatisation, damage self-esteem and their sense of belonging, and their chances of being approved of as a “valid” member (Loewenthal, 2014: 328). Therefore, members of religious–cultural minority groups typically prefer to strengthen their group identification (Timotijevic & Breakwell, 2000: 359) to enhance their sense of belonging, continuity, self-esteem and distinctiveness principles and thereby bolster their identity (Loewenthal, 2014: 329). As an additional coping mechanism, some members of religious–cultural minority groups may prioritise their group identities over their other identities. The relative separation and perceived significance of ethnic and religious identity may vary from group to group. For example, some may view being Muslim as a cultural identity rather than a religious one, whereas others view religious identity as distinct and more significant than cultural (ethnic) identity (Loewenthal, 2014: 326). Thus, a response

to any threat to the ethnic and racial identities of immigrants might highlight religious and gender identities, or vice versa.

One of IPT's key strengths resides in its recognition, explanation, and elaboration of the various coping mechanisms people adopt when they believe their identities are under threat (Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2012: 507). Therefore, IPT does more than simply theorise identity construction; it also describes the conditions that generate effective identity processes. Additionally, it envisages how an individuals may respond to identity threats. Since different forms of identity threat engender different responses, coping strategies are flexible and individualised. In addition, it is asserted that some tactics are more effective over the long term than others (Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2012: 507). Depending on the degree of interdependence between people, their chosen coping mechanism may change. IPT identifies intra-psychic, interpersonal, group, intergroup, and societal levels of coping mechanisms (Breakwell, 1986; Breakwell, 2015b; Breakwell et al., 2022). Despite coping mechanisms fundamentally falling within these stages of human dependency, they will likely vary qualitatively by individual and/or culture (Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2012: 507).

2.3.4.2. Advantages – Limitations of IPT

According to Cinnirella (2014: 255), IPT is ideally suited to examining threats within a coherent model of identity structure and processes, as it encompasses components that other theories only partially address. Regarding the relationship and connection between identity and religion, IPT offers unique explanations and insights that Social Identity Theory (SIT) and role theory only do to a very limited extent (Loewenthal, 2014: 330). In addition, IPT offers a comprehensive model affording insight into the implications of religious identity on coping strategies, when developed in response to perceived threats to identity. While SIT can be helpful for understanding intergroup relations, prejudice, and hostility, it also focuses on identity as it arises from group membership, categorization, and comparison, rather than the individual's own dynamic processes of identity formation (Loewenthal, 2014: 318). In contrast, IPT is enormously concerned with the dynamic processes of identity development as experienced by the individual. IPT contends that individuals have freedom of choice with regard to formulating their identity structure; therefore, changes in identity are purposeful (Timotijevic & Breakwell, 2000: 357).

2.4. Gender Issues and the Challenges for Muslim Men

Gender is one of the most important factors in an individuals' identity formation. When reviewing the challenges faced by religious or ethnic minority groups, gender appears to play a significant role, with historical gender relations and the construction of gender identities influencing individuals' lives and posing various difficulties. Connell (2005: 76) emphasises that the gender relations within a society must first be examined in order to comprehend class, racial, or global inequality. Gender interacts strongly with race, class, and religion, and cultural constructs have significant effects on gender (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005: 839). Understanding both genders requires understanding of intersecting relationships between masculinities and femininities and other social categories, such as class, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, age, and religion (Hakak, 2016: 18). Since gender identities have a considerable impact on the lives of minority group members, the gender question is a prominent area of interest when researching minority groups (Reid & Comas-Diaz, 1990). Unarguably, gender is fundamental to the formulation of the identity of modern Muslims in the UK, requiring careful consideration in order to comprehend the challenges Muslims face (Alkhammash, 2020: 92).

2.4.1. Muslim 'Bodies' as Symbols of Otherness and Difference

In the gender related issues of Islam and Muslims, Muslim woman's body and Muslim man's body is treated as a powerful site for the construction of identity and otherness (Culcasi & Gokmen, 2011: 85). On the one hand, they are more likely to be subjected to racialized and religiously inspired discrimination and hostile acts because of the way they physically present their Muslim identity. On the other hand, Muslim women who wear a headscarf, veil, or hijab, as well as Muslim men with beards and religious attire, are typically regarded as those who should and must be rescued from religious oppression (Sharma et al. 2019: 99). For instance, after the Afghanistan War in 2001, in many newspapers and magazines, 'women removing their coverings and men shaving their beards became a central narrative that symbolized liberation' (Culcasi & Gokmen, 2011: 91). However, it is commonly overlooked that many individuals may have chosen to wear a headscarf or beard of their own choice without feeling oppressed. Repeatedly, a debate on Muslim women's headscarf or veil is sparked by considering it as religious oppression, thereby exacerbating Islamophobia and discrimination and drawing more negative attention to Muslim women. These women typically endure the brunt of Islamophobia and are sometimes labelled as potential brides of Daesh and other terrorist groups (Sharma et al. 2019: 96). Muslim women are frequently gendered based on

their physical religious symbols, such as the headscarf, veil, and hijab; their bodies become symbols of otherness and differences (Culcasi & Gokmen, 2011: 85).

2.4.2. Gendered Islamophobia

According to Hopkins (2016: 187), in the case of Islamophobic attacks, the majority of victims are women, while the majority of the perpetrators are men, particularly white men, whose 'racially and religiously motivated violence is first motivated by racism that is partially shaped by patriarchy and sexism, with the victims being targeted as a result of these racist interpretations of the intersections of gender, ethnicity, and religion'. Consequently, religiously motivated discrimination frequently also encompasses the dimension of racial discrimination, as racial prejudice appears to stem from gender relations, gender roles, and the competitive character of masculine identities. Similarly, the majority of Islamophobic attacks are perpetrated by 'white men who enact specific practises associated with masculinity and white supremacy' (Hopkins, 2016: 187). These attacks send the message that the power of their masculine identity functions as a symbol of their superiority and should be feared.

2.4.3. Gendered Muslim Men, Islamophobia and Masculinity

Muslim men are gendered too; as bearded, dark-skinned, or turban-wearing terrorists (Sharma et al. 2019: 99) their bodies become a site 'where identities are created, symbolised, performed, and even contested'. Specifically in Orientalist tradition, the beard has been perceived as a sign of backwardness, and removal of the beard as a symbol of modernization and liberation (Culcasi & Gokmen, 2011: 92). However, religions generally promote traditional masculinity and its bodily expressions, contributing to the justification of the masculine dominance over the feminine (Connell, 2005: 46). Conceptions of masculinity can be perceived as beliefs about what it means to be a man, and what kinds of actions are expected from men (Fedele, 2013). In the Islamic tradition, masculinity emerges as a set of distinctive practices; both pride and responsibilities are given to men as, 'breadwinner, protector of family honour, providers for the family needs, and when required as fighters or martyrs for family, values, nation and religion' (Ouzgane, 2006: 4). Relative to its Western application, the terms of masculinity in the Islamic tradition appear to impose a direct and enormous responsibilities on men to provide for their families and meet their requirements. Certainly, this is not to obscure the reality that many women in the Muslim world share their husbands' responsibilities, by working and becoming breadwinners. Rather it is intended to stress that religious, cultural, traditional, and societal pressures on men are relatively more intense, as

men are expected to be the primary bearers of responsibility. Taking on this responsibility is not always a simple process, particularly in contexts where Muslim men face not only life's challenges but also racially motivated competitiveness focusing on masculinity and religiously motivated hate crimes, Islamophobia.

Islamophobia is most commonly a matter of debate in Western countries where Muslims are immigrants, minorities, and symbolically "other". Muslim males often face insurmountable obstacles in the Western world, bearing the dual burden of being immigrants and outsiders and traditional masculinity roles. In a context in which they are treated as 'Other', it appears that Muslim men must overcome additional obstacles to make a good life for themselves and their families: finding a safe housing and neighbourhood, getting a proper job, earning enough money to meet family needs, providing quality education for children, forming social ties, participating appropriately in society, transmitting cultural and religious values to children, maintaining a healthy balance between work and family life, etc. In a climate of growing Islamophobia, fears about the safety of their families may also contribute an additional layer to Muslim men's stress. As one of their primary responsibilities is to safeguard their families and ensure their safety, they may feel they need to be more vigilant and expend additional efforts fulfilling their fatherly and spousal duties. It is anticipated that this may have disruptive psychological effects on Muslim men's psychology. As Connell (2005: 86) emphasises, inherited sex roles and masculinity requirements could bind men to specific gender patterns and place extreme pressure on them.

2.4.4. Masculinities Theory

Connell's theory of masculinities is widely recognised as the most prominent theory in the study of men and masculinities, with far-reaching implications not only for gender studies but also many other fields. The theory analyses historically specific masculinities by applying a critical feminist analysis, acknowledging the varying degrees to which individual men play in its reproduction (Wedgwood, 2009). According to Connell (2005), there have been many perceptions of masculinity; for example, the view that 'true masculinity is almost always thought to proceed from men's bodies - to be inherent in a male body or to express some- thing about a male body' (p. 45); masculinity refers to the social elaboration of the biological function of fatherhood (p. 52); and that where 'religion's capacity to justify gender ideology has collapsed, biology has been chosen to fill the gap' (p. 46). Connell (2005: 71) suggests that to understand masculinity, the processes and relationships through which men and women conduct gendered lives should be examined. She (2005: 71) argues that 'masculinity is

simultaneously a place in gender relations, the practises through which men and women engage that place in gender, and the effects of these practises in bodily experience, personality, and culture'.

In addition, Connell's theory of masculinity is especially intriguing and important when considering questions of gender and power, as well as the notion of masculine dominance (Wedgwood, 2009). In her initial formulation, Connell (1987, 1995) argues hegemonic masculinity represents a specific form of masculinity that exists within a particular historical and societal context and legitimises unequal gender relations between men and women, masculinity and femininity, and among masculinities. Connell (1987: 183) stresses that 'hegemonic masculinity is always constructed in relation to various subordinated masculinities as well as in relation to women'. Indeed, Connell (2005: 77) applies the term "hegemonic masculinity" referring to 'the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women' (Connell, 2005: 77). Subsequently, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) significantly reformulated the concept of hegemonic masculinity to address the associated misconceptions and misapplications. Hegemonic masculinity is typically reified as the most honoured way of being a man, i.e., necessitating that all other men position themselves in relation to it. However, hegemonic masculinity does not imply violence, but rather ascendancy accomplished through cultural advancement, institutions, and persuasion (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005: 832). 'The reformulated model of hegemonic masculinity also proposes that scholars empirically examine existing hegemonic masculinities on three levels: local, regional, and global' (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005: 832). Messerschmidt (2018) proposes that hegemonic masculinity be conceived of entirely in plural terms, with emphasis placed on recognising the differences among hegemonic masculinities as a key aspect of enlarging the concept, not only in terms of local, regional, and global contexts, but also in terms of hybrid, dominating versus protective, and material versus discursive hegemonic masculinities.

2.4.5. Muslim Masculinities

Discussing Muslim masculinities specifically, Siraj (2014:102) asserts that males do not all share the same experience of masculinity; rather, they differ in a variety of ways, including how they define and express masculinity in relation to such variables as race, class, nationality, religion, and social status. The construction and practices of Muslim masculinities are multifaceted, as Muslim 'men are not born; they are made; they construct their masculinities

within particular social and historical contexts' (Ouzgane 2006: 2). However, relatively little research has been conducted to examine how Muslim men themselves perceive masculinity and whether Islam influences how they interpret their own masculinity (Chaudhrey, 2020). Moreover, gender studies scholars rarely examine Islamic masculinity, and when they do, they frequently associate it with deviance-related phenomena, rather than considering religion as one of the fundamental, non-reductionist elements of contemporary Islamic masculinity (Fedele, 2013). However, Siraj (2014:101) argues that religion should be acknowledged as a key factor in the construction of Muslim masculinities, such that studies on Muslim males should take a much broader view of religion's impact on Muslim masculinities.

Despite having less of an impact in Western civilization, when used as a framework to explain differences in the distribution of resources and inequalities between men and women, religion remains relevant (Hakak, 2016:19). In terms of Islam, every area of everyday life is associated with specific gender roles and responsibilities, which support hegemonic masculinity practices; consequently, Muslim males have a religious obligation to provide for their families (Inhorn, 2012). The gender identities of Muslim males continue to be heavily influenced by their religious beliefs and family expectations (Dwyer et al., 2008: 130). Samad (1998)'s research in Bradford revealed that despite Muslim men their having limited knowledge of Islam, they utilise religion to construct and maintain their masculinity, and perceive and practise masculinity as "hard" men. Further research revealed that Islam served as a powerful resource for Pakistani Muslim men in Bradford to justify their control over and even violence against women (Macey, 1999). Their role is that of 'breadwinner, protector of family honour, suppliers for the needs of the family, and, when necessary, fighters or martyrs for family, values, nation, and religion' according to Islamic tradition, and fulfilment of this role gives men both pride and places upon them the burden of responsibility (Ouzgane, 2006: 4).

The construction, understanding and practices of Muslim masculinities are various and multifaceted in the UK context (Archer, 2001; Hopkins, 2007; Dwyer et al., 2008; Hopkins, 2009; Farooq & Parker, 2009). Hopkins (2009: 305) argues that participation in sport is critical to the construction of young Muslim masculinities, as it reinforces masculine identities and associates them with public spaces. Through physical education and sports, Muslim males can embrace and embody their sense of self and convey more generally diverse Islamic aims (e.g., self-discipline) (Farooq & Parker, 2009). Participants in Siraj's (2014) study of Muslim men revealed that they wear beards to distinguish themselves from women and other age groups,

attributing significance to beard growth as indicators of maturation and development (distinguishing from children). Social position is an additional significant component that has a substantial influence on Muslim masculinities. Markussen (2020: 1456) argues that, combined with age, gender, class, and ethnic minority status, Somalis' previous social position in their home country shapes their perceptions of masculinity. Refugees' gender constructions and gender roles are subject to numerous conflicts and crisis as a result of overlapping dominant discourses on race, gender, and social class (Mills, 2012: 29).

Archer (2001) focuses on how young Muslims in the UK adopt a particular model of hegemonic masculinity (powerful, patriarchal) to position themselves relative to Afro-Caribbean men, white men, and Muslim women, and how they construct and use masculinities in discourse. In their work, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005: 842) admit the importance of Archer's (2001) research, which investigated how young Muslims create a locally hegemonic version of masculinity to foster self-respect despite experiences of being discredited, for example, as a result of racial denigration. In Archer's (2001) study, the participants frequently highlighted the combination of their Muslim and masculine identities as a response to prejudice, indicating that Islam provides them with a strong, positive identity. Notably, Archer (2001: 87) interprets this strong identification with religion as a method of coping when encountering racism. Moreover, Archer (2001: 88) also asserts that although young women usually shrug off the significance of race, young men effectively "took up" race, identifying religion as an integral part of race, and by doing so, were able to assert themselves as powerful men in relation to Muslim women and white men. According to Connell (2005: 71), masculinity can also be understood by examining the processes and relationships through which men and women conduct gendered lives. Wetherell (1993, cited in Archer, 2001: 83) argues that men may construct their masculine identities in relation to women (specifically the "ownership" and "control" of women), further by developing discourses that promote the perception that they are in the position of offering "protection of femininity", "caring for" and "controlling" of women. Women are constructed as cultural carriers through their embodiment of collective honour (Yuval-Davis &Anthias, 1989, cited in Archer, 2001). Thus, protection of femininity is central responsibility and feature of masculinity, and Archer (2001: 97) suggests 'that the young Muslim men's resistance to the "westernisation" of Muslim women could be read as a resistance to the internal, psychological "colonising" of Asian/Muslim women by the dominant (white male) culture, because controlling and exploiting another group's women is the ultimate expression of power'.

According to Siraj (2010), religiously informed patriarchal gender roles place men at the head of the family, verifying hegemonic definitions of masculinity, and interestingly, some women approve these gender roles and assist men in feeling masculine. Siraj's (2014: 114) research claims that Muslim males develop and maintain hegemonic masculinity primarily by supporting, defending, and caring for others, especially their wives, working and having the resources to support their families are also essential elements of Muslim masculinity. Indeed, Hopkins (2006) suggests that working is a crucial obligation for Muslim males, since it gives them the strength and ability to support their families. According to Mansoor (2015: 57), Muslim males are subject to familial socio-cultural norms and expectations, one of the most important being honour. Marriage is understood as a means for Muslim men to demonstrate their masculinity, as they dedicate themselves to performing their duties as the family's primary provider (Siraj, 2014: 105). A Muslim man is obligated by his religion to assume responsibility for his wife, by virtue of his custodial responsibility as a guardian for women, providing for their overall socio-economic and emotional welfare, keeping his family well-fed and comfortable, having a moral character and the ability to earn lawful (halal) income to support his family (Aslam, 2014: 146). Muslim men feel compelled to protect and keep a watch over "their" women to preserve their honour, which defines their highest status and control; losing control of a woman would then jeopardise their honour (Madhar, 2019: 5).

On the other hand, in the mainstream media, as well as in the vast majority of academic studies, Muslim men are rarely portrayed as vulnerable or displaying positive emotions, and are frequently characterised in the news solely as violent offenders (Britton, 2015). Research by Britton (2019) on Muslim men in Rotherham suggests that a more comprehensive understanding of Muslim men, beyond the narrow focus on negative emotionality, could be obtained by examining details relating to the under-researched relational, emotional, and intimate dimensions of Muslim men's lives and exploring their personal lives. Britton (2019) asserts that 'focusing on personal life enhances understanding of changing gender and generational relations in Muslim families and shifting masculine roles and identities' (p.36). The child sexual exploitation crisis in Rotherham resulted in predominantly negative narratives of racialized Muslim masculinities, but according to Britton (2019: 37), Muslim men resisted these narratives and emphasised their caring roles, responsibilities, and affective ties to portray a more caring and positive image of their lives. Furthermore, Britton (2019: 46) notes that expressing concerns about the well-being and safety of family members is an additional way in which Muslim men demonstrate caring masculinities.

In his study, which investigates how Muslim men in the UK talk about their experiences of discrimination, Garden (2019) demonstrates that Muslim males discuss their encounters with prejudice by forming their identity in contrast to dominant and inescapable narratives that portray them as suspicious, dangerous, and threatening outsiders who have the potential to become awful extremists and terrorists. As a result, Muslim males in the UK are constantly required to interact with and distance themselves from these widespread discussions. This exemplifies the Muslim men's ability to navigate the challenging discourse environment actively and creatively, thereby highlighting their resilience (Garden, 2019).

2.4.6. Identity Process Theory and Muslim Masculinities

IPT, and notably the fundamental identity motivational principles it posits, are particularly well-suited to comprehending the complex, varied structure of ethnic and minority identities, as the theory emphasises a socio-psychological approach to both identity and identity threat (Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2012: 503-520). It also appears that an IPT perspective on Muslim masculinities in the UK will be beneficial for developing a solid and thorough understanding of Muslim masculinities. Motivational identity principles (continuity, self-esteem, self-efficacy, distinctiveness, belonging, meaning, and psychological coherence) seem to play a significant role in the construction and practices of masculinities, and may also provide important and robust insights into Muslim masculinities.

2.5. Conclusion

In this chapter, the literature reviewed demonstrated how the “identity” problem remains a core consideration when explicating the challenges facing Muslim men living in the UK. According to contemporary sources, their various identities, such as race, ethnicity, gender, religion, immigrant status, class, etc., may enormously influence and shape Muslim men’s lives. Islamophobia continues to constitute one of the biggest challenges facing Muslim men in the UK, and as such, it was examined in detail. Intersectionality, IPT and masculinity will provide the main theoretical vantage points considered in this research.

CHAPTER 3

Research Methodology

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Introduction

As outlined in the previous chapter, relatively little is known about the challenges Muslim men encounter in the UK. The present study seeks to improve knowledge of Muslim men's lived experiences and by so doing, to investigate the types of challenges they face, as they are typically overlooked in academic research.

This chapter introduces the research methodology proposed for this study, describing the nature of qualitative research. It adopts qualitative methods and employs an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). The phenomenological approach is adopted herein to explore and shed light on the nature of the challenges Muslim men must negotiate when living in the UK. To gain a deeper understanding of the nature of these challenges, semi-structured in-depth interviews are conducted with participants from a variety of backgrounds.

In the first section of this chapter, the research questions and study aims are introduced. The second section focuses on the research design and discusses the nature of qualitative research, research paradigms and philosophy, phenomenological research as the research methodology of the study, and IPA. The following section reveals the procedures undertaken, including the participant recruitment methods, inclusion/exclusion criteria, and participant profiles. The data collection process, which included semi-structured interviews, pilot interviews and the development of an interview guide, online interviews, and establishing rapport with the participants, is also described. In the following sections, the data analysis process, the credibility and transferability of the research, ethical considerations, the challenges/limitations of the study, and the researcher's positionality and reflexivity are discussed.

3.2.Research Questions and Aims

The study's overarching aim was to determine the lived experiences of Muslim males in the UK, to gain insight into the difficulties they face. Specifically, it sought to investigate the challenges faced by Muslim men in the UK, an environment in which discrimination and Islamophobia are on the rise, and how their identity constructions, practises, and responses reflect this context. Consequently, the following research questions were posed:

1. What are the challenges Pakistani, Somali and Algerian Muslim men experience in the UK?
2. How do the intersecting identities of Pakistani, Somali, and Algerian Muslim men (such as their race/ethnicity, gender, class, migrant status, and religion) impact their experiences?
3. How do Pakistani, Somali, and Algerian Muslim men in the UK experience challenges (e.g., threats to one's identity) that affect their motivational identity principles as defined by Identity Process Theory (continuity, self-esteem, self-efficacy, distinctiveness, meaning, belonging, and psychological coherence)?
4. How do Pakistani, Somali, and Algerian Muslim men in the UK construct their masculine identities? How do their experiences and challenges impact their construction and practice of masculine identities?

The research questions were developed as a result of my personal and educational background, my personal interests, my initial experiences in the UK, and most importantly, the findings of the pilot study. These factors are discussed in detail in the following sections.

3.3.Research Design

3.3.1. Research paradigm and philosophy

All research designs (quantitative, qualitative, or mixed research design) are rooted in specific worldviews and philosophical traditions (Rossman & Rallis, 2016:41). These theories, which concern the nature of reality and the relationship that humans have with it, are represented by paradigms. Each paradigm has its own underlying philosophical assumptions about ontology (i.e. "what is the nature of reality?"), epistemology (i.e. "what is the relationship between the knower and what can be known?"), and methodology (i.e. "what procedures are used to acquire knowledge?") (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Quantitative researchers favour the positivist paradigm (the belief in an objective reality), whereas qualitative researchers are more likely to adopt the interpretivist paradigm (the belief in a subjective reality). In accordance with the qualitative perspective taken in this study, the interpretivist paradigm is deemed the most suitable as it focuses on Muslim men in the UK's actual lived experiences.

Objectivists (or positivists) believe the nature of reality exists independently of human awareness (Crotty, 1998), and that reality exists "out there" distinct from all human experiences (Laverty, 2003). In contrast, the fundamental tenet of the interpretive paradigm is that "reality is not something 'out there,' but is rather local and specifically constructed" (Laverty, 2003:

26). ‘Since it advocates the belief that every society has its own regime of truth, i.e., discourses that are accepted as true and the mechanisms that make it possible to distinguish between truth and error’ (Sheridan, 1990: 222), the ontological perspective of relativism is adopted here. According to its relativist approach to ontology, this investigation’s epistemological stance is best characterised as interpretivism (social constructionism).

As defined by Saunders et al. (2007), interpretivism is an epistemology that stresses the need to appreciate human diversity and individual social agency. This emphasises the importance of conducting research among people. Critical to interpretivist epistemology is the requirement for the researcher to adopt an empathetic stance (Glesne, 2016: 19). Social constructivism (often combined with interpretivism) is typically viewed as an approach adopted by qualitative researchers’, and social constructivists assume individuals strive to understand the world in which they live and work by developing subjective meanings based on their own experiences (Creswell, 2009: 8). Rossman and Rallis (2016) argue that when interacting with others, people typically use what they see, hear, and experience to develop their own subjective interpretations regarding what they encounter. Thus, in terms of the current research, the challenges faced by Muslim men and the meaning they have on their lives should be understood to arise against the backdrop of each participants’ subjective interpretations of their own lived experiences. Consequently, when presenting the participants’ experiences and perspectives as research findings, I am also aware that these encapsulate subjective meanings negotiated socially and historically through interactions with others.

3.3.2. Qualitative research

The selection of a quantitative, qualitative, or mixed research design for an academic study is typically influenced by the nature of the research problem, the issue being investigated, the personal experiences of the researcher(s), and the intended audience (Creswell, 2009). Importantly, the key differences between quantitative and qualitative research designs are ‘The basic philosophical assumptions, the types of research strategies and the specific methods employed in conducting these strategies’ (Creswell, 2009: 3). The qualitative research strategy is inductivist, constructionist, and interpretivist (Bryman, 2012: 380), with answers are sought in the real world by gathering data from people, places, events, and activities undertaken in natural settings. In contrast, quantitative research is conducted in laboratories or gathered through written survey methods and assessments (Rossman & Rallis, 2016: 39).

According to Creswell (2009), the primary objective of qualitative research is to investigate and comprehend the level of significance individuals or groups place on social or human problems. The qualitative method requires that data collection be undertaken within the participant's natural environment, and the subsequent data analysis involves identifying specific and general themes according to the researcher's interpretation. Rossman and Rallis (2016: 45) argue that qualitative research is essentially interpretive, and that qualitative researchers provide explanations for objects or social actions. In the case of qualitative research, the chief emphasis is on description, analysis, and interpretation, so as to comprehend and make sense of the social world. By contrast, quantitative research usually endeavours to control variables and predict outcomes.

One of the key components of the qualitative approach is often the collection of data through the observation of participants' behaviour while engaged in activities. Additionally, open-ended interviews, in which the researcher seeks to establish the meaning of a phenomenon from the respondents' perspective are also proposed (Bryman, 2012). The purpose of qualitative research is to comprehend and interpret participants' sense-making process in relation to the phenomenon under study. Thus, qualitative researchers usually focus on the specific contexts in which participants live and work, and their interactions with others, with face-to-face interactions being of special interest (Glesne, 2016). When seeking to comprehend the significance of a social or human problems as experienced by individuals, witnessing face-to-face interactions provides comprehensive and understandable data (Creswell, 2009: 4). In qualitative research, investigators may also work with the respondent by collaborating to identify and interpret relevant information to make sense of the topic. This is usually achieved through one-to-one interviews, which allow rapport to be established, and encourage participants to think and communicate in-depth at a personal level (Reid et al., 2005: 22). Hogg and Bannister (2001) contend that a qualitative perspective is most appropriate when investigating under-researched topics. As opposed to the process of forming testable hypotheses prior to data collection, qualitative research allows the researcher to fulfil the objective of investigating the actual experiences of individuals (Hesse-Biber, 2007). As the primary objective of the present study is to investigate and understand the challenges faced by Muslim males in the UK, the qualitative research methodology was considered applicable.

3.3.3. Research methodology: phenomenology

According to Creswell and Miller (1997), research methodology can be described 'as a process in which a methodological perspective is adapted by researchers to shape the direction

of scholarly research by providing a philosophical base or frame of reference'. Qualitative research offers a broad, interpretive, and naturalistic approach to the study of social phenomena, employing a variety of research methodologies (Rossman & Rallis, 2016: 41). As described by interpretivists, the primary objective is to clarify individuals' direct "lived experience," which (originating in phenomenology) also emphasises the significance of the role played by "emotions" in experience (Glesne, 2016: 19). 'Phenomenological approaches are epistemologically grounded in a paradigm of personal knowledge and subjectivity, and thus emphasise the significance of personal perspective and interpretation' (Lester, 1999: 1). Each individual's experience is acknowledged to be distinct, emergent, and comprised of diverse emotions, meanings, and interpretations. The objective of the phenomenological method is to illuminate particular phenomena through participants' senses and perceptions, including their emotions, meanings, and interpretations (Lester, 1999: 2). This is one of the overarching goals of the current study.

According to Creswell (2009: 13) 'Phenomenological research is a strategy of inquiry in which the researcher identifies the essence of human experiences about a phenomenon as described by participants'. Previously, Lester (1999: 2) emphasised that a phenomenological approach is specifically advantageous as a method for revealing in depth issues and making individuals' voices heard. In the context of this study, the phenomenological approach is well-suited to uncovering and comprehending the challenges Muslim men report, which may be either in depth or concealed. To ensure Muslim men's voices are heard, it is first necessary to highlight their experiences and perceptions from their own perspectives.

Moreover, Moustakas (1994: 54) claims that the phenomenological approach concentrates on 'a return to things as they are given', attempting to examine entities from multiple sides, angles, and perspectives to arrive at a unified version of a phenomenon's essence. Thus, the perspective, interpretations, and meaning associated with the researcher become significant when conducting phenomenological research. One of the distinguishing characteristics of phenomenological research is that the researcher's involvement in the study is that of an interested and subjective actor, as opposed to a detached and objective observer (Lester, 1999: 3).

Within qualitative research, phenomenology is utilised to investigate participants' lived experiences. Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger are the most distinguished pioneers of the phenomenological approach. Phenomenological research is also a method created in the fields of philosophy and psychology, by which the researcher provides an account of participants'

subjective experiences with a given occurrence (Laverty, 2003). In the phenomenological approach, it is crucial to investigate how individuals assign meaning to their experiences in the context of their interactions with the environment.

The phenomenological approach requires the division of data into separate segments and units of meaning before coding it into categories (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). During the process of categorization, the researcher should take into account the respondents' customs and language, and the key elements identified. Reconstruction of the categories that subjects use to conceptualise their own experiences and world views is then possible, and the researcher's assessment of significant features then further assists with the development of theoretical insights based on themes. Thus, this analytical process comprises both descriptive and explanatory categories (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

3.3.4. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

Individual perceptions result in different interpretations of the same or dissimilar realities. Although it is widely acknowledged that cultural factors play a significant role in shaping one's worldview, Smith (2015) argues that they contribute to, rather than determine the processes by which someone makes sense of the world. This clearly demonstrates that IPA is more consistent with the epistemological positioning of the current study, as it acknowledges the crucial connection between a person's thinking, speaking, and emotional state, and holds that meanings are constructed by individuals within their own social and personal worlds (Chaudhrey, 2020).

IPA is suitable for interpreting the voices of participants from across the sociocultural spectrum. It is not concerned with evaluating the hypotheses that incorporate prior assumptions; rather, it investigates how participants interpret their experiences. Through their own experiences and life narratives, participants can provide researchers with insights into their beliefs, commitments, and emotions (Reid et al., 2005). IPA provides a successful analysis because it is interpretative, meaning that it prevents results from being presented as facts. It is also transparent, reasonable for participants, co-analysts, supervisors, and general readers; and allows researchers to reflect on their role in the data collection, data analysis, and publication processes (Reid et al., 2005).

The IPA process moves from the particular to the shared, and from the descriptive to the interpretative (hermeneutic) (Smith & Osborn, 2008). Understanding the lived experiences of the participants and their own meaning-making processes in this context are central pillars of

IPA (Smith & Osborn, 2008). In light of these two key integrals, IPA is both phenomenological and psychological. It is phenomenological because it pursues an understanding and explanation of human conscious lived experience of phenomena, and psychological because it seeks an analysis of meaning-making and hermeneutic interpretation (Smith & Osborn, 2008: 53).

3.3.5. Rationale for applying IPA

Although 'IPA was initially applied to problems in health psychology, it became more and more popular in other fields' (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014: 9). For example, Smith and Osborn (2008: 55) identify IPA as a useful tool for investigating how people perceive the situations they face and how they assign meaning within their personal and social worlds. In order to examine the challenges faced by Muslim men in the UK, comprehension of their perceptions of the situations they confront and their sense-making processes in their personal and social worlds can be gleaned from their own personal lived experiences. Muslim men in the UK encounter many challenges, which may complicate their inner lives, daily lives, familial lives, professional lives, and so on. According to Smith and Osborn (2008: 55), IPA is a suitable method to employ when researching complex, process-oriented, or novel topics. Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014: 9) suggest 'community psychologists, as well as psychologists of migration and acculturation, can find IPA useful to examine how various groups construct their ethnic (or group) identity, what meaning they attribute to social roles, and how they perceive phenomena'.

IPA also requires researchers to pose broader and more open research questions. Prior assumptions are avoided in IPA projects, and so researchers employing this tool are not attempting to test hypotheses. The primary objective of IPA is to investigate the area of interest in a flexible and comprehensive manner (Smith & Osborn, 2008: 55). In the current investigation, the researcher has neither prior assumptions nor hypotheses that need to be tested. The investigator has a strong interest in the topic being studied and has worked in this area for a considerable amount of time, however, the aim is to get inside the world of the respondents to grasp the realities of their lives by eliciting more information. According to Smith and Osborn (2008: 57), the best way to collect data for an IPA study is through semi-structured interviews, and if good rapport is established between the researcher and the participants, then the respondents may introduce an issue the researcher had not previously considered. In this circumstance, the researcher should allow participants maximum opportunity to tell their own stories, perceiving them as experiential experts on the topic (Smith & Osborn, 2008: 58). The topic of this research is ideally suited to participants raising an issue

the researcher had not previously considered, and the semi-structured interviews have revealed a wealth of relevant data.

In the case of IPA projects, researchers typically deal with relatively homogeneous groups for which the research question is significant, and favour purposive sampling techniques over random or representative sampling techniques (Smith & Osborn, 2008: 55). In order to gain a broader and more in-depth understanding of the perceptions and understandings of a particular group, IPA investigators conduct interviews with small sample sizes, and spend a considerable amount of time on the analysis process (Smith & Osborn, 2008: 55). To conduct interviews for this study, a group of Muslim males, for whom the research query is significant was chosen. The semi-structured interviews were conducted with Muslim males over the age of 18 who claimed to have encountered difficulties in the UK. In this study, the purposive sampling technique was used to recruit Muslim men over the age of 18 who have encountered challenges in the UK.

Although it has some disadvantages, such as affording less control to the researcher over interviews, requiring a longer time to conduct interviews, and a more complex analysis process, IPA has many advantages for researchers, such as fostering rapport and empathy between the researcher and the participants, permitting greater flexibility of coverage, enabling the interviewees to delve into novel areas, producing richer data, etc. (Smith & Osborn, 2008: 59). The analytical approach taken in this study was based on the concepts mentioned above and on the recommendations for data analysis and interpretation provided by Smith's (2008) practical guidelines.

3.4.Procedures

3.4.1. Recruitment methods

The selection of participants in phenomenological research is guided by two principles: first, they must have experienced the phenomena of interest; and second, they must be able to describe what it is like to have lived through that experience (Moustakas, 1994). Consequently, a nonprobability sampling strategy was implemented. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling method in which participants are chosen or targeted based on predetermined criteria derived from the research questions. The pre-selected criteria for this study included being a Muslim male over the age of 18 residing in the UK, and having experience (of challenges). The researcher used his own connections, social media, and contacts at mosques and student Islamic organisations within universities to recruit 21 Muslim males in the UK over the age of 18. As

a further non-probability sampling technique, convenience sampling was also employed, meaning that subjects were selected based on ease of access for the researcher (Maxfield & Babbie, 2009). Details of the research project and the recruitment requirements (Appendix 6) were advertised on social media platforms, such as some Facebook groups and Twitter, and shared via email groups or WhatsApp groups the researcher was already associated with. Potential participants were invited to express interest via email or WhatsApp messages, and a brief telephone screening call was then conducted prior to the interview.

A snowball sampling technique was also included as a sampling strategy. The snowball sampling technique allows for the recruitment of new participants via referrals from those who had already participated in the study. Snowball sampling is a non-probability method typically used when a population of interest is "hidden" or "difficult to access" and there is no sampling frame for the target group (Patton, 1987). Through the use of snowball sampling, I was able to gain access to several participants with an extensive, significant, and rich experience (of challenges) as Muslim men in the UK, via other participants. I asked each participant in the pilot study and in the initial interviews if they knew any other Muslim men in their communities or environments who, in their opinion, have significant experiences to add as Muslim men in the UK. In this way, I was able to gain access to participants with comparatively richer and more dramatic life experiences, allowing me to acquire a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by Muslim men. However, I was aware that snowball sampling has been criticised for not creating statistically random samples and questioning the representativeness of results. Despite this, qualitative social researchers, notably interviewers and ethnographers, employ snowball sampling as a non-random sampling without generalisation, representativeness, or external validity (Parker et al., 2019). The snowball sampling method is also susceptible to selection bias, because the sample is dependent on the researcher's initial contacts and the referral process can result in a homogenous sample with distorted characteristics (Parker et al., 2019). In order to mitigate the selection bias risk, I screened the participants who were recruited against my inclusion/exclusion criteria and recruited only those five individuals whom I deemed suitable for the study. After distributing my research advertisement, I received a large number of responses from potential participants who expressed an interest in participating in the study. This meant I was able to implement snowball sampling relatively narrowly. The interviews were conducted between 02/12/2019 and 20/08/2021.

3.4.2. Inclusion/Exclusion criteria

The pre-selection criteria for the study were, being a Muslim male over the age of 18, residing in the UK, and having lived experiences of challenges as a Muslim man. The primary objective of this research was to conduct interviews with 21 Muslim males from diverse backgrounds, and participants from three distinct backgrounds were chosen. The decision to conduct interviews with Pakistani, Somali, and Algerian Muslim males was based on a number of reasons. First, Pakistanis, Somalis, and Algerians have distinct geographical backgrounds (Asian, East African, and North African, respectively), and their cultural backgrounds, lifestyles, and levels of social participation vary, which affects their experiences and the challenges they face. Secondly, the histories of Pakistanis, Algerians, and Somalis in the UK are quite distinct. Although Pakistanis first arrived in the UK in the 1950s, Algerians and Somalis have been living in the UK since the 1980s and 1990s. This is a particularly relevant criterion for this research, because it means the three groups have distinct generations currently in the UK: Pakistanis are third, fourth, or even fifth generation; Algerians and Somalis are mostly first and second generation, with a limited number of third-generation. Length of group history in the UK was considered a highly significant variable, due to its quite substantial impact on the difficulties the individuals within it encounter, relating to settling in the country, established social connections, and securing of economic positions. Thirdly, my colleagues in the Turkish kebab restaurant, who initially inspired me to focus my PhD research on Muslim men, masculinity, intersectionality, psychological motivations, and emotions, were of Pakistani, Somali, and Algerian descent. It was the first time in my life that I had personally made Pakistani, Somali, and Algerian acquaintances, and I was aware that their differing characteristics would add interest to this academic research.

I also considered marital status when selecting participants, as this tends to influence the nature of a person's difficulties and experiences. I conducted interviews with 14 married and 7 single participants. Being a first-generation or subsequent-generation individual was also an important criterion, and I essentially classified my interviews as either with first-generation or subsequent-generation participants. Length of residency in the UK was also a factor in the selection of participants. I decided to exclude participants who had resided in the UK for fewer than two years, because, in my opinion, it takes at least two years to gain a thorough understanding of a place and build up enough experience to provide useful insights.

Location was yet another significant exclusion criterion used when selecting participants. Only Muslim males residing in London or Birmingham, the two largest cities in the UK, were

interviewed. London and Birmingham are the most ethnically, culturally and religiously diverse places in the UK with population of 8,796,628 and 1,144,900, respectively (How the population changed where you live, Census 2021 – ONS, 2022). According to the most recent census data (2021), the Muslim population in London had risen to 15% from 12.6% in 2011, while the Muslim population in Birmingham had reached 29.9% from 21.8% in 2011 (Religion, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics, 2022). In terms of multiculturalism, London and Birmingham are held up as national and worldwide role models making them ideal candidates for this research.

3.4.3. Sample size

According to Moustakas (1994), the use of the phenomenological approach requires the examination of a limited number of participants through in-depth and extended involvement, with the purpose of discerning patterns and connections of significance. Similarly, IPA contradicts the conventional understanding of a linear relationship between 'number of participants' and research value (Smith & Osborn, 2008). Additionally, Lester (1999:1) argues that, in multiple participant research, when factors begin to recur across participants, the strength of any inference increases.

According to Reid et al., writing in 2005, the average number of participants engaged in IPA research was 15, while the greatest sample size was 42. Indeed, there is no definitive answer to the question of sample size, because it is determined by a number of factors, including the nature of the studied topic, the number of cases, the amount of data collected, the researcher's constraints, and the analysis process (Smith & Osborn, 2008: 56). Reid et al. (2005) also suggest larger sample sizes can be used in comparison groups to investigate a phenomenon from multiple perspectives and develop a more detailed, multifaceted account of the phenomenon, as a form of "triangulation". For the purpose of this study, 7 semi-structured interviews were conducted with individuals from each of three distinct nationality groups: Pakistani, Somali, and Algerian. The total sample size was therefore 21. Although the sample group shared a common gender, religion, and place of residence (the UK), their diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds may have affected their lived experiences, level/form of encounter, and responses to Islamophobia. I investigated the differences between the three nationality groups, which enabled me to make comparisons from which to triangulate research data.

3.4.4. The participants

My research sample consisted of twenty-one respondents. Table 1 below sets out demographic data pertaining to place, age, marital status, occupation, nationality, years spent in the UK, and generational position. Pseudonyms have been assigned to every participant.

Table 1. *Participants' profiles*

Name	Place	Age	M. Status	Occupation	Nationality	In the UK Since	Generational Position
Abbas	London	28	Married	Student	Pakistan	2017	First Generation
Bilal	London	38	Married	IT	Pakistan	2000	First Generation
Dawood	London	41	Married	Shopkeeper	Pakistan	1997	First Generation
Elyas	London	20	Single	Student	Pakistan	Born in the UK	Second Generation
Faisal	London	33	Married	Finance	Somali	2017	First Generation
Ghaffar	London	37	Married	Teacher	Pakistan	Born in the UK	Third Generation
Hamza	Birmingham	46	Married	Teacher/Imam	Algerian	2003	First Generation
Imran	London	63	Married	Teacher/Imam	Somali	1980	First Generation
Javed	London	35	Married	PhD Student	Pakistan	2016	First Generation
Kabir	Birmingham	45	Married	Mechanical Engineer	Algerian	1988	First Generation
Lateef	Birmingham	56	Married	NGO Director	Somali	1995	First Generation
Muhammad	Birmingham	30	Married	Teacher	Somali	Born in the UK	Second Generation
Rashid	London	68	Married	IT	Pakistan	1990	First Generation
Salman	London	44	Single	NGO Director	Algerian	1999	First Generation
Tahir	London	49	Married	Uber Driver	Algerian	1995	First Generation
Uzair	Birmingham	21	Single	Engineer	Somali	Born in the UK	Second Generation
Vasam	Birmingham	22	Single	Student	Algerian	Born in the UK	Second Generation
Wahab	London	21	Single	Engineer	Somali	Born in the UK	Second Generation
Yousuf	Birmingham	22	Single	IT	Somali	2010	First Generation
Zain	London	22	Single	NGO	Algerian	Born in the UK	Third Generation
Zakariya	London	59	Married	Retired TFL staff	Algerian	1982	First Generation

3.5.Data Collection Process

3.5.1. Semi-structured individual interviews

Individual, semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted to support the data collection process in this study. This method enabled me to elicit rich and authentic data with detailed descriptions from the participants, as well as affording me enough flexibility to accommodate the participants' varying characteristics and levels of understanding. Individual interviews are appropriate when a researcher wishes to inquire about a sensitive topic that requires confidentiality and a more intimate setting for data collection. Similarly, individual interviews are typically preferred when working with "difficult to reach" groups, such as religious or minority groups. Individual interviews are also more manageable and convenient than group interviews, because the researcher is able to concentrate fully on only one person. This method also facilitates rapport-building, ensuring the participant would be willing to share personal information, and pursue interesting areas without other participants interrupting them (Zempi & Chakraborti, 2014). Due to the sensitive nature of the current study, which sought to reach members of religious minority groups to investigate the challenges they face, individual semi-structured in-depth interviews allowed me to develop stronger rapport with the participants and gain a deeper understanding of Muslim men's experiences. The semi-structured nature of the interviews also provided me with flexibility in terms of rearranging the order of the interview questions and resolving inconsistencies in responses, as well as allowing participants freedom to raise intriguing points (Maxfield & Babbie, 2009). As the study progressed, new questions and themes were added to or adaptations made for the subsequent semi-structured interviews.

Although at the outset of the research I had considered conducting focus group interviews, I ultimately chose to conduct only individual interviews, to avoid some participants choosing to remain silent and/or feeling uncomfortable speaking in front of others. Given the sensitivity of the topic, there was a chance that the respondents may have been hesitant to share their experiences, and may not have disclosed confidential information about their struggles in front of others. With group interviews there is always a risk that any discussion may become dominated by members of the focus group who are acquainted with one another. They may additionally presume there is no need to elucidate certain issues in detail, assuming others already possess the requisite knowledge, which could cause me to neglect some crucial points

or overlook some focus group participants. Although I recognised that the focus group interviews have some benefits, such as generating greater interaction among participants, which enabled the researcher to elicit richer data and capture key points, the sensitivity of the current research led me to prefer semi-structured-individual interviews over focus group interviews.

The participants were given an explanation of the study's goals, provided with a copy of the participant information sheet (Appendix 2), and asked to complete informed consent forms (Appendix 3) before the interviews. The participants were also given enough opportunity to review the materials, ask questions, and discuss the information included on the forms before the interviews were conducted. After obtaining informed consent, debrief forms (Appendix 4) were provided to the participants and interviews conducted with each participant in a private setting for 50 to 90 minutes (Interview schedule Appendix 5). All the interviews were conducted in English. The interviews were recorded with the participants' permission and they were also informed they could interrupt the interviewer at any time and ask questions. I conducted four face-to-face interviews as a pilot study, followed by twenty-one online interviews.

3.5.2. Pilot interviews and developing the interview guide

To refine the data collection methods and ensure the interview schedule was sufficiently sensitive and completely thorough, pilot interviews were conducted with four participants who met the study's inclusion criteria (Garden, 2019). Their responses helped me understand how the information I was asking about may be perceived by my eventual participants, and gave me confidence that my selection of questions was comprehensive. Furthermore, the pilot interviews were recorded and analysed effectively to determine aspects of my interview technique for improvement.

At the outset of this research project, I intended to investigate the general challenges faced by Muslim men in the UK, and then I conducted a pilot study (consisting of four semi-structured interviews) with Muslim men from diverse backgrounds to identify the specific challenges they face. The primary objective of the pilot study was to assess the project's viability and thereafter identify the most suitable theoretical frameworks. The results of the pilot investigation were as follows: 1) The majority of challenges faced by Muslim males in the UK are "identity"-related; 2) The difficulties they face seem to multiply because of how their identities overlap; 3) Their masculine identities appear to confer enormous responsibilities

on them; and 4) Their identity-related challenges appear to have a significant psychological impact on them.

Accordingly, the main research questions were refined, and the interview guide developed. The interview guide was created by first determining the overarching themes and parts the interviews would cover, leaving room for respondents to delve into those issues not anticipated in the theoretical framework. Although the topics and sections identified were organised into a logical sequence, the order of the interview questions varied as the conversations followed their natural flow (Bryman, 2012).

The data collection process began by briefly introducing the participants, followed by demographic questions regarding age, country of origin, date of arrival in the UK, occupation, ethnicity, nationality, and where they reside in the UK (or have resided), etc. The data collection continued with some general questions, such as how they perceive what it means to be a Muslim in the UK, what they think the challenges of Muslims in the UK are, etc. These questions enabled me to quickly delve into the participants' lived experiences, as their responses typically referenced their experiences. The conversation and questions then shifted to the participants' lived experiences in the UK. Covering for instance their early memories of life in the UK and their first experiences, such as moving to the UK if they were first-generation immigrants, or school and childhood experiences if they were second-generation immigrants or later (for the interview guide, see Appendix 5). I specifically asked the participants to elaborate on their own lived experiences to begin exploring their thoughts, emotions, and responses. I asked the respondents to characterise in detail their stories and experiences of the challenges they were forced to navigate, such as discrimination, racism, Islamophobia, or other challenges, and how they felt and reacted.

3.5.3. Online Interviews

Interviews are commonest method for collecting data in qualitative research (Janghorban et al., 2014). Face-to-face interviews allowed the researcher to engage in the world of the participants by establishing rapport. However, face-to-face interviews are not always feasible due to time and financial constraints, geographical dispersion, and boundaries created by physical mobility (Janghorban et al., 2014; Iacono et al., 2016; Deakin & Wakefield, 2014; Seitz, 2016), and in this case a pandemic. To eliminate geographical and physical barriers between the researcher and their participants, online interviews are considered a highly suitable method for conducting interviews.

Conducting interviews via online platforms such as Skype or Zoom may also bring many other advantages, such as affording access to participants worldwide, increasing the variety of the research sample, enabling transcultural research, eliminating the need to visit an agreed location for the interviews, conserving financial and time resources, being easier and more comfortable for some participants, potentially encouraging reluctant participants to take part, giving the participants the opportunity to withdraw their decision more easily than is possible with face-to-face interviews, etc. (Janghorban et al., 2014; Iacono et al., 2016; Deakin & Wakefield, 2014; Seitz, 2016).

There are also some limitations to online interviews. In online interviews, the most difficult tasks for the researcher are establishing rapport and identifying nonverbal indicators. In addition, many people still do not have access to the internet or a computer, and online interviews require participants to have access to software technology and the skills to use it (Janghorban et al., 2014; Iacono et al., 2016; Deakin & Wakefield, 2014; Seitz, 2016). In addition, the researcher may encounter technical issues during online interviews, such as call drops, pauses, inaudible parts, power outages, connection issues, network issues, audio/video issues, voice/video interruptions, and so on (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014). When conducting interviews online, researchers should be prepared to locate a room without distractions, slow down and clarify their speech, be open to repeating answers and queries, and pay close attention to the expressions on participants' faces (Seitz, 2016). Ethical considerations are another crucial aspect of online interviews. Ethical considerations may be the same for both in-person and online interviews. Researchers can obtain informed consent through online, email, or paper forms, and all participants are then made aware of audio and video recordings (Janghorban et al., 2014). The researcher must also exercise caution, since some participants may not realise what is visible to interviews via their camera, and therefore accidentally reveal personal information (Iacono et al., 2016).

When planning this research, I could not have predicted that a pandemic would require researchers to conduct interviews through online platforms. However, in 2020, after I had already completed my four face-to-face pilot interviews, the Covid-19 pandemic spread across the globe. Governments took numerous measures to control infection rates, including closing schools and enforcing local or national lockdowns, which had a significant impact on everyone's lives. I therefore chose to conduct my interviews via online platforms such as Skype and Zoom after the UK went into lockdown in March 2020. Overall, I benefited from the advantages afforded by online interviews, despite occasional technical issues and challenges

identifying non-verbal indicators. I was able to reschedule interview time several times on the same day in response to participant requests, and due to the complexities of making travel arrangements, I would not have had this degree of flexibility with in-person interviews. On the other hand, technical difficulties did create a barrier to the development of intimacy, and I had to re-establish rapport and begin again on those occasions technology failed. Some participants did not have a Skype or Zoom account and also lacked experience with this type of technology. I attempted to assist them with opening a Skype or Zoom account, but on one occasion when this proved unfeasible, I conducted an interview with a participant via a WhatsApp video call. I was unable to control the interview environment and external disruptive factors, which was a further limitation. For example, in one interview, the participant's phone rang continually, interfering with the interview. In another case, the participant was distracted by his wife and children, which prevented him from concentrating. At this stage, I would like to emphasise that, in my experience, face-to-face interviews provide better results, and allow the researcher greater control over the interview process, so I plan to employ face-to-face interviews wherever possible in my future studies.

3.5.4. Establishing rapport with the participants

In qualitative research, the participants' perception of the researcher as an "insider" can have many benefits. The method of obtaining and being granted access to study participants influences the data collection procedure, specifically the establishment of rapport between researcher and respondent. As Lester (1999: 3) explains, phenomenological research aims for maximal depth, and establishing a high level of rapport and empathy is vital to the acquisition of detailed information. However, participants can be reluctant to cooperate with or grant access to an external researcher. They may have preconceived notions or biases about the researcher's characteristics, which prevent the researcher's initial access to the participants. In the context of minority and religious groups, it is highly probable that participants may develop scepticism regarding outside researchers, asking why they were chosen and feeling as though they are being scrutinised or treated as other (Shah, 2004). Therefore, being perceived as an "insider" proved to be of great importance in this research, which sought to examine the challenges faced by Muslim men who are members of both minority and religious groups.

When referring to the challenges outsider researchers must overcome during the research process, Berger (2015: 227) identifies the following: they cannot fully comprehend what it is like to be in certain situations they have not personally experienced; they lack language and jargon sensitivity, preventing them from understanding what words mean in context; and they

may miss the disguised-subtle expressions included in themes and clues that would have been obvious to an 'insider'. Despite these obstacles, outsider researchers still report some advantages, including the ability to generate analytical objectivity regarding a study by remaining detached and viewing data critically (Zempi & Chakraborty, 2014), and their ignorance of the research milieu and researched topic allows them to collect richer data (Berger, 2015: 227). However, insider researchers can use their knowledge and familiarity with relevant social interaction patterns to gain access, increasing participants' willingness to disclose personal and sensitive information, and to construct meaning, as well as eliciting genuine and legitimate participant experiences (Zempi & Chakraborti, 2014). Additionally, the researcher can establish a genuine rapport, hear what is unsaid, probe more efficiently, and detect hints that others might miss. Meanwhile, the respondents can criticise their host countries and the authorities comfortably, something they would be unlikely to do in the presence of an "outsider" researcher; and can be more confident when discussing "hidden" and sensitive experiences (Berger, 2015: 22). When conducting research on disadvantaged communities such as religious and ethnic minorities, the researcher's insider status is crucial to understanding respondents' experiences (Zempi & Chakraborti, 2014). Consequently, I undoubtedly benefited from being an "insider," and my similarities with the participants placed me in an ideal position to conduct this research. Despite this, I was aware of the risks associated with my 'insider' status, which could cause me to blur boundaries, impose my own values, beliefs, and perceptions, and project biases (Berger, 2015: 224).

Given the sensitivity of the subject matter, I utilised my identity as a Muslim man to establish a strong rapport with the participants and place them at ease. My male identity facilitated my access to Muslim men participants. A researcher who wishes to study Muslims should be familiar with Islam's regulations concerning gender relations. Avoiding communication with "non-mahram" individuals is a fundamental principle among Muslims, although it is not necessarily rigorously applied in the modern world. A "mahram" is any relative of the opposite sex to whom marriage is forbidden. In the case of mahrams, marriage is expressly forbidden. According to Ramirez (2015), a non-mahram is a person with whom marriage would be permissible. According to the Quran and the Sunnah (the way of life of the Prophet Muhammad), unrestricted mixing and socialising between unrelated, non-mahram men and women is rigorously prohibited in Islam, at least as a general rule, unless a woman is in the presence of a mahram, such as her husband, father, sibling, or son (Zempi & Chakraborty, 2014). So, whether she is a Muslim or not, a female researcher wishing to conduct research on

Muslim men may encounter obstacles. The 'non-mahram' issue, however, poses no difficulty for a male researcher when communicating with Muslim male peers. Moreover, sharing one's challenges and problems with a woman may be perceived as a sign of vulnerability by men, and as a manifestation of their masculinity, men may avoid discussing the challenges and problems they experience with women (Ellemers, 2018).

My Muslim identity also allowed me to be perceived as an insider, as according to Garland et al. (2006), researchers may better inquire into and explore the experiences of religious minority groups if they themselves are members of that faith. As a Muslim (with a bachelor's degree in Islamic theology), I have sufficient knowledge of Islam and am very familiar with Islamic terminology, which allowed me to understand what the participants meant, without needing to ask further questions to avoid misinterpreting their experiences (Garland et al., 2006). I was already aware of their sensitivities and how to approach them when asking them about matters pertaining to their Muslim identity. As Spalek (2005) explains, a researcher's various racial, religious, and cultural perspectives may cause them to neglect critical and sensitive aspects of their participants' lived experiences. Thus, in this research, I benefited from understanding the bond of brotherhood shared by Muslims when establishing rapport with the participants. The majority of the respondents expressed their view that they considered helping their Muslim brother a part of their religious duty. All the participants, without exception, referred to me as "my brother" during each and every interview, and I, in turn, referred to them as "my brother." Use of the term "my brother" automatically strengthened my relationship with the participants in a natural way.

Undoubtedly, being a Muslim male afforded me numerous advantages when conducting this research. Conversely, it also led me to encounter several situations that I had not considered. As Keval (2009) argues, the researcher's status as an insider places them in a position to know certain facts that do not then need elaboration because they are assumed. Some participants, for instance, believed that I was already familiar with their religious sects, congregations, and religious figures. It is impossible for a Muslim to be aware of all the religious sects, congregations, and religious figures that exist in the Muslim world due to the geographical diversity of Muslims. Some participants cited religious figures that I was unfamiliar with. Consequently, some then felt compelled to elaborate about their religious sects, congregations, and religious figures. In such instances, they then assumed the role of "educator", explaining to me the central tenets of their religious sects and the dignity of their religious leaders, thereby encouraging them to speak much more and in greater depth.

According to Tinker and Armstrong (2008), placing less confident participants in the roles of educator and/or authority encourages them to speak more openly and comfortably, allowing more detailed and exhaustive data to be gathered. In the same way, Berger (2015: 227) observed that the researcher's lack of knowledge may place participants in a position of expertise, which then enriches data collection.

Finally, I also deliberately avoided "active listening" and summarising what the participants had said. This allowed me to maintain a sense of rapport with the participants while also extending them the freedom to discuss their experiences as they wished (Garden, 2019). During the interviews, I refrained from making any critical comments or showing signs of disapproval, and during the data gathering process, I made notes about my observations. However, in order to avoid making the participants feel uneasy, I did not take notes in plain sight. I ensured the confidentiality of the respondents by promptly recording their observations in an encrypted Word document on a computer.

3.6. Data Analysis Process

One of the main obstacles researchers encounter when conducting a phenomenological study is the vast collections of notes, recordings, and transcripts that must be examined and evaluated. It is important to examine all data sources thoroughly. Certainly, the analysis process necessitates meticulous and conscientious work, as well as a keen awareness of the numerous ways in which the various components of discussions or observations relate. The researcher must also first acquire data and then transform that data into information through the process of analysis and interpretation (Rossman & Rallis, 2016: 40). When performing data analyses, researchers employ specific techniques to convert their data into information and knowledge. In the current study, a qualitative method, specifically IPA was applied using NVivo 12, which is a practical qualitative analysis software package. Data was coded broadly into themes relating to the challenges reported by Muslim men. Use of software ensures all phases of the analytic process are traceable and transparent and provides a detailed and comprehensive audit trail, thereby simplifying the complexity of the analysis process. The analytical approach taken here was based on the concepts and recommendations for data analysis and the interpretation provided in Smith's (2008) practical guidelines.

To familiarise myself with the data, I listened to the interviews multiple times and wrote down any thoughts, recollections, or reflections that emerged while doing so (Flowers et al., 2009). Following this, the twenty-one interviews were transcribed verbatim. The process of

transcribing is recommended as an effective way to become acquainted with one's data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In order to ensure the accuracy of the participant's subjective experiences, I re-listened to the interviews while reading the transcript, which allowed me to make any necessary modifications and notes. The subsequent phase consisted of identifying and emphasising exploratory comments, related components, expressions, emotions, and the key words and phrases the participants expressed. The research questions posed in this study sought to investigate the nature of the challenges encountered by Muslim men, as well as the numerous identity discourses and practises developed by the respondents. Consequently, the coding scheme was structured around these objectives. This was then followed by the identification and development of emergent themes. This phase concentrated predominantly on exploratory comments rather than the transcript itself. These were abstract and rooted in the text, and related to pertinent concepts and theories. The emergent themes were derived from both the participants' expressions and the researcher's subjective interpretation thereof. The next step was to identify the emerging themes and look for visual patterns to establish possible connections between them. This procedure facilitated the identification of similarities and differences across the themes. A descriptive term was assigned to the shared themes conveying their conceptual character. The final phase of the analysis consisted of identifying patterns across the cases, and, after some themes were renamed or otherwise modified, determining the final superordinate and subordinate themes.

The pilot research findings of this current study suggest that Muslim men in the UK mostly encounter difficulties linked to their identity, and these challenges seem to impact or even threaten their individual components of identity or their overall sense of identity. Muslim males in the UK mostly regard their issues as a threat to their identity, which in turn significantly affects their motivational identity principles (derived from Identity Process Theory). Moreover, their challenges also shape and influence their masculine identity constructions, perceptions, and practises. The emergent themes, patterns, subordinate themes, and superordinate themes were formed and developed according to Identity Process Theory (IPT) and masculinities. A detailed analysis and discussion of selected themes and subordinate themes will be presented in the following chapters. In Chapter 4, the themes and patterns that were developed based on the motivational identity principles (continuity, distinctiveness, self-efficacy, self-esteem, belonging, meaning, and psychological coherence) are discussed to illustrate how challenges threaten and affect Muslim men's identities. In Chapter 5, the themes and subthemes are organised to explore the experiences and discourses of the respondents

regarding their masculine identity. The aim of this chapter is to understand "how they construct their masculinities as a Muslim and what factors affect their construction of masculinities", "how Muslim men practice their masculinities in the UK" and "how Muslim men in the UK see women, British men, and Muslim". Each theme has several subthemes that function to support and develop the main themes. The analysis of the themes is typically based on substantial verbatim excerpts from the data, which is one of the most important components of IPA. To portray an initial "insider's perspective" of the topic it is necessary to repeatedly refer to verbatim excerpts to exemplify this perspective and support any interpretive comments (Reid et al., 2005: 22).

3.7.Credibility and Transferability

'The trustworthiness or rigour of a study refers to the degree of confidence in the data, interpretation, and methodologies used to guarantee its quality' (Connelly, 2016: 435). Thus, the credibility of the research, and confidence in the study's veracity and, by extension, its findings, are the most crucial criterion (Polit & Beck, 2014). Connelly (2016) asserts that credibility may be established through the use of many strategies encompassing 'prolonged interaction with participants, persistent observation when relevant to the study, peer debriefing, member verification, and reflective journaling' (p. 435). Berger (2015: 230) recommends that researchers use a log, repeated review, and peer consultation in order to develop credibility, stressing the significance of revisiting the same interviews a few weeks after the initial analysis. Triangulation across multiple sources also contributed to the achievement of credibility in qualitative research (Wallendorf & Belk, 1989).

From the moment the first interview was conducted onwards I kept a diary to log the data collection process and my experience of it. I wrote about how I accessed the participants, which online platform I used for the interviews, my impressions of the participants, how I felt during the interview, what new ideas I generated during the interview, what challenges I identified, how the participants' responses made me feel and think, how the participants' real-life experiences and stories affected me, and what I would do/have done in their position, etc. I then reviewed my notes multiple times after each interview before subsequent interviews. Considering my notes, I then made comparisons between the interviews. This enabled me to self-evaluate my insider and outsider status, allowing me to witness my reflections, emotions, thoughts, impressions, and immediate responses to the incidents with clarity. The use of a log to record my observations provided me with additional benefits, such as the recognition of

significant points, codes, and clarifications during the subsequent phases of the analysis (Birks et al., 2008).

According to Cope (2014), a thorough description of the in-depth data analysis and a repeated review of the transcripts are two of the most important requirements when determining the credibility of qualitative research. These two factors provided me with a proper 'process to achieve data saturation and breadth of understanding of the phenomenon' (Cope, 2014: 90). Once I had finished transcribing an interview, I read the transcript multiple times on various occasions. I always followed the same procedure: first, I thoroughly read the transcript, and then, after some time, I reread it while simultaneously listening to the voice recording. This method allowed me to recall the moment of the interview and the associated feelings-emotions. I was able to recall or recognise several significant aspects, by drawing on my emotions, and reflections. I utilised this method with all the interview transcripts. I routinely reviewed the transcripts over a period of time, and with each review, I was able to identify new concepts, codes, emotions, reflections, and develop more profound understandings.

Member verification is an additional essential factor when enhancing the credibility of qualitative research (Cope, 2014). After the data analysis phase is complete, member checking is conducted, which involves requesting participant feedback and checks regarding the summary of themes that arose during the analysis process (Cope, 2014: 90). Member checking allows the researcher to go back to the source of the data with results, to request validation, verify accuracy, and test for resonance with the participants' experiences (Birt et al., 2016). Through member checking, the researcher can ensure that their interpretations of the participants' experiences are accurate. I asked my interview subjects if I could send them some of my findings and interpretations later. A number of the participants expressed an eagerness to provide feedback. After completing my data analysis, I contacted three participants to seek their feedback and validation with regard to my summary of themes. I conducted three additional interviews with the same participants (one from each national background) after sharing my research findings and themes and requesting their feedback. This procedure allowed me to assess the compatibility between my research findings and the participants' feedback.

Triangulation is another significant step employed to enhance the credibility of qualitative research (Cope, 2014: 90). In the case of larger sample sizes, Reid et al. (2005) propose use of comparison groups to investigate phenomena from multiple perspectives to develop more detailed, multifaceted accounts, for the purpose of "triangulation". In this study, seven semi-

structured interviews were conducted with three distinct nationality groups: Pakistani, Somali, and Algerian. Although the participants all share a common gender, religion, and place of residence (the UK), their ethnic and cultural background, lived experiences, and level/type of encounter with and response to challenges varied by nationality. Therefore, I analysed and compared the distinctions between these three diverse nationalities to assist with data triangulation. In addition to making observations during the interviews, using a log to take notes on my reflections (a reflexive journal), and reference to the scientific literature, were the other important methods of data collection and triangulation used (Cope, 2014: 90).

Finally, I considered that 'peer review is the principal mechanism for quality control in most scientific disciplines' (Bornmann, 2011). While conducting this study, I was constantly in contact with my supervisor, seeking his advice before and after each interview. I immediately sent each transcript to my supervisor after completing the transcription phase. He provided me with extensive feedback and allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of the interviewing process. During the analysis stage we discussed codes, themes, and patterns. His expertise in qualitative research and with interviewing enabled me to acquire comprehensive insights into both, thereby enhancing the quality of the final research.

Research transferability depends on describing the surrounding conditions in sufficient detail for a reader to determine whether or not they are similar to the situation with which he or she is comparing it, and consequently, whether or not the findings are applicable to the other setting (Shenton, 2004). The aim of this research was not to reach broad conclusions about the experiences of Muslim males in the UK. Rather, the reported findings were intended to be representative of the lived experiences of a cross-section of Muslim men in the UK. Thus, it was vital for me to assess whether the results of the study would be applicable to other social contexts (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). In order to address the matter of transferability, I theoretically abstracted and interpreted the data I collected in one context so that it would "fit" others. Therefore, the developed themes will be also applicable to contexts other than Muslim men in the UK.

3.8. Ethical Considerations

Prior to conducting this research, ethical approval was obtained from the Brunel University London Research ethics committee (Appendix 1 – Approval Number: 17735-MHR-Nov/2019- 21330-4). As should be the case with all qualitative research, all the participants were given an information sheet explaining the purpose of the study, and a debrief form listing

support services of interest to them. More importantly, all the participants provided their consent to be interviewed. It was clearly explained to the respondents that any information collected about them during the course of the study would be kept rigorously confidential, and that their participation and identities would similarly remain completely confidential and their responses anonymised. In order to secure the participants' identities for safety and privacy reasons, pseudonyms were employed when analysing the data. The participants were also informed that pseudonyms would be used throughout the duration of the study to protect their anonymity in any published work or articles intended for broader distribution. All identifying information was removed from stored data, or altered to ensure confidentiality (Smith, 2015). In addition, the participants were informed that they have the right to withdraw from the study or leave the interview at any time, as well as to request that any data that makes them feel uncomfortable not be used. The participants were also given the opportunity to voice any concerns at the end of each interviews. Each participant was given contact information for both the researcher and the research supervisor, in case they had any queries or concerns about the research.

Due to the sensitive nature of the research, I was aware that some interviewees may experience discomfort (Wellings et al., 2000). However, only a small percentage of the participants showed any signs of emotion when discussing their own experiences, and even fewer expressed anger when discussing particular topics or individuals. Therefore, I concentrated on also observing the participants' body language during the interviews to determine if they were having any physical responses. Changes in tone of voice, hesitancy, and avoidance of eye contact are some of the most prominent signs of emotional distress (Curtis and Curtis, 2011; Zempi, 2014). In this instance, I chose to end that particular line of questioning to avoid putting the interviewees under additional stress. I conveyed my empathetic understanding of their emotions and enquired about their proposed solutions. I recognised that asking the participants to offer their solutions to problems put them in an 'expert' and 'authority' position, which made them feel calmer, more tranquil, sensible, and restrained.

All the participants agreed to be recorded; however, I felt that some participants (particularly non-UK-born immigrants) were a bit hesitant about being recorded via online platforms such as Zoom or Skype. I believe that this is also a limitation of online interviews, as recording via online platforms as opposed to a traditional tape recorder seems to induce greater reluctance in individuals, as they may believe disclosure of confidential information is

easier via online platforms. Therefore, I again reassured them that their participation in the study would be kept anonymous and confidential. In order to make the participants feel more at ease, I also had a brief conversation with them before and after the interview that was not recorded. After the interviews, once the participants had been assured they were no longer being recorded, some of them shared additional specific experiences and provided insightful commentary. In these cases I took some notes and got their permission to use these notes in my research. Finally, I asked the participants about their feedback from the interviews.

3.9. Limitations and Challenges

Neuman (2010) defines research limitations as factors beyond the researcher's control. Multiple limitations are usual in qualitative research, as was the case here. First, I believe the fact that I had to conduct my interviews online rather than face-to-face due to the pandemic posed the greatest challenge for my research. As previously mentioned, soon after completing my face-to-face pilot interviews, I realised I would have to conduct my main interviews online due to the Covid-19 outbreak, as a result of the many restrictions and lockdowns in the UK. Despite the fact that online interviews provided me with some benefits, such as flexibility when scheduling interview times, I had difficulty establishing rapport with some of the participants due to technical issues. The sensitive nature of the research necessitated a strong rapport with all participants, which I am certain could have been accomplished more effectively through face-to-face interviews, in order to gain a much deeper comprehension of the lived experiences of Muslim men. Due to the lack of physical presence when collecting data, I was unable to properly observe the verbal and nonverbal expressions of the respondents, which would have otherwise supported my interpretations of their meanings. In addition, the online interviews reduced my control over the interview process and environment. In these online contexts, it was challenging to keep the participants' attention on the interview, and some of the participants became distracted by external factors such as ringing phones or other people being present (their children or spouses, etc.). These factors limited the effectiveness of the interview process and the quality of the data collected from the participants.

Second, my first online interviews (at least six interviews) coincided with the period in which the chaotic climate of the Covid-19 outbreak dominated the UK and the entire globe. At the time, the UK's coronavirus death toll was the highest in Europe, despite the Prime Minister's announcement that the government would take no action against Covid-19 because it supported an approach that stressed population immunity. Thus, I was required to return to Turkey with my wife and one-year-old son, which meant we spent fourteen days in a quarantine

room. After the quarantine period, we stayed with my parents in Turkey, where I began conducting online interviews despite having a poor internet connection. In addition, some of the first participants I interviewed were emotionally affected by the pandemic because some of their family members had tested positive or been hospitalised. I offered to postpone the interviews, but they said they were able to participate. Thus, I conducted six interviews in this chaotic environment. Even though I acquired rich and valuable data, I felt that the turbulent atmosphere of Covid-19 negatively impacted the quality of these initial interviews. Once I returned to the UK, I completed the remaining interviews, during which time the initial Covid-19 chaos had abated, and the restrictions to control Covid-19 had been somewhat relaxed.

A third limitation was potential researcher bias. According to Christensen et al. (2011), researchers rely on the interpretation of data from the point of view of their participants. However, confirmation bias exists as one of the commonest researcher biases that can influence the interpretations of researchers (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). Greenwald et al. (1986) define confirmation bias as the tendency to develop interpretations and conclusions based on new data that are excessively congruent with a priori hypotheses. Due to my insider (Muslim male) position in respect of the research, I may have been prone to confirmation bias when hearing about the difficulties faced by the participants (Zempi & Chakraborti, 2014). To avoid confirmation bias, at an early stage of my research, I compiled a summary of my beliefs and thoughts on the topic and analysed whether I held any preconceived assumptions, and if so what. In addition, I utilised reflexivity (which will be explained shortly) to develop my self-awareness to reflect my position and role in the research.

Fourthly, there was a danger of Socially desirable responding (SDR) in this case, as it is a prevalent problem associated with interviews (Mick, 1996). In general, SDR refers to the desire to present oneself in an excessively favourable manner; it causes individuals to provide responses that they believe are socially acceptable or desirable, regardless of whether they reflect their true beliefs and attitudes. This is also known as "social desirability bias" and it can also affect surveys, interviews, and questionnaires (Tracey, 2016). Individual interviews were used to mitigate the risk of social desirability bias, as it is typically higher in focus group interviews where participants are speaking in front of other participants. In addition, indirect questions were frequently used, and I often asked the participants to describe their lived experiences rather than their beliefs or thoughts.

Finally, despite designing a series of semi-structured questions to encourage respondents to elaborate on their responses, I received brief and/or no responses to certain questions from

some participants. Moreover, some participants were hesitant while others were eager to share their thoughts on the research topic. This variability limited my ability to delve more deeply into the complexities of the challenges and experiences faced by Muslim males. Moreover, in the final thesis I have more frequently cited respondents who had an exceptional ability to articulate their experiences, emotions, and thoughts through highly effective narrative, than others.

3.10. Researcher's Positionality and Reflexivity

The term positionality explains both a person's worldview and the stance they take regarding the subject of their research and its social and political context (Foote & Bartell, 2011; Savin-Baden & Major, 2013; and Rowe, 2014). In qualitative studies, the self-positioning of researchers is comprised of numerous factors, such as gender, age, ethnicity, social status, religion, language, ideology, personal experiences, emotions, etc. (Holmes, 2020). These factors have the potential to influence the research in terms of access to participants, the nature of the researcher-researched relationship, and the interpretation of findings (Berger, 2015: 220; Wellington, et al. 2005; Creswell, 2009: 8). Self-reflection and reflective methodology must be ongoing processes for a researcher to be able to recognise, create, critique, and communicate their positionality (Holmes, 2020). Researchers should 'focus on self-knowledge and sensitivity, better understand the role of the self in the creation of knowledge, carefully self-monitor the impact of their biases, beliefs and personal experiences on their research, and maintain the balance between the personal and the universal' (Berger, 2015: 220). A social researcher must consider the implications of their methods, values, prejudices, and decisions upon the development of the knowledge of the social world being generated (Bryman, 2012: 393). Researchers should also actively acknowledge and explicitly recognise the potential influence of their positions on research processes and outcomes (Berger, 2015: 220). This process, also known as reflexivity, requires continuous internal dialogue and critical self-evaluation of researcher's positionality.

In the case of IPA, "emic" and "etic" positions are balanced:

> In the former position (phenomenological, insider), the researcher begins by listening to people's stories and places the participants' worldview at the centre of the account. In the latter (interpretive, outsider) position, the researcher endeavours to make meaning of the experiences and concerns of the participants and to elucidate them in a manner that answers a specific research question. (Reid et al., 2005: 22)

Reflexivity requires constant balancing of "insider" and "outsider" positions: the former uses familiarity to gain a deeper understanding of participants' perception and interpretation of their lived experience, and the latter ensures investigators remain rigorous to avoid projecting their own experience and using it as a lens through which to view and understand participants' experiences (Berger, 2015: 230).

In the current research, my position in relation to the participants can be described as a "space between," implying I am simultaneously an insider and an outsider (Dwyer & Buckland, 2009). I recognise some similarities between my own experiences and those of the participants, but to a limited extent. That is, I was a relative insider because I identified as a Muslim male and was therefore acquainted with the expected norms, traditions, and lifestyles of Muslim men. However, I was also a relative outsider, due to my lack of specific cultural knowledge of the study participants. As Berger (2015: 223) suggests, my insider status required me to be vigilant and meticulously reflect on how my presence and who I am influenced the conversation, and I realised that although I shared some experiences with some participants, we approached them differently. For instance, like the majority of the participants, I had arrived in the UK from a different country. Although I had encountered some problems and difficulties when I first arrived in the UK, I realised from the interviews that my difficulties were not as severe as those of my participants. I was a government-sponsored PhD candidate with a sufficient monthly stipend. The majority of my difficulties were related to adapting to and orienting myself in my new life, and I did not have to navigate any financial obstacles. Once the respondents revealed their experiences and economic challenges when they first arrived in the UK, such as difficulties obtaining employment and housing, I realised that their difficulties are much more serious and more heavily related to their economic circumstances. Thus, I decided to investigate the difficulties stemming from their economic circumstances more closely by asking more pointed questions.

When discussing reflexivity in qualitative research, Berger's (2015: 224) insightful comments reveal how a researcher's shared experiences with a participant may colour their connection with them, possibly even resulting in the researcher imposing his or her own perspective on the research. For instance, when the participants described problems and experiences they had encountered in their native countries, I felt an overwhelming urge to share my own similar story. However, I monitored myself attentively and did not interrupt my participants. Similarly, the participants sometimes left sentences unfinished because they presumed I already knew the remainder of the information, since we share the same experience.

In such cases, I occasionally completed the sentences unintentionally and automatically. Berger (2015: 24) argues that shared experience may also affect the power relationship between researcher and participants, by generating a sense of comparison and competition. When discussing their lives in their home countries, the participants sometimes made comparisons, such as "I think you don't have this problem in your country (Turkey)", or introduced an element of competition, such as "one day, our country will develop as much as yours." This urged me to stop and think in the middle of the conversation, but I consciously avoided making other comparison in return.

Qualitative researchers cannot set aside their experiences, perceptions, understandings, feelings, and biases during the research process, nor should they necessarily appear to be objective bystanders (Harwell, 2011). The insider position in an interview may require researchers to share their experiences or disclose some personal information. Although doing so can serve to establish rapport, researchers need to take care not to compromise their objectivity by becoming too involved (Holmes, 2020). Valentine (2007: 171) suggests maintaining an "empathic distance" when reporting how she felt compelled to give honest and open responses to a participant's inquiries, due to her ethical position of 'owing it to the person who just shared with her his painful personal experience'. Berger (2015: 224) argues that by being more sensitive and responsive to requests to share aspects of her experiences, she obtained more personal and in "depth" stories in return, than would have been possible with a more "professional" distanced approach. Specifically, sharing emotional experiences can be a more effective way of establishing genuine rapport, although it simultaneously makes it more difficult to maintain reflexivity. For instance, when one participant described his first days in the UK, he addressed his emotions, homesickness, and how much he missed his family and new-born son, who were in his home country at the time. I was profoundly moved and became very emotional upon hearing this because I shared the same experience. When I first arrived in the UK for my PhD studies, my son was only 25 days old, and I had to leave my wife and new-born son behind due to the lengthy passport and visa application process. The process took nearly three months, and I felt these initial days were particularly difficult. I shared my experience with the participant, and we both felt that we could truly comprehend one another. In order to minimise emotionality during the interview, however, I decided to stop showing my emotions. I moved on to the next question quickly, working to keep my emotional responses under control.

3.11. Chapter Summary

This chapter has explained that study adopts an interpretivist qualitative research paradigm based on a relativist ontology, a social constructionist epistemology, and phenomenology. It explained that in accordance with the phenomenological methodology adopted for this research, semi-structured, in-depth interviews are used for collecting the data. This chapter typically presents the nature of qualitative research and phenomenology.

Firstly, the research questions, the research paradigm and philosophy, the research methodology and the nature of IPA were introduced. Following this, the research procedures, including participant recruitment methods, inclusion/exclusion criteria, sample size, and participant profiles, were described in detail. The data collection process, which included semi-structured interviews, pilot interviews and the development of an interview guide, online interviews, and establishing rapport with the participants, was described. In the following sections, the data analysis process, the credibility and transferability of the research, ethical considerations, the challenges/limitations of the study, and the researcher's positionality and reflexivity were all discussed.

In qualitative research, there are two potential presentation strategies. In the first, the "results" section includes the emergent thematic analysis, whereas the "discussion" section connects this analysis to the existing literature. An alternative strategy is to discuss the connections to the literature, as each superordinate theme is presented in a single "results and discussion" section (Smith & Osborn, 2007: 76). The chapters that follow will discuss the superordinate themes of the research in a "results and discussion" chapter and then how the motivational identity principles (Identity Process Theory – IPT) of Muslim men are impacted and threatened by the challenges they face, emphasising their lived experiences in the next chapter.

Chapter 4

Challenges to Motivational Identity Principles Faced by Muslim Men in the UK

4. Challenges to Motivational Identity Principles Faced by Muslim Men in the UK

4.1. Introduction

Ethnic and minority group research has always attracted considerable interest in the social sciences domain, and numerous empirical and theoretical studies have been conducted from multiple perspectives. Identity Process Theory (IPT), particularly the basic motivational identity principles it explores, is ideally suited as a tool for understanding the complex, multifaceted structure of ethnic and minority identities, because it emphasises socio-psychological approaches to identity and identity threat (Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2012: 503-520). However, the role played by the motivational principles of identity has rarely been explored in the context of ethnicity and minority studies (Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2012: 503). According to Breakwell (1986), the dimensions of the self (including ethnic, religious, and national identities, etc.) are understood to constitute a dynamic social product that resides in psychological processes. It is therefore vital to employ a socio-psychological approach that integrates intrapsychic and socio-cultural levels of analysis to demonstrate how socio-cultural and socio-historical conditions are instrumental in the formation of the particular patterns associated with individual identification (Breakwell, 1986). Unquestionably, the construction of ethnic and minority identities is complex and multifaceted.

Identities comprise numerous interconnected dimensions and principles, and any threat to an individual's identity principles can have a profound effect on their lives. Threats to identity, according to IPT theory, primarily target continuity, self-esteem, self-efficacy, distinctiveness, belonging, meaning, and psychological coherence. According to the findings of the current research, the challenges encountered by Muslim men in the UK threaten their motivational identity principles, as the majority are identity-related. This chapter investigates how Muslim men in the UK exhibit and stress their identity principles as facets of their identity, as well as how their identity principles are influenced by the challenges they encounter. In order to demonstrate how Muslim men address threats to their identity principles, the research findings are presented and then discussed in depth with regard to each identity principle, with real life examples provided. Overall, the interviews suggest the challenges faced by Muslim males in the UK threaten and significantly impact their motivational identity principles.

4.2. Continuity

The findings presented in this study indicate that Muslim men in the UK have a strong desire for consistency and a sense of continuity across time and situation. Specifically, the research participants frequently emphasised the importance of a sense of continuity within their Muslim identity and cultural/ethnic heritage. The challenges that typically affect the continuity identity principles of Muslim males in the UK were found to comprise distinct patterns, themes, and components related to variables such as ethnicity, generational status (first or subsequent), location, and time. Although each Muslim man appeared to confront these challenges at a different level and in a unique context, the continuity principle was relatively uniform generationally, but differed measurably between first and subsequent generations of Muslim men. First, I will present the research findings revealing how first-generation (newcomer) Muslim men confronted the threats to the continuity of their ethnic and religious identity, followed by data collected from subsequent (second, third, etc.) generations of Muslim men. I will then discuss and summarize the findings of this part of my investigation.

4.2.1. First-generation (newcomer) Muslim men

4.2.1.1 Adaptation to a new life

In simple terms, the continuity principle demands an identifiable and balanced consistency between past, present, and future within a person's identity frame (Breakwell, 1987). Migration from one country to another where people have a completely different nationality, race, ethnicity, religion, language, and way of life, etc., is a very distressing and difficult process to navigate, wreaking immense and confronting change in people's lives (Timotijevic & Breakwell, 2000: 355). Migration can therefore be considered one of the greatest threats to the continuity principle, as it creates significant inconsistencies between a person's past and their present. Immigrants must therefore consider or embrace numerous factors, such as language, way of life, culture, social dynamics, politics, law, social orders, economic rules, traffic rules, climate and weather conditions, etc., if they are to live safely and appropriately in a new country. According to the interview data, the continuity of the ethnic and religious identities of first-generation Muslim males was threatened by the emergence of novel elements in their new environment. Salman characterised his initial days in the UK as tough and similar to being in a fight.

> When I came here, it was a bit, uh, difficult. Why? Because uh, to find Muslims and to be, um, like giving advice…. Because a bit difficult. And like now is 21 years, a long time. It does mean, uh, it was too difficult for me, but I survived and I was like fighting and I succeeded for it. (Salman, Algerian, first generation)

Several times throughout the interview, Salman used the term "survival" to describe the immensity of the challenges he was forced to negotiate. When describing his difficulties, he first emphasised that he was unable to find other Muslims to offer him guidance and advice. This demonstrates conclusively that Muslim males sought out their Muslim fellows when they first moved to the UK, as a key strategy to feel secure and maintain their cultural and religious way of life. In agreement with Salman's explanation, Faisal stated that:

> Before I moved to UK, I was having some friends in the UK who told me how to the UK looks like. Okay. They told me about community ... how I should spend my time ... sense of how living in the UK life. I was fortunate to live in central London, where it's a lot of Muslim around. When I moved to UK, looking at the mosques, community centre, Muslims living here. It's really, maybe it's a right place to move to, a place that I knew about them, the nations. Uh, anything like that. The place where I can practice my worships. (Faisal, Somali, first generation)

Faisal's ability to adapt to his new life appears to have been greatly facilitated by having friends who could offer him advice on what his life in the UK would be like before he moved there, and also by residing in central London upon his arrival, as there are many Muslims there. In this way, he appears to have mitigated the adverse effects posed by threats to his continuity principles. He describes London as the ideal location for him to continue practising his religion. Consequently, his religious identity, which could be considered a central component of his continuity principle, was not threatened.

Returning to Salman's difficulties, he appears to have been particularly astonished by how difficult it was to make friends when he first arrived. He declared:

> It was a country, uh, you cannot find, uh, friends easily. People, they don't get like friendship. Most of the people, they look for their interest for most of them... if you don't have money, you cannot survive. It does mean I need to be like the hard worker, any to, uh, build your own life. You need to be strong character. (Salman, Algerian, first generation)

Salman appears to have had a very difficult time during his early days in the UK, as the culture and ways of developing friendships differed vastly from those in his home country of Algeria. In his initial days in the country, his sense of continuity seems to have been threatened. On a more positive note, Salman explained that money is crucial for survival in the UK, and that he was able overcome this obstacle by working diligently and having a strong character. This may imply that having a strong character and being a diligent worker can enhance one's sense of

continuity. It may also imply that as people are less likely to form friendships and the culture is more individualistic, people realise quickly that they need to rely on themselves and become self-sufficient. Similarly, Tahir also expresses the challenge of earning a sufficient wage:

> Life is hard here, and you need to work non-stop, you should continue, so, you have to do any kind of job to earn. You sometimes have to work in difficult, low-earned jobs even you know you can do better, you are capable of better jobs, ok. (Tahir, Algerian, first generation)

Tahir's explanation describes the obstacles he had to overcome to continue living in the UK. Although he knew he was qualified for better jobs, he was forced to accept more difficult and low-paying positions to secure his settlement in the UK. He further highlighted that he worked in various jobs, requiring him to put in lengthy hours. Although this seems to have posed a threat to Tahir's confidence in his own talents (self-efficacy), Tahir appears to have employed continuity identity concepts to mitigate any threat. This may imply that Muslim men in the UK are willing to prioritise any identity principle in order to mitigate primary threat when any of their other identity principles are endangered.

4.2.1.2. Worrying about children

The research findings indicate that first-generation Muslim fathers are especially concerned about the religious and ethnic/cultural identities of their children as a result of living in the UK. This poses a threat and a challenge to their continuity identity principle, as first-generation Muslims typically view their religious and ethnic/cultural identities as a central tenet of this principle. When I questioned the participants about their concerns or worries regarding their children or raising their children in the UK, Hamza replied:

> We sometimes have worries for them, that, that, uh, raising them with our own cultures, traditions and religion. (Hamza, Algerian, first generation)

Hamza clarified that he (and other Muslims) expect parents to raise their children according to their own cultures, traditions, and religions. Indeed, these three elements are intertwined and interact, and appear to play a significant role in the identity formation of Muslim men in the UK. Their concerns about preserving these aspects of their children's identities appear to threaten their own identity continuity principles. Similarly, Javed observed the following:

> ...more concerned about culture. Yeah I have talked to many people and they have certain concerns (about children) but then they will grow up. They will become, you

> know.. This country will involve them and they will be totally independent. I think we, our culture is totally scared of independence. (Javed, Pakistani, first generation)

Javed offered a fascinating and fundamental examination and self-criticism of Muslim communities. He considered this fear to be one of the most significant causes of concern among Muslim parents with regard to their children's futures. According to him, the British way of life eventually integrates Muslim children, instilling in them the notion of independence. Developing increasingly independent personalities may prompt Muslim children to seek independence from their own culture, tradition, religion, etc., thereby posing a threat to their fathers and Muslim men's identity continuity principle.

Education is another essential concern mentioned by Muslim fathers in the UK when discussing their children. Faisal indicated:

> To be honest (raising children in the UK) is quite worrying. Uh, living in a community like the UK, uh, I think before used to be quite easier where you are going an Islamic schools and similar private schools. But now, uh, with this change in the UK education system where the sector sexual education will be introduced to the kids. It's very worrying for me as a Muslim to raise a kid in the UK. ((Faisal, Somali, first generation)

As stated, ensuring their children receive a good education that is compatible with their religious beliefs is crucial for Faisal and many of the other participants. Thus, any educational curriculum or course content that is incompatible with (or contrary to) Islam appears to pose a formidable challenge to Muslim men's continuity principle of identity. At the time when I was first beginning to collect my research data by conducting interviews with Muslim men, the sexual education debate among Muslim communities in the UK was extremely heated, and as a result many participants voiced their concerns about the issue clearly and vehemently. Their responses, reactions, and terminology allowed me to investigate and comprehend how their identity principles were being affected (threatened) by the issues raised in current debates in the UK, as well as how strongly they react to maintain their identity principles; in this case, their continuity principle of identity. Lateef indicated similar concerns:

> Still challenging because we have some controversial matters. We are encountering every time... when they go to state school, they are in a big dilemma because they spend their times or the prime time in this school for learning the literature. They're reading, they're getting kind of influence of bothering about faith. (Lateef, Somali, first generation)

According to Lateef, children spend the majority of their time in school, and some of what they learn there can influence their views on faith leading them to stray away from Islam. This was broadly acknowledged as a genuine threat to the continuity principle of Muslim males, who wished to raise their children according to their own culture, tradition, and religion.

Muslim males in the UK also expressed their concern that their children's Muslim identities might pose career obstacles for them. For example, Kabir elucidated:

> … that's one of the things I'm worried about my children what's going to happen... If you have a Muslim name, you don't get the job interview and you have to send thousand hundreds of CVs then to get a job, you know what I mean, to get an interview. And then, you have to be twice as good as somebody else to get the job. (Kabir, Algerian, first generation)

Kabir described some of the obstacles he had encountered personally, and then emphasised his apprehension over his offspring facing the same obstacles. He drew attention to the fact that maintaining his children's (Muslim) religious identities, which is one of the most important and fundamental desires for continuity of identity, may potentially create obstacles for their career prospects in the UK.

4.2.2. Subsequent generations of Muslim men

As they were born, raised, and educated in the UK, subsequent-generation immigrants are typically expected to face fewer challenges adapting than their first-generation ancestors (Crul, 2016). They participate in the daily life and social systems from a very young age. They quickly adjust to the language spoken outside the home and are able to speak English like natives. However, the challenges faced by subsequent generations of immigrants appear to highly identity-related (Phalet et al., 2018). Developing one's identity as a Muslim male in an environment where discrimination and xenophobia are escalating dramatically, such as the UK, affects the continuity principle of identity. As they have both inherited their ancestors' race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, culture, and traditions, and been born, raised, and educated in the new country, they need to consider multiple aspects when constructing their own identities.

4.2.2.1. Adaptation to a New Environment

First-generation Muslims in the UK reported preferring to reside and remain within their own communities to mitigate the negative effects of the adaptation process (Sartawi & Sammut, 2012). Consequently, the majority of Muslims of subsequent generations were born and raised within their own communities (Wang et al., 2020). Although they did not migrate to the UK from their native countries themselves, the current study revealed that Muslims of

subsequent generations (despite being born in the UK) can have difficulty adapting when they need to relocate outside of their own communities and safe zones, either with their families or alone. In such cases, the continuity of their identities appears to come under threat, and they must navigate new challenges as they go about their lives.

Vasam described how difficult it was for him when his family moved to a neighbourhood with fewer Muslims while he was at secondary school.

> …. In my primary school, it was like, you become like a family kind of. Um, so it was really nice… in my primary school, there were a lot of Muslims as well. Um, and also a lot of different cultures as well. My secondary school was a bit more different. It was a bit hard, like very, very few Muslims. I never saw Algerians. I never saw any like cultures that I grew up with. (Vasam, Algerian, second generation)

Vasam mentions having been negatively affected by moving to a new neighbourhood with fewer Muslims and less cultural diversity. He likens his elementary school environment to a "family," and his continuity principle of identity appears to have been threatened by his departure from this "family" environment. In this instance, Vasam experienced difficulties due to entering a new environment with fewer Muslims and less cultural diversity generally. Notably, Vasam states, "there were a great deal of Muslims," followed by, "there were also a great deal of other cultures." He refers to his original community as a "family," by which it is possible to infer that the presence of numerous co-religionists and exposure to diverse cultures bolstered his confidence and continuity principle. Concordantly, when describing his secondary education experience, he uses the same order: "very few Muslims - never saw Algerians - never saw any cultures similar to those he grew up with." In both instances, he prioritises "Muslims" (religion), suggesting his Muslimness (religion) plays a significant role in his identification and continuity.

Vasam continues to explain why he found this cultural shift hard to adapt to:

> Because I grew up with a lot of Bengali people, uh, Somali people, uh, Jamaicans and in secondary, but I didn't see anyone from those cultures as well. .. it was a bit hard, because I grew up with those cultures, I find it easy to relate. Like we all teach each other about the cultures, we eat each other's foods, like when it's Ramadhan for example,.. uh, um, but in secondary school … I found it kind of hard to adapt at times. Like sometimes they have very different mentalities or different views on life. So for me it was a bit hard to relate to some people…. I still made friends, but it was mainly like football or you know, things that everyone has in common. But not in terms of things that really value in life like family, um, and culture and community. Those were really the values I had in secondary school. (Vasam, Algerian, second generation)

Vasam's explanation emphasised the significance of the continuity principle in the formation of his identity. Growing up with certain groups appears to have enhanced his ability to apply the continuity principle, as he found it easy to relate them. He mentions his Jamaican friends alongside his Bengali and Somali peers, despite Jamaicans being predominantly non-Muslims. Therefore, it could be suggested that, despite Vasam prioritising religion in his own identity construction, having friends from various cultures (even if they are not Muslims) distinct from British culture, appears to strengthen his continuity principle. Second, Vasam exemplified "food", describing how easy it was for him to relate to certain cultural groups through cuisine. It could be argued that "food" is one of the most crucial factors in the preservation of identities (continuity of identity). For Muslims, "halal food" is one of the most important issues to consider. Thirdly, it can be difficult to relate to new groups with very distinct mentalities or worldviews. As a result, this threatened his continuity principle, as he found very distinct mentalities or perspectives incompatible with his upbringing. Interestingly, Vasam describes making friends when everyone has something in common, such as football, which can serve as a bridge between diverse cultures and backgrounds. This indicates how individuals are skilful at finding a solution to cope with threats to their continuity principles. Finally, Vasam described the most significant values he possessed during his secondary school years, including family, culture, and community. He remarked on how he was unable to relate to others in terms of these values. This situation could be construed as a genuine threat to his continuity principle. Similarly, Uzair described the conflicts he experienced when attending a Catholic school:

> I went to a Catholic school. …they did some like Catholic prayers and stuff like that. There was a bit, a few issues when I told my mom, yeah, they made us do some Catholic prayers and obviously my mom told me you shouldn't be doing those prayers, just don't do it. Um, there were a bit of friction when, um, my mom told me sort of this because teachers were sort of trying to signify that I was being disobedient but was just a difference in religion. (Uzair, Somali, second generation)

Uzair seemed to be torn between these two conflicting demands: his mother forbade him to participate in the school's mandatory Catholic prayer services, but the school expected him to do so. The friction between these two contradictory requirements led to his being accused of disobedience in school. As Uzair indicates, it was merely a religious difference, and his sense of continuity compelled him to adhere to his religious obligations and not violate his beliefs. Uzair also mentioned the following activities, which he describes as blasphemous:

> I used to partake in the Christmas cards,…stuff like praying. Because when you're praying, you're praying to another God so it goes completely against your religion. And you're committing sort of basically blasphemy... that was one experience growing as a Muslim, but I was one of the few Muslims in that school to be fair it, that's why it was sometimes quite difficult. (Uzair, Somali, second generation)

When Uzair was saying "praying to another God," it seems he was referring to the Holy Trinity, consisting of the Father, the Son (Jesus Christ), and the Holy Spirit. In Islam, the notion of the Holy Trinity, as comprehended in Christianity, is explicitly rejected. The Quran, the sacred text of Islam, expressly mentions the denial of the Trinity. In Islam, Jesus is recognised as a prophet, but not as the Son of God. In Islam, acknowledging Jesus as the Son of God is a rejection of the fundamental concept of the ultimate unity of God (Allah) and means blasphemy (Khan, 2018). Although Uzair described and was aware that praying to another God and partaking in Christmas cards is equivalent to perpetrating blasphemy, he admitted that he used to do so. This reflects that schoolchildren find it difficult to avoid activities that are incompatible with their religion (even when they are aware that it is against their religion), but they also want to participate in all class activities. This unavoidably challenges their sense of continuity, and this experience is particularly difficult for school-aged children, as Uzair characterised. In a similar vein, Yousuf explained how he tried to be more like the people around him, something he now regrets:

> I think something that I tried to do too much of is to assimilate in society. Sometimes I think it resulted in suppressing my Muslim identity... So, I tried to be a bit more like the people around me, but that I regret doing. I wish I knew amongst my identity stopped to more my cultural identity and stayed very strong with that as a oppose to trying to become, let's say more, more English. I would've preferred if I went to a more predominantly ethnic minority school as cause sometimes, I just couldn't relate with some of the students and some of the things they used to do. (Yousuf, Somali, first generation)

In his interview, Yousuf successfully demonstrated how environments and schools with less diversity and smaller Muslim populations influence the continuity of identities among Muslim children. He drew attention to the fact that this may cause Muslim students to strive too hard to assimilate into their environments, posing a significant threat to the continuity of their identity, as far as the principle requires they preserve their religious and cultural identity in every setting. He also revealed that it is extremely difficult for Muslim children to maintain their religious identities in environments and schools with less diversity and smaller Muslim populations, although they seem to become stronger in their ability to do so as they age.

4.2.2.2. Concern for their future in the UK

A significant number of young second- and third-generation Muslim males stated that they do not see a future for themselves in the UK, which is one of the most intriguing findings to emerge from this research. It is fascinating that, despite their first-generation ancestors having worked very hard and encountered many obstacles in order to migrate to and settle in the UK, they are willing to leave. The findings indicate that their desire to move to other countries is primarily motivated by economic and religious factors. Uzair explained:

> To be fair I see myself in the UK for like maybe the next 10 years, but maybe not, after then 10 years, maybe not. I feel like, of course this is all economical. … If I was to move from the UK, it would only be down to economic reasons, which is why I'm thinking. (Uzair, Somali, second generation)

Throughout the interview, Uzair repeatedly emphasised how his own community's (Somali) challenges in the UK are primarily economic in nature, explaining that they are still struggling to establish settlements. He frequently emphasised that he considers his community in the UK to be of an inferior social class, and that it is these views that are reflected in a desire to leave. Similarly, another Somali participant Yousuf shared similar thoughts:

> I don't see my future in the UK. I want to say right now I'm neutral. It's not bad enough now for me to looking for way to get out of the country. In maybe five, six years, part of me wants to move to like Qatar, for example, it's a very Muslim country. But it also because of the style of living cause of the west live. There is a lot of like expats that live in Qatar. I know one or two people that live there personally and they are enjoying life there. You don't have any of negative things that you might experience in this country. Like, for example, like the cost of living, it's not just through, it's not through the roof. There's no racism. I mean, there's no Islamophobia, cause most people they're Muslims. Life is becoming very hard in this country. It's not just me, a lot of my Muslim friends, all also haven't thought that things going to get better. If things don't get better, then I think it's time for us to pack our bags when we have the opportunity to do so. Once we find a good job that pays quite well in somewhere in the middle east, then I think it might be time for us to pack our bags and leave. It's not extremely dire as of now, but it's not great. It's not great personally. (Yousuf, Somali, first generation)

Yousuf begins his explanation of why he might choose to move from the UK to Qatar by noting that the cost of living in the UK is becoming unaffordable. As Qatar has a predominantly Muslim population, he stated that prejudice and Islamophobia do not exist there. Finally, he stated that he is not the only one who thinks this way, noting that his friends share similar sentiments, and that he may leave the UK if they tell him he can find a well-paid position in the Middle East. In his explanation, he focused primarily on economic factors, followed by

discrimination and Islamophobia. Although many Somali participants in the study indicated experiencing some racism or Islamophobia (sometimes more so than Pakistani and Algerian participants), they frequently cited economic factors when mentioning their desire to leave the UK. It could be argued that the economic difficulties faced by Somali males represent more severe challenges than discrimination and Islamophobia. In contrast, the Algerian participants who expressed a desire to leave the UK typically highlighted obstacles that threaten or affect their Muslim identities. Vasam stated:

> If I'm being very honest, the UK is in a bit of a bad place right now for Muslims. Not because of how we're treated, but because of the ideologies that affect Muslims now. So from my experience, I've seen a lot of Muslims affect by liberalism, different ideologies ... a lot of Muslims now you see that they've been affected by these ideologies … I don't know, me personally, I think in a few years' time, things keep getting harder for us to practice religion with pride. Then I might move countries, maybe like, Qatar, the UAE, but it's very easy to say this, but I know like my family and it's also going to be quite difficult. We'll just see how things go. (Vasam, Algerian, second generation)

Vasam mentioned several ideologies that have a negative effect on Muslims, stating that he believes these ideologies detract from Muslims' Islamic characteristics. In addition, he indicated that he predicts that practising his religion openly may become more difficult in the near future, and that he may then consider leaving the UK. Additionally, Vasam acknowledged that this is not a simple decision. Although he stated that he must consider his family, it appears that his thoughts and concerns regarding obstacles such as differing ideologies are encouraging him to consider migrating. This appears to create a dilemma for Vasam and impacts his identity continuity principle.

Zain is an Algerian participant who also does not see a future for himself in the UK, citing economic and religious factors:

> I'm planning move away just Middle East. For a better life. More comfortable. In terms of financially, in terms of the weather, in terms of how opportunities are not even (in the UK). I think opportunities as well. I feel like that in the UK, they're becoming a lot more limited compared to in the middle east. And in terms of practicing my religion as well, I feel like I'd be a lot more comfortable there. (Zain, Algerian, third generation)

Zain also emphasised financial considerations and the diminishing opportunities in the UK. He also stated that he would feel more secure about practising his religion in the Middle East.

Thus, I asked him whether he feels uncomfortable about practising his religion in the UK. He responded that, while he does not feel overly uncomfortable, he would like to feel greater ease.

The majority of the participants who expressed a desire to leave the UK referenced both economic and religious motives. They primarily mentioned that they would move to Middle Eastern nations such as Qatar and the United Arab Emirates. Economically and religiously, they perceive these nations would be more favourable. Interestingly, they believe that currently the situation for Muslims is worsening in the UK. Therefore, it is evident that multiple factors appear to have a negative impact on their continuity principle of identity, and in order to regain a strong sense of continuity they intend to leave the UK.

4.2.3. Discussion about continuity

This study revealed that almost all the participants are strongly internally motivated to maintain their religious and ethnic/cultural identities. They all reported experiences that affected them negatively relative to their ability to maintain continuity in their identity principles in the UK. The continuity principle refers to continuity across time and situation, and accommodation/assimilation and evaluation processes operate in tandem to generate continuity (Breakwell, 1986: 34; Timotijevic & Breakwell, 2000: 355). Any new situation, development, or threat is evaluated according to internal accommodation/assimilation and evaluation processes, and people (identities) attempt to maintain the continuity of their existence by finding a solution. Several factors appeared prominently in the research findings as obstacles to Muslim men's identity continuity principles. Although adapting to life in the UK and worrying about their children represent significant obstacles for first-generation Muslim men, second- and third-generation Muslim men encounter challenges such as adjusting to a new environment when they move to a new location within the UK and begin worrying about their futures. As Breakwell (1993: 8) explains the continuity principle by quoting Erikson's (1980) statement that 'the individual seeks what is neatly termed persistent sameness with oneself', Muslim men in the UK attempt to maintain their religious and ethnic/cultural values because these are important to them, relating these are fundamental components of the continuity identity principle.

Living with "immigrant" and "foreigner" labels as people of a different race, ethnicity, nationality, and religion in an environment where there is prejudice and even hostility towards outsiders appears to have created many challenges for Muslim males in the UK. Notably, over the last few decades, during which racism and xenophobia have increased dramatically, various aspects of Muslim men's identities have been targeted for a variety of political, economic, psychological, social, and personal reasons. In this unstable environment, it has become

increasingly difficult for Muslim men with diverse identity components to continue living safely and in accordance with social norms. Consequently, their sense of continuity, which is crucial, and a defining characteristic of their identity, seems to be directly threatened. Islamophobia and discrimination appear to profoundly target the continuity principle as experienced by Muslim males, who report facing numerous obstacles to maintaining their sense of continuity. According to Jaspal et al. (2012), many first-generation Muslim British South Asians opine that the white British majority poses a threat to the continuity of their ethnic and religious identity. This research uncovered a similar finding, with first-generation Muslim males in particular citing challenges pertaining to their religious and ethnic/cultural identities, and those of their offspring. Specifically in terms of adapting to their new life in the UK, their early days appear to have been especially difficult.

Erikson (1980) emphasises that continuity cannot be considered identical to consistency; growth and change include inconsistencies between past and present conceptions of the self, and are necessary for continuity. Such these changes are essential for the development of identity as long as they are compatible with that same identity. According to Breakwell (1987):

> The continuity principle refers to the motivation to maintain a sense of connection across time and situation within identity: continuity is not necessarily the absence of change, but that there is some conceptual thread connecting past, present, and future within a person's identity. (p. 95)

Although Muslim men are not totally closed minded with regard to change, any new element that may require alteration to their religious and ethnic/cultural identities triggers resistance. Muslim men are unwilling to completely acquire or absorb novel elements with potential to conflict with their religious and ethnic/cultural identities. Islam and Muslims have possessed certain distinguishing characteristics and practises for centuries, providing Muslims with a sense of continuity throughout the ages (Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2012: 511).

The transmission of these Islamic characteristics and practises to future generations is regarded by Muslims as a significant responsibility. Specifically, Muslim men appear to display an immense sense of responsibility in terms of the desire to instil Islamic values in their children and preserve their religious identities in the UK. The British way of life, including its various ideologies, the education system, and the teaching of sexual education in schools, competes with first-generation Muslim men's imperative to raise their children with their own cultural-religious values, and so they fear their children losing their religious-ethnic identities.

This challenge has a significant impact on the continuity identity principle of first-generation Muslim males. In particular, second- and third-generation Muslim men are more likely than first-generation Muslim men to self-identify with their multiple identities, including their Britishness. This self-identification appears to be perceived as a threat to their continuity. This finding parallels that of Jaspal and Cinnirella (2012: 520-521) who asserted that first-generation Muslims view their religious-ethnic identity as 'core', and are concerned about their children's growing disconnection from self-aspects associated with their ethnocultural and religious identities.

Sense of continuity is a critical and defining characteristic of identity, and consistency with an individual's self-conceptions can provide more reliable information, greater recall, and more desirable social contexts to ensure self-confirming feedback (Vignoles et al., 2002: 203). According to the research, second and third generation Muslim males were typically born and raised within their own ethnic and religious communities. They have strong communication engagement and interaction with group members. Moving away from their own ethnic and religious communities to a new location in which there are very few members of their group seems to create a challenge for second- and third-generation Muslim men. Many second- and third-generation participants remarked that it was extremely difficult for them to adapt to their new environment and that they faced numerous obstacles that threatened their identity principle. As Vignoles et al. (2002: 203) suggested, the loss of continuity may have negative psychological effects, as second and third generation Muslim men appear to experience greater stress when their continuity identity principle is compromised in a new environment where they have few group members with whom they can develop a sense of belonging.

4.3. Self-esteem

Self-esteem is likely the most well-known and frequently used of the identity principles considered here. Individuals engage in a perpetual endeavour to maintain high self-worth, as having a strong sense of one's personal or social value is one of the most crucial aspects of identity formation and preservation (Breakwell, 1986: 34; Timotijevic & Breakwell, 2000: 355). The interview findings indicated that Muslim men in the UK hold a remarkably high self-esteem, and generally express feelings of contentment with regard to their personal characteristics and abilities. However, when they sense their self-esteem is being attacked, they typically struggle and resist vehemently. This section details the research findings pertaining to self-esteem; it discusses how Muslim males in the UK have achieved and maintain high self-esteem and describes their emotional responses when their self-esteem is challenged.

4.3.1. Research findings and analysis regarding self-esteem

The study findings revealed that Muslim males in the UK have a strong sense of personal worth or social value, and a strong desire to maintain high self-esteem. They are willing to demonstrate and express their sense of self-worth. They are also aware of their abilities, personal values, contributions to wider society, inherent limitations, and potential challenges. In terms of self-esteem, three overarching findings were prominent: Muslim men are extremely proud and satisfied with their various identities (religious, ethnic, national, and local); they value their contribution to British society; and they consider their skills and credentials significant and valuable. Additionally, it should be noted that they acknowledged any attack or challenge that targets their identity components, or devalues their contribution and skills, negatively impacts their self-esteem.

4.3.1.1 Pride in their various identities

First, the majority of the participants expressed pride and contentment in their various identities, such as religion, race, ethnicity, and nationality. Faisal stated that whenever he is questioned about his origins, he always responds with pride:

> I say where I'm from, happily, Somalia that where I am originally from. (Faisal, Somali, first generation)

It is common for Muslim males to be proud of their origins, and this is reflected in their discourses and speech patterns. In the interviews, even the tones of their voices reflected their pride. The interviewees' expressions of pride in their original ethnicities in the UK environment, where they are viewed as foreigner and immigrant, seems to be a way for Muslim men to maintain healthy self-esteem, avoiding any negative sentiment associated with their immigrant status. Similarly, they also displayed pride in their religion, which serves as a further factor enhancing their sense of self-esteem.

> I am very sort of proud about my religion. It is very like the main thing for me, like a big part of my life... There are some principles I had, which I was never going to compromise. So I never drink alcohol and that was how I've always been. I said, I don't drink. After a while they got the message, and they respected it. That's also why I really want people to be proud about their religion. Because when you're proud about who you are and your identity, then people respect you as well. They see that you're very like principled. They see you are strong by your own values. (Vasam, Algerian, second generation)

Vasam views his religion as the most important aspect of his life, and frequently expressed during the interview how proud he is to be a Muslim. Interestingly, Vasam was also one of the participants with very high self-esteem, and he attributed this to his religious identity on multiple occasions. He shared how he responds when offered a drink by friends. His high self-esteem and firm sense of religious identity enabled him to convey to his friends that he is extremely principled with regard to his faith, and that this should be respected. This may suggest that a strong religious identity gives Muslim males a high sense of self-esteem, and as such they are eager to demonstrate this in their discourses. Vasam also indicated that possessing Islamic symbolic characteristics, such as a beard, is an additional essential distinguishing characteristic for Muslim males to be proud of:

> Beard is like a symbol of you being proud of your religion... It's like, you know, that religion is like your priority, ... it's mainly like a symbol of being proud of who you are. (Vasam, Algerian, second generation)

Vasam made it very evident that having a beard is a means to demonstrate pride in one's religion and by extension pride in oneself.

Vasam was not alone among the participants in holding this view. Many stated that having Islamic symbols such as a beard is a manifestation of how proud they are of their identities. This could suggest that Muslim men with high self-esteem are willing to express their identities more overtly. Muslim men also appear to benefit from elevated self-esteem when confronted with obstacles:

> I think I have a very strong Islamic identity, …. if I'm very frank, then the in light of Islamophobia and all of these things, I think I've become much more of a strong personality in my day-to-day actions. (Ghaffar, Pakistani, third generation)

Ghaffar is one of the most intriguing participants in the study, and he frequently emphasised his engagement with and adherence to his identity components. He spoke frequently and with great pride about his Islamic identity and concerning how it has enabled him to construct a strong sense of self. Similarly, he stated that he is proud of the community in which he grew up and still resides. He referenced an argument he had during a football game when describing this. He was very proud when reporting how he yelled at his rivals, "I'm from Wembley, Brent (London)!". According to Ghaffar, Wembley Brent is a very diverse, famous, and well-known area in London, and no one is willing to engage in conflict with Wembley residents.

Throughout the interview, he repeatedly expressed his pride in Wembley, and the significant role it played in his identity formation:

> I was born in London, Northwest London. So very mixed, uh, ethnicity population. All of my schooling is with people from all backgrounds, races, religions, because Brent is the most diverse place in the whole world. Wembley, Brent is it's very diverse. More than any others. So, what I am today is much of it is because of this upbringing. It's a very diverse upbringing in that sense. (Ghaffar, Pakistani, third generation)

Ghaffar made it obvious that he considers Wembley to be the most diverse place in the world (according to him) because it encompasses people of all backgrounds, races, and religions, and that he is proud to have been raised in such a diverse environment. In his discourses, he also highlights the fact that he is from Wembley as a form of self-protection, and does not hesitate to bring up his origins to intimidate others.

The participants' dual nationalities and Britishness also appear to provide them with a healthy sense of self-esteem. The majority of the participants proudly stated that they feel wholly or largely that they belong to British society:

> I really feel that I fully belong to the society. Specifically at this difficult time (Covid-19 times), you feel that you belong to the society that you are living with... I really feel sense of belonging to the UK society. (Faisal, Somali, first generation)

It was also very common for participants to experience a sense of belonging to British society. The majority of the respondents indicated that they consider themselves a part of and compatible with UK society. This could suggest that their sense of belonging to British society and identification as British provide them with a high sense of self-esteem, allowing them to avoid the negative consequences of their immigration status.

4.3.1.2 Placing a high value on their contributions to British society

According to research findings, one of the most significant factors in boosting the self-esteem of Muslim males in the UK is their belief that they are contributing to the larger society in which they are considered immigrants. They perceive their individual and collective contributions to British society to be highly worthwhile, and thus appear to have a strong sense of self-esteem. In their discourses, their contributions to society as a whole (as Muslims) appear to be more significant than their individual contributions, and the participants emphasised their group contributions more often than their individual contributions.

> We (Muslims) contribute to this country that message needs to go, how much contribution we make to this country. And this is our country, we are proud of it. I'm proud to be a Muslim and proud to be British. That message needs to get through. (Kabir, Algerian, first generation)

Here Kabir expressed how proud he is to be both British and Muslim. He regards the UK as his home country, and highly values the contributions of Muslims to the UK. He argues that the substantial positive contribution of Muslims to British society has not received the attention it deserves. According to him, this contribution should be better articulated and explained to the British public, to reduce negative biases against Muslims. Similarly, Faisal described how he and his wife contribute to British society by working diligently in a crucial and essential role in the health sector:

> My wife works, she contributes to the British society. She works in a hospital where she does cancer diagnosis and I work in one of the banks in the city. (Faisal, Somali, first generation)

Beyond their individual contributions, Faisal is also proud of how Muslims collectively contribute to British society, particularly mentioning their roles within the NHS during the challenging Covid-19 pandemic.

> … Also going back to the pandemic issue, our role as Muslims in the NHS is very important, in the hospitals as Muslims, who are saving lives, who are part of the society with the good ethics of work, staying tight, working day and nights for British society, contribute to the society. They are working and helping... We are here for the society when they need. (Faisal, Somali, first generation)

This suggests Muslim males value the collective contribution of all Muslims to British society, and did so significantly more during the Covid-19 pandemic. During the pandemic period in which everyone feared for their lives, they took considerable pride and self-esteem from their work within wider British society. This stance could also be interpreted as a refutation of the common belief that immigrants typically receive benefits from society (social benefits, etc.), rather than contributing to it. This appears to have provided Muslims with an opportunity to demonstrate their contributions to British society, enhancing their self-esteem in an individual and collective context.

Faisal also drew attention to the contribution of Zakat (donation), the fourth, and one of the most significant pillars of Islam, to British society:

> There is also the Zakat (donation) issue. There's international Zakat foundation in the UK where they give Zakat, charity to the non-Muslims, homeless people. (Faisal, Somali, first generation)

Faisal emphasised that non-Muslims and homeless individuals in the UK also benefit from Zakat donations. Thus, Muslims contribute to society by providing social support, and Muslim males appear to be proud of this Islamic practise, regarding it as valuable and prestigious.

The participants also indicated their pride in notable British Muslims. They appear to have a strong sense of improved social value and self-esteem when prominent Muslims are acknowledged for their contributions to British society. Mo Salah, for instance is very popular among Muslim men, and the majority of participants remarked that they are very proud of him because he represents Muslim men admirably. Dawood felt proud when he saw a video of Mo Salah's supporters chanting and praising him as if they were Muslims:

> … Oh, I really liked it. I feel proud when something like that happens. People know he is Muslim. (Dawood, Pakistani, first generation)

This may suggest that when their famous co-religionists contribute positively to British society there is a sense that this reduces prejudices against Islam and Muslims, heightening Muslim men's personal and social value. Muslim males appear eager to share the achievements and contributions of prominent Muslim figures, as it increases their value within their own personal and social contexts. Indeed, Wahab indicated that:

> I think it's a very important thing Mo Salah does right now. I think, Islamophobia levels actually fallen off in Liverpool. Mo Salah and money. Last year, I heard many people became Muslim just because it's Salah. I've heard. And also, now just Newcastle was bought from the Saudi Arabia family. (Wahab, Somali, second generation)

Mo Salah's success in reducing Islamophobia in Liverpool appears to make Wahab extremely proud. The fact that some individuals converted to Islam solely due to Salah, adds to his feelings of pride. On the other hand, Newcastle Football Club's purchase by Muslims (a Saudi Arabian family) appears to be regarded as a success among Muslims, and Wahab appears proud of this fact. It may also suggest that Muslims' success in establishing business connections, and their enormous investments in the UK, also boost Muslim men's self-esteem, as they appear to appreciate these successes as their own.

4.3.1.3. Being Proud of Their Abilities and Qualifications

Individual and group abilities and qualifications are a further factor contributing to Muslim men's high self-esteem in the UK. The majority of the respondents indicated that they have confidence in their use of language, communication skills, education, and profession. The ability to speak English fluently is one of the most notable skills the participants are proud of.

> I can easily talk to people and very much feel like I'm part of society. (Elyas, Pakistani, second generation)

Elyas noted in his explanation that speaking English fluently and makes him feel very much like a member of society. This could suggest that speaking English fluently has a positive effect on his self-esteem when interacting with other members of society. Similarly, Tahir expressed his pride in his English proficiency:

> I am living here for 26 years. I can speak English very well now. (Tahir, Algerian, first generation)

During the interview, Tahir frequently emphasised how long he has lived in the UK, and it was apparent that his extensive experience based on his time spent in the UK gives him a sense of high self-esteem. Several times, he proudly mentioned his remarkable ability with the language. In a similar vein, Salman explained how his command of the English language ensures he can defend himself.

> … I can defend myself because I can speak English very fluently. (Salman, Algerian, first generation)

Salman appears to view his fluency in English as a form of protection against the challenges he might encounter in the UK. As a fluent English speaker, he emphasised his high sense of self-esteem regarding the extent to which this helped him navigate challenges. These findings could suggest that a strong command of the English language should be regarded as one of the most crucial factors determining self-esteem among Muslim men in the UK, probably because English fluency is regarded as a prerequisite for communicating with and engaging in society.

Ghaffar provided an intriguing example of how his exceptional English skills astonished people from the upper classes:

> … I speak like Shakespeare. So, if somebody is like upper class, he would say, "oh, he is talking like Shakespeare, but he looks like a criminal. How is it possible?" (Ghaffar, Pakistani, third generation)

During the interviews, Ghaffar demonstrated his exceptional English proficiency by using idioms, phrases, irony, and terms that were extremely fascinating. He compared himself to Shakespeare in terms of his proficiency in the English language, before making the above observation. This could suggest that speaking English fluently both affords protection against discrimination and boosts the self-esteem of Muslim men.

Meanwhile, speaking multiple languages proficiently enhances Muslim men's self-esteem significantly. They compare themselves (immigrants who can/must speak at least two languages) to English people (who are typically not required to speak multiple languages). Many participants were proud to be able to communicate in at least two languages proficiently (English and their native language):

> So right now, I'm fluent in English, Algerian Arabic and French, and I'm learning classical Arabic and also Spanish as well. (Vasam, Algerian, second generation)

This suggests that speaking multiple languages fluently as an immigrant makes Muslim males feel exclusive and valuable in the context of the UK, adding to their self-esteem in an individual and social context.

Education is another important factor that contributes to participants' sense of self-worth. Individually and collectively, they value their educational attainments and career options. Although first-generation Muslims were relatively less well educated, second and third generations have had the opportunity to receive a quality education. First-generation Muslim males were proud of the educational achievements of their children:

> Education matters too much, and if you don't have a good education, it is hard to get a good job. Many Muslims don't have a good education, I mean, there are many (Muslims) now, but 10-20 years ago, we did not have. (Tahir, Algerian, first generation)

In the interviews, the majority of first-generation Muslim males emphasised the significance of education and expressed their pride in the success of second and third generations.

Similarly, second and third generation Muslim males explained that they valued their education and placed a high premium on it:

> I have graduated from a very good university. Very good degree. Um, just waiting for, you know, a good job. I think I could do really well. (Wahab, Somali, second generation)

Wahab is another participant with a very high sense of self-esteem. Although he believes that he and his Somali community continue to face many obstacles to establishing themselves in the UK, he believes that education can solve their problems. As a graduate from a very reputable university with a very prestigious degree, he suggests a decent education boosts the self-esteem of Muslim men and can reduce the difficulties associated with their immigrant status.

Muslim males in the UK report a high sense of self-esteem associated with their educational attainments, which they frequently demonstrated and indicated during the interviews. On the other hand, challenges such as prejudice and discrimination negatively impacted the self-esteem of Muslim men in the UK.

4.3.1.4 The Challenges that Target Muslim Men's Self-Esteem

Although Muslim men in the UK have high self-esteem in terms of their own identity constructions, the many challenges they encounter do target and affect key aspects of their self-esteem in a negative way. Specifically, discrimination that targets Muslim men's ethnic and religious identities threatens their sense of self-esteem. The participants mentioned numerous negative experiences that have had a significant impact on their self-esteem; however, I will only discuss two that I found particularly remarkable. When Kabir was 11 years old, he and his family moved to the UK. His lack of English was apparently his greatest obstacle during his early days in the UK, and he appears to have been severely psychologically affected during his school years.

> When I came here, obviously due to lack of English, it was very difficult... When I went to school, because my lack of English, they thought, you know, in this country, if you can't speak English, they think you're stupid. You know, that's one of the perceptions. (Kabir, Algerian, first generation)

Kabir later explained that this perception also stemmed from his status as an immigrant. Moreover, he disclosed a specific experience of school-based discrimination.

> … And also my teachers, because I came here by 11, they put me into like a sort of, into the GCSEs course and because I wasn't able to speak English properly, they didn't expect me to achieve anything. One of the things they ask you is what do you want to be when you finish your GCSEs, your secondary education in this country? And I said,

> I want to be an engineer. And one of my teachers laughed. He said, "come on", you know, "be realistic, you know, you can't be an engineer cause obviously you're not going to get the thing". I felt really bad about this. It's lack of expectation because obviously I was an immigrant. (Kabir, Algerian, first generation)

Kabir seemed profoundly affected by the awful treatment he faced as a young boy of eleven in the UK. As apparent from the tone of his voice, his negative feelings regarding the incident persist. As Kabir pointed out, one of his teachers treated him as if he would be incapable of achieving anything due to his immigrant status and lack of English. In addition, his future career aspirations and plans were ridiculed in front of his fellow students, and he was told he could not become an engineer. Ironically, he became an engineer and secured a position with a prestigious company. However, he did not appear to have fully recovered from the damage done to his self-esteem during his early years in the UK. This may suggest that any assault on one's self-esteem, particularly when first arriving in the UK (perhaps more so as a child), can have a devastating effect on the lives and emotions of Muslim men.

The second example concerns Ghaffar's encounter with discrimination while working at the airport. He stated that he had completed his duties, changed his clothes, and then went to the prayer room on the day of the incident.

> Before I go into the toilet, I changed my high viz cloth yellow, bright. I think, I changed to clothes into normal clothes in the toilet. And I go into prayer room. Maybe they see on the camera. Oh, this suspicious!! So normally they do go around the security and they come in the prayer room as well. This time the woman came in with a dog, normally they don't come in with a dog. This time they came in with a dog and they stayed, I was very tired... I was quite traumatized, and angry. When I saw the gun, pointing down, when I'm sitting down near my feet, this heckler, or whatever. I saw the gun and I actually felt, maybe because of the dog as well, more angry. (Ghaffar, Pakistani, third generation)

Ghaffar indicated that the incident was quite humiliating, and that he was also furious. Despite being an airport employee, he was regarded with suspicion as a Muslim, and was treated badly in the prayer room. The incident appears to have threatened his self-esteem. He stated that he had not committed any wrongdoing, and that there was no reason to suspect him. He was just praying in the prayer room. Specifically, the dog and the gun appeared to aggravate Ghaffar considerably, raising his ire. Typically, dogs and weapons are used when there is an expectation of an extremely dangerous perpetrator. Ghaffar stated that he felt traumatised and enraged by the female security guard's offensive and aggressive behaviour. Later, Ghaffar

emphasised that he had to take a break to recover from the negative effects of the incident, and it took him a very long time to integrate. It appears that his sense of worth had been diminished as a result of the incident, and that the security personnel's behaviour had made him feel worthless. This suggests that Muslim men's self-esteem is negatively impacted when they feel disrespected and unappreciated, or when they are regarded suspiciously based solely on their appearance and Muslim identity. In addition, Muslim males feel especially disrespected when they are intimidated in the prayer room, which prompts anger.

4.3.2. Discussion on Self-esteem

The results of this study revealed that all the participants strive to attain and maintain self-esteem. Breakwell (1993) argues that self-esteem is a fundamental principle in all identity theories. According to IPT, accommodation/assimilation and evaluation mechanisms generate personal or social worth (Breakwell, 1986: 34; Timotijevic & Breakwell, 2000: 355). The self-esteem principle was regarded as the superordinate principle in the early years of IPT, and the other three principles (continuity, self-efficacy, and distinctiveness) were viewed as contributing in a variety of ways to self-esteem (Breakwell, 1993: 8). However, additional research revealed that self-esteem should not be regarded as more significant than other principles (Vignoles et al., 2002), and since then, in terms of IPT understanding, all motivational identity principles were given equal theoretical consideration (Breakwell et al., 2022). Aligning with this, the current research demonstrated that each identity motivational principle is unique meriting equal theoretical consideration.

According to Rosenberg et al. (1995), individuals subjectively evaluate their own worth, with this process of evaluation measuring a specific aspect of the self (specific self-esteem) or the whole self (global self-esteem). Although 'specific self-esteem is more associated with narrowly defined areas of activity (e.g., sporting achievement), global self-esteem is more associated with overall psychological well-being, in IPT usually global self-esteem is measured' (Breakwell, 2021: 577). However, it is important to note that IPT recognises the significance of some aspects of self-esteem in the establishment and sustenance of global self-esteem (Breakwell, 2021). The findings of this study indicated that Muslim men's self-esteem appear to relate more to their overall psychological health than to their specific personal achievements. They desire to feel valuable in both individual and social contexts, and to be respected by other members of society. This seems particularly significant for Muslim men in the context of the UK, as they are typically regarded as foreigners and immigrants and encounter racism and discrimination. Strong self-esteem also appears to provide Muslim men

in the UK with protection against potential negative effects associated with their immigrant status.

Muslim men also appear to be able to boost their self-esteem by enhancing and proudly highlighting their various identities (ethnic, religious, national, etc.), which provides them with some protection against the negative effects of their immigrant status and also seems to enhance their overall psychological well-being. Consistent with findings reported by Nesdale and Mak (2003), whose research focuses on the psychological effects of immigration and measures immigrants' ethnic and personal self-esteem, this study revealed the level of ethnic and religious identification among Muslim men to be very high, thereby bolstering their self-esteem. In contrast, Nesdale and Mak (2003) discovered individual achievements and accomplishments to be the most significant predictors of personal self-esteem. Although the study participants repeatedly stated that their individual achievements and accomplishments boost their self-esteem, Muslim males appear to place greater importance on the achievements and accomplishments of their ethnic and religious groups than on their own personal successes. Their group achievements appear to boost their self-esteem more than their individual accomplishments. In their research Nesdale and Mak (2003) posit that immigrants can feel valuable due to their status as members of specific communities when they witness other members of their groups experience some success. Despite personally achieving some successes and contributing effectively to their group, the Muslim male participants in this study appear to feel their greatest sense of value from their self-identification as Muslims (as group members).

According to Vignoles et al. (2006), in the process of self-evaluation, people frequently highlight their own and their group's abilities confidently, and are likely to benefit from any information that supports a positive self-evaluation. It emerged that all the Muslim males interviewed have a similar tendency to share positive self-evaluations that support their self-esteem positively. They were confident in their discourse, and were proud to talk about their individual and group skills. On the other hand, Vignoles et al. (2006) imply that individuals and groups typically evaluate themselves as "better than average" according to a variety of dimensions. The findings of this study revealed, however, that Muslim men appear to have a positive self-evaluation and a high sense of self-esteem when they considered themselves as equal to (not better than) other British people (i.e., being proud of their Britishness). This may suggest that Muslim men (as a disadvantaged group) derive positive self-evaluation from considering themselves on an equal footing with the people of the host country, similar to that that might be derived by others considering themselves and their groups as "above average."

Individuals' self-esteem is also regarded as a fundamental characteristic, and any threat to one's self-esteem may have a negative effect. When self-esteem is threatened, people might experience sadness or depression, or may even develop a defence mechanism to protect their identities, such as modifying their cognitions or behaviour, or reacting with hostility to the source of the threat (Vignoles et al., 2006). When their self-esteem is threatened or they are disrespected, Muslim men reported experiencing intense discomfort, sadness, anger, or even trauma. Specifically, any threat that targets their identities and abilities and harms their self-esteem means that Muslim men engage in active attempts to mitigate damage, such as responding with hostility, yelling, or responding in a particular way. IPT research indicates that people feel a greater desire to maintain their self-esteem when confronted with threats or challenges (Vignoles et al., 2006; Breakwell, 2021). This study found that Muslim men in the UK feel a similar desire when confronted with challenges.

4.4. Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy is another essential motivational identity principle determining the construction of an individual's identity. People typically believe they are capable of achieving success and that they have control over their own circumstances. Self-efficacy appears to play an essential role in the lives of immigrants in their host countries, and any challenge that targets their self-efficacy principles may negatively impact their lives. In this section, I will present key research findings and then discuss how Muslim men in the UK exercise self-efficacy identity principles and also how the challenges they encounter influence their self-efficacy.

4.4.1. Research findings and analysis regarding self-efficacy

In general, the findings of this study indicate that Muslim men in the UK have a strong sense of competence, capability, and control over their own actions. They are confident in their ability to achieve success in a particular task. They emphasised that they generally consider their skills and abilities adequate or almost adequate to meet the demands of life in the UK. In general, Muslim males highlighted aspects such as their work, language, education, and career-related abilities and competencies in reference to self-efficacy. On the other hand, their numerous identity components and responsibilities appear to require Muslim men to perform additional duties. For example, they face numerous challenges to their self-efficacy; however, their challenges and responsibilities seem to enhance their abilities and sentiments. Although first-generation Muslim men frequently referred to their self-efficacy in terms of labour and language, second- and third-generation Muslim men's self-efficacy was found to relate more to their abilities pertaining to their education and careers.

4.4.1.1 First-Generation Muslim Men

First-generation Muslim males demonstrated specific labour and language skills. Muslim males also typically viewed themselves as qualified for a variety of occupations. Tahir indicated that despite his belief that he is qualified for better employment, he was required to work in tough positions:

> You sometimes have to work in difficult, low-earned jobs even you know you can do better, you are capable of better jobs. (Tahir, Algerian, first generation)

Tahir frequently emphasised his self-efficacy, and his belief that he is capable of achieving success in his professional life throughout the interview. He believes that his skills are sufficient to perform, or even superior to the majority of positions he held in the UK. Moreover, his difficulties seem to have bolstered his self-efficacy. Similarly, Salman described how he was able to successfully establish himself in the UK when he first arrived:

> …You need to be like, the hard worker, to build your own life. You need to be strong character... It was difficult on the beginning before, the first three months, then you start to get alike, understanding the culture, understanding the way of life in the UK. (Salman, Algerian, first generation)

Salman considers himself capable and competent of comprehending the culture and way of life in the UK, and he claimed that his hard work had allowed him to build himself an independent life in the UK. Additionally, he mentioned on numerous occasions how entrepreneurial he was in his home country as well as the UK, when seeking out and utilising various opportunities. Moving to the UK also represented an opportunity for him, and it appeared that his high self-efficacy assisted him when moving to and establishing a new life in the UK. This may suggest that first-generation Muslim men with high self-efficacy benefit from their self-efficacy when settling in the UK. Salman also mentioned how inadequate his English was when he first arrived in the UK, especially as he now considers his English proficiency to be excellent:

> (When I first came to the UK) I needed to study English because I wasn't in my country because I just studied Arabic and French. I started studying English from my beginning at the university level... (But now) I can speak English very fluently. I can defend myself, whatever position, anywhere, let's say anyone, white English can't humiliate me, no. (Salman, Algerian, first generation)

Evidently, Salman's fluency in the English language bolsters his self-efficacy and self-esteem, providing him with a defence mechanism that he can use to address any challenges or adverse

situations. Muslim men with sufficient English proficiency have a strong sense of self-efficacy, which gives them a sense of security and overall psychological well-being. It was discussed in the preceding section that for Muslim men, proficiency in English is also an ability to be proud of (self-esteem).

In addition to their professed proficiency in labour and language, first-generation Muslim men also reported their competence in a variety of other domains. Faisal, for instance, described how he believes Muslim fathers are effective at raising large families:

> I have seen so many people (Muslim men) who are successfully raising 10 kids in the UK. (Faisal, Somali, first generation)

In addition to Faisal, many participants cited raising children (in both a quantitative and qualitative sense) as a virtue. This implies that among Muslim males, raising many children (in both a quantitative and qualitative sense) is typically regarded as a valued skill, which enhances their feelings of self-efficacy and self-esteem.

4.4.1.2. Second and third-generation Muslim men

One of the most intriguing findings of this study is that some Muslim males, particularly those from the second and third generations, believe they must be more capable and competent than British natives if they are to maintain their identities and fulfil their responsibilities. They believe they must work harder than their British peers, and must be efficient at time management, responsible, organised, etc. It seems they need to ensure they have mastered multiple skills. Uzair described how his religious education requirements encouraged him to work harder as a youth:

> The first thing I realized as a kid, I found myself and a lot of Muslim kids working harder than non-Muslim kids because, um, what would happen is, we'd go to school and then after school we'd go to Madrasa (religious school). We'd learn Quran we'd learn Islamic studies and stuff like that. So, I felt like as a young age, we had two parities, … I found it quite hard as a kid to be on this, um, balancing the two things. (Uzair, Somali, second generation)

Uzair indicated that he had to devote significantly more time to his education than his British peers, as he was required to attend religious school after school and on weekends. This improved Uzair's time management and organisational skills. In addition, he described how he managed his time effectively while at school, so that he would be able to perform the five daily prayers. He utilised his break periods effectively to worship.

Third and second-generation Muslim men seemingly place a high value on education and believe they are capable of obtaining a good education. However, they also encounter obstacles and discrimination associated with their educational capacities. Wahab shared his experiences, elaborating on the difficulties he encountered in school:

> I feel like, definitely Somali boys were really looked down upon, really looked down upon for some reason. I don't know why. I think one of the biggest things was for me during the first week of sixth form, they were checking the predictive grades. And one of the things that they were checking was like if you are free school meals, your background, where you're from, and apparently if you are Somali, you are less likely to achieve. And I think like, you know, the fact that you're being Somali, and your predictive grades are based on where you're from. (Wahab, Somali, second generation)

Throughout the interviews, Wahab emphasised how Somalis continue to struggle to establish their communities in the UK, referencing difficulties in terms of education, status, and economics. However, Wahab also emphasised his continued optimism about his own and Somalis' future in the UK. He believes that he and other Somalis are capable of attaining success. However, he also criticised and objected to how Somali boys have been treated in institutions, and how their abilities and feelings of self-efficacy were compromised. He believes that predicted grades are associated with a person's origin, which he finds extremely discriminatory and unacceptable. The findings suggest that any discrimination or challenge in school that targets pupils' abilities and self-efficacy can have a devastating effect on Muslim men in the UK, and that not all of them are able to overcome childhood prejudices as adults. Wahab then related another incident involving predictive grades:

> One of my friends he's at Cambridge University right now and he's Somali. I think there was a girl very similar grades with him. He got predicted two A's, two B's, and she got predicted for eight A stars because she was a white girl, but now he's the one at Cambridge. I think stuff like that really, you know, hit you just like, why? Like, I'm just an individual, it's like, you're grouped up with all the failures of your people and it's saying you're going to be the same. It's not a nice thing. (Wahab, Somali, second generation)

Wahab appears irritated by the discrimination directed not only towards him, but also his Somali companions. He emphasised that he considered this to be inappropriate and unacceptable. Additionally, he reported pride in his friend's accomplishments, noting that this boosted his self-efficacy. It could be suggested that, while any challenge or discrimination that targets the self-efficacy of group members appears to have a negative effect on Muslim men's

own self-efficacy, the success of any group member conversely contributes to improving Muslim men's self-efficacy.

Wahab later revealed that he failed the sixth form and returned to secondary school to begin again. He described how discrimination in the (first) sixth form affected him, and how, when he returned to his secondary school, his frustrations motivated him to attain success; he ultimately attended a very prestigious university. Consequently, he also accessed opportunities to intern at reputable businesses:

> I ended up at Warwick, but I felt like if I was at that, that six form, the one where there was a lot of discrimination, I felt like that would never happen that my life would've taken a different turn... During university I did an internship at Lloyds bank as a data scientist, which was, uh, quite good. I wanted to get to data science, so it was a very good internship. (Wahab, Somali, second generation)

Wahab explained how discrimination negatively impacts people's sense of self-efficacy and observed that it can alter the course of their lives. He believes that he would not have been able to get into Warwick University if he had remained in the (first) six form, where he was subject to a lot of discrimination. This may suggest that any discrimination or attack on Muslim men's self-efficacy during their years in education could completely alter their lives, creating challenges that will mar an entire lifetime.

4.4.2. Discussion on self-efficacy

The self-efficacy principle in IPT 'refers to motivation to maintain feelings of competence and control' (Breakwell, 1993: 205). 'IPT was clearly influenced by Bandura's (1977) Self-Efficacy Model. Bandura (1995) defined self-efficacy as the belief in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations' (p.2). The research findings in the current study revealed Muslim men in the UK have a strong motivation to develop competence and personal agency. Although first-generation Muslim men typically attributed their self-efficacy to their work and language skills, second and third generation Muslim men's self-efficacy was more closely tied to their education and career skills. In contrast, any assault or discrimination directed towards Muslim men's sense of self-efficacy appears to have had a devastating effect.

Bandura (1978) was among one of the first social psychologists to propose that a person's sense of their self-efficacy is significantly more dependent on their perceived success than their actual success (Jaspal, 2014). That is, as a result of its influence upon choices and the surrounding environment, perceived success can nurture personal development (Bandura,

1978). The Self-Efficacy Model places significant emphasis on an individual's perception of self-efficacy, rather than on their actual level of control or competence (Hendy et al., 2006: 222). Similarly, as understood by IPT, an individual's perception of self-efficacy is regarded as a powerful determinant of decision-making and action, which is typically significant as a means of selecting coping strategies (Breakwell, 2021: 577-8). The findings of this study indicate that Muslim males have a strongly held belief pertaining to their ability to achieve future successes, and it is their perceived self-efficacy, rather than their actual level of competence that is more meaningful to them. According to Vignoles et al. (2002: 203), induced sentiments of self-efficacy are primarily associated with higher subjective well-being and as such enhance actual personal and collective efficacy. This research also revealed that Muslim men's perceived strong self-efficacy motivated them to achieve actual success.

According to Burke et al. (2009: 113),

> [S]elf-efficacy beliefs regulate human functioning through cognition (enables people to predict and develop ways to control events that affect their lives), motivation (contributes to self-regulation), affect (influences emotional reactions to difficult situations as well as anxiety arousal), and selection (influences types of activities or environments chosen).

This belief appears to be supported by the current research, which found Muslim men's motivation and affect functions of self-efficacy feelings appear to be more dominant. Any challenge, attack, or discrimination that targets sentiments of self-efficacy can activate the self-regulatory functions of Muslim men, causing them to react emotionally. People's beliefs concerning their capabilities (self-agency) are also prevalent in self-regulation (Bandura, 1993), and the individual's self-agency when constructing and regulating identity is a fundamental presupposition of IPT (Jaspal, 2014).

In contrast, feelings of futility, alienation, helplessness, anxiety, and depression may result from loss or lack of self-efficacy (Breakwell, 1993; Vignoles et al., 2002: 203). Similarly, negative emotions, such as sorrow and anger, may be experienced when self-efficacy is threatened. This study found Muslim men experience discomfort, sadness, and anger when their self-efficacy principles are threatened. Specifically, any discrimination or attack against their abilities appears to negatively impact their overall psychological well-being. According to Majer (2009), self-efficacy for education is an essential cognitive resource among immigrants, such that their immigration status may influence their educational successes. According to the findings of this study, education plays a significant role in Muslim men's self-

efficacy, and many explained how their immigrant status poses an obstacle to their educational success.

According to Bandura (1997: 80), challenges and difficulties present individuals with an opportunity to increase their capabilities, when they learn how to overcome them or transform barriers into opportunities. Muslim men in the UK were revealed to be capable of overcoming obstacles by bolstering their feelings of self-efficacy. Furthermore, they do not give up readily, but on the contrary experience an increased desire to confront and challenge the source of their adversity when their self-efficacy is threatened. This was also seen to afford them with increased motivation to attain success, resulting in their feeling more competent and in control.

4.5. Distinctiveness

At both the individual and a group level, everyone wishes to be distinguished to some degree from others. Any threat to a person's sense of uniqueness and distinctiveness could prove detrimental to their identity, and consequently, individuals endeavour to maintain their uniqueness and sense of distinctiveness in any way possible. The research findings concerning the significance of distinctiveness are also presented in this section. It discusses how Muslim males manifest their distinctiveness at both the individual and group level, and also how the challenges they face are connected to distinctiveness as a motivational principle.

4.5.1. Research findings and analysis regarding distinctiveness

As individuals and as a group, the interviewees' responses suggested distinctiveness is a central component of Muslim men's identity constructions. Some of the difficulties faced by Muslim males in the UK target the distinctiveness principle, particularly at the group level. To demonstrate this, the participants primarily highlighted and expressed their identities in positive ways. Specifically, their Muslim identity was identified as affording them a sense of dignity, uniqueness, and distinctiveness at the individual level as well as a group level.

4.5.1.1. Muslimness

When I asked the participants how they would identify or introduce themselves, they typically emphasised their Muslim identity and religion first. Many of the participants directly responded "Muslim". In relation to his self-identification, Muhammad compared the phases of his life:

> I would say it's different when I was growing up. When I was growing up, I think I identified myself more with being British, and then as I grew up, I think mid-twenties to late thirties, I think I started to identify myself more with my ancestors, more my Somali background with age, but I think my identity for me comes more from the

> religion than ethnicity. So I would first identify myself as a Muslim. It was just something that was part of my DNA. It's natural. I think the older I got the more stronger that I got in my religion. (Muhammad, Somali, second generation)

In all cases, when the participants were requested to share their self-definitions, their religious identities (Muslimness) took precedence.

In the UK context, Muslim males appear to distinguish themselves by expressing their Muslim identity. Conversely, any challenge to what it means to be a Muslim therefore posed a question over the significance of this aspect of their distinctiveness; for example, Ghaffar describes how he felt after 9/11:

> … one or two years behind the 9/11, when Islam and, as Muslims, our reputation was under attack. Reputation of Islam was basically as well under attack. So, I think that was a call to action that you say you're Muslim, … and I think this devalues can continued even until today. (Ghaffar, Pakistani, third generation)

Ghaffar reported perceiving the assaults against Islam and the reputation of Muslims in the media as a call to action. Stating "I am Muslim" could be viewed as a declaration of distinctiveness and also a mechanism of mutual protection. Prioritising one's identity through its expressions reveals which identity is to be regarded as the distinguishing identity. The majority of the participants prioritised their religious identity, with their Muslimness appearing to provide them with a sense of individual and collective dignity, uniqueness, and distinctiveness.

4.5.1.2. Britishness

Although the interviewees' self-identifications were predominantly associated with their religion, depending on the context, their multiple identifications also afforded them a stronger sense of distinctiveness. Specifically, in the context of the UK, highlighting their Britishness helped enable them to articulate their distinctiveness as British citizens.

> I think I can identify myself as a British Muslim. (Bilal, Pakistani, first generation)

Bilal has lived in the UK for almost twenty years and stated that he identifies as British. Bilal seemed to experience distinctiveness from both his Muslim and British self-identifications, and he proudly demonstrated both identities. Similarly, Elyas identified as a British Muslim, offering further explanation:

> Uh, I'm a British Muslim. I would say perhaps, ... you know, I am a Muslim like that, or I hold Islamic values close to me, but then I'm also a British person. the way I, and the, the sort of things I'm into, I would say I'm a British person. ((Elyas, Pakistani, second generation)

Elyas' explanation allowed me to investigate why, despite some Muslim men appearing to identify with their various identity components immediately after being asked how they define themselves, they do not perceive their self-identification and their various identity components consciously or continuously. My question appear to have prompted Elyas to ponder his self-identification, with the result that he contemplated his dual identities.

When some of the participants indicated their Britishness, it was evident to me that they were actually referring to their acculturation:

> Um, well, um, I think I've as a Somali person, I've also integrated quite well with the British culture. Um, I'm as much Somali as I'm British. (Wahab, Somali, second generation)

Wahab indicated that he is both British and Somali. He stated that he has integrated into British culture quite well. Moreover, his cultural adaptation appears to be a crucial component of Wahab's Britishness, with the result that he seems to identify as British. This further serves to strengthen his identity's principle of distinctiveness.

As a result of highlighting their Britishness alongside their original ethnicities or their Muslimness, the participants are bolstering their distinctiveness, since having multiple integrated self-identifications is associated with having a strong personality. Their British self-identifications can be viewed as expressing to British society that they embrace their Britishness as Muslims residing in the UK, thereby demonstrates their robust perceived distinctiveness.

4.5.1.3. Role models

I questioned my participants regarding whether they had a personal role model and, if so, to describe them in detail, so that I could comprehend their self-identity formation in greater depth. The majority of the participants emphasised that Prophet Muhammad is their primary role model because they are Muslims. They typically stated that Prophet Muhammad is the role model for all Muslims.

> As a Muslim of course my role model is the Prophet, everyone's role model is Prophet Muhammad. (Abbas, Pakistani, first generation)

In Abbas's explanation, he makes it abundantly clear that Muslims' adherence to the Prophet Muhammad as a role model is a defining characteristic and a distinctive feature. The Prophet Muhammad is a role model for everyone, according to him.

> I consider Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) as a role model in my life that he's perfect identity in the world and a perfect role model for anyone. So, he was a good son. He was a good father, he was a good husband, he was a good human, he had a good input in the world, look after the poor people…. I think he is a role model for me. (Bilal, Pakistani, first generation)

In his explanation, Bilal refers to Prophet Muhammad as a "good son, a good father, and a good husband," which are also ideal characteristics for Muslim men. Consideration of the Prophet as a role model therefore appears to be a distinguishing characteristic of Muslim masculinity. Elyas indicated that he also admires Prophet Muhammad's appearance.

> Prophet Muhammad is a good role model for me. I always look at the Sunnah (the way of Prophet) and how we did things and now I try to model myself after him. Even long hair and the beard, he gave me the idea. (Elyas, Pakistani, second generation)

Indeed, Elyas has lengthy hair and a beard, and he explained he modelled his appearance on that of the Prophet Muhammad. Following the Prophet Muhammad in numerous aspects of his life appears to strengthen Elyas' distinctiveness principle.

4.5.1.4. Separateness dimension of Muslim men's distinctiveness

Being a Muslim was mentioned repeatedly as creating a "separateness" dimension, and was also motivated by distinctiveness. Separation from others in terms of thought and action is a facet of distinctiveness. Tahir explains:

> As a Muslim, you cannot go to pubs, ... of course, there are many Muslims go to pubs, but we should not drink, it is haram (forbidden by religion), Islam forbids drinking, and we should not go to pubs, uh. People here usually socialize in pubs, ... drinking, singing, chatting. It is a barrier for us to mix non-Muslims. We are Muslim, we should not drink. We cannot do everything that other people do. (Tahir, Algerian, first generation)

In his explanation, Tahir emphasises that drinking and going to pubs is a widespread activity in British culture. However, he asserts that Muslims should not participate in such activities because Allah forbids them. "We cannot do everything that other people do," he says, clarifying the distinctiveness of Muslims. Tahir acknowledges that drinking and going to pubs can be a barrier that prevents Muslims from mixing with non-Muslims. Therefore, it appears

that socialising through drinking and going to pubs creates a challenge in terms of the "separateness" requirement of the distinctiveness motivation among Muslim men. Bilal considers this difficulty one of the greatest issues facing Muslim men in the UK:

> The biggest problem a Muslim man will face that Muslim men don't drink. They don't. So, people think that's very unsocialized kind of thing. So, it's okay when you do... Socializing with people, very, very important. And a lot of people understand that you don't drink, you are Muslim, it's normal, but a lot of people will find it very awkward. I had, I spoken to a couple of friends they were police in there. They said they couldn't go up the up the ladder only because they couldn't socialize because some companies have a drinking trend in the company. And when you don't mix with that way then you find the problems. (Bilal, Pakistani, first generation)

Bilal narrated an intriguing story, suggesting that because Muslim males typically do not consume alcohol they face additional obstacles and challenges in their careers, as not drinking may prevent their integration into work groups. This cultural expectation with regard to the workplace may potentially impede the career advancement of Muslim males. Similarly, Kabir also explained that Muslims' refusal to consume alcohol influences their careers:

> In my workplace I had to apply for the manager's position 10 times, and it took me 12 years to get a promotion. I have been the most qualified person and that, so there's institutional racism being a Muslim. Job prospect as well, like in a school, universities, they don't give you the same level of corporation and same level of help as another student. Yeah. And also another thing in the job, if you don't go out drinking with the management, like with the work colleagues and drinking alcohol and things like that. If you are not part of them, it's very difficult. .... So, for Muslim management, if you don't go out drinking and things like that's socialized, it's very difficult to see (become Muslim manager). And it's, you are not clicked, then you don't get the jobs. (Kabir, Algerian, first generation)

Kabir indicates that his Muslim faith has repeatedly generated numerous challenges and obstacles in his professional life throughout his career. He stated that it is obvious that if someone does not drink they may not be accepted, and may be excluded from the group. This appears to have prevented Kabir advancing in his career and receiving a promotion. It may also imply that the dimensions of Muslim men's distinctiveness principle of identity (the "separateness" dimension of distinctiveness principle in this instance) are threatened by challenges such as not drinking (which may affect socialisation in workplaces), and this appears to have a negative impact.

4.5.1.5. Fulfilling religious commandments and having a beard

The study participants expressed their belief that adhering to religious commandments is a critical requirement for them as Muslims. Observing religious commandments establishes a barrier between the group to which they belong and the outside world; it separates the group from others, and affords members of the group their distinctiveness. Some of these religious commandments pertain to codes of dress, such as the hijab, or other aspects of physical appearance, such as growing a beard. This study revealed that Muslim men think of having a beard as a religious requirement, and a distinguishing trait for Muslim men:

> The reason why I have a beard is because of the Sunnah (the way of life) of the Prophet Muhammad. So, I'm following his Sunnah… so which is an Islamic symbol, … this is part of identity. If you are a Muslim and, ... the Muslim has an appearance. So, I should keep this appearance to say I'm a Muslim. (Abbas, Pakistani, first generation)

As described by Abbas, having a beard and keeping a Muslim appearance is a type of manifestation of Muslimness and an essential part of a Muslim man's identity. Abbas indicated that Muslim men should maintain and proudly display physical characteristics that define their Muslimness. Referencing another aspect, Lateef drew attention to the following reality:

> If we have a similar type of beard, this is identification as Muslim. (Lateef, Somali, first generation)

Here, Lateef indicates that Muslims do not necessarily wear a beard solely to follow the Sunnah, but also because they wish to be fashionable and recognisable to other Muslims. According to him, sharing a similar style of beard makes it easier for Muslim males to identify one another. In his interview, Ghaffar stated how strong he feels due to having a beard:

> I think I'm very strong with my beard. So, like, if somebody says something to me or try to even with a knife or something (because of my beard), I don't care. I'm not scared. (Ghaffar, Pakistani, third generation)

Ghaffar emphasised how important his beard is to him, even were he to find himself in a life-threatening situation. It could be inferred that Muslim men in the UK are willing to maintain and defend their distinctive identities for a variety of reasons, despite the fact that this might expose them to potentially adverse circumstances.

Certainly, having a distinguishing characteristic of a Muslim male, a beard in this context, may also present challenges, as noted by Faisal:

> …if you are a bearded Muslim, you should be more responsible watching out your actions, general issues... They may face more discrimination because maybe of their long beard for instance. (Faisal, Somali, first generation)

In his explanation, Faisal draws attention to the fact that Muslim men with beards must be more responsible and circumspect in their actions, because any distinctive physical religious symbols can make them vulnerable to discrimination, or closer observation. This was supported by many of the respondents, who confirmed that having a beard makes Muslim men more vulnerable to discrimination and Islamophobia. Thus, although having a beard strengthens the distinctiveness identity principle, it also represents a challenge. Consequently, the possibility of confronting discrimination and Islamophobia due to one's appearance has a negative effect on the distinctiveness identity principle of Muslim males.

4.5.2. Discussion on Distinctiveness

Individuals (identities) tend to pursue distinctiveness in both the personal and the social sense. In terms of the personal, distinctiveness refers to distinguishing characteristics that yield a sense of pride. In a social sense, distinctiveness refers to membership of a social category with distinctive norms and requirements, that function to distinguish it from other groups (Fearon, 1999: 2). The results of this study demonstrated that all the participants desire distinctiveness, both personally and collectively. According to Vignoles et al. (2000: 337), 'on a social level, people act especially in ways that demonstrate their distinctiveness to others'. Accordingly, the Muslim men interviewed were found to be very willing to demonstrate their distinctive characteristics. Muslim males demonstrate their distinctiveness primarily by highlighting aspects of their Muslimness, followed by their ethnicity and then their Britishness. Adopting the Prophet Muhammad as their primary role model is another crucial aspect of their distinctiveness.

An interesting finding is that Muslim males place a greater emphasis on group distinctiveness than individual distinctiveness. This finding parallels Breakwell's (1987) assertion that individual distinctiveness is a characteristic that is unique to Western or individualistic cultures; whereas, for individuals from collectivist cultures, group distinctiveness is more relevant and meaningful than individual distinctiveness (Vignoles et al., 2000: 342). According to this study, Muslim men typically express their distinctiveness by accentuating the characteristics of the groups to which they belong. However, group identifications can also be conceived of as a route to individual distinctiveness, as high levels of group distinctiveness can boost individual distinctiveness (Vignoles et al., 2000: 341).

Without this, group identification and group distinctiveness would be devoid of significance were individual distinctiveness not enhanced. Muslim males intend to demonstrate their individual distinctiveness while concurrently emphasising their group identification as Muslims.

Among the strong determinants of group identifications, religion and ethnicity reflect a sense of belonging and togetherness, which is very common among groups that wish to differentiate themselves from other groups, usually by referring to their ethnic and religious identities (Phukon, 2002: 1). In general, ethnicity and religious identity are intertwined as they encompass signifiers of culture, tradition, language, customs, way of life, etc. (Hardy et al., 2019). Ethnic and religious identity constructions are, from a psychological standpoint, fundamentally significant dimensions known to be closely associated with distinctiveness (Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2012: 510). The results of this study revealed that Muslim males are confident about both their religion and their ethnicity, and are eager to highlight these identities as defining characteristics of their distinctiveness. Almost all the study participants cited their religious and ethnic identities as a source of pride in their self-identification. Conversely, any attack on a group and its members negatively influences people's sense of distinctiveness (Timotijevic & Breakwell, 2000: 368). This research also revealed that Muslim men are willing act (e.g., publicly expressing their Muslimness and defending their religion on various platforms) when their Muslimness or Islam as a religion come under attack, as such assaults violate their identity principle of distinctiveness.

According to Breakwell (1993), people strive to maximise their distinctiveness from others by emphasising the unique aspects of their identity; however, this principle should not be interpreted as "total distinctiveness", because "being a little different but not completely" is what people seek. This study revealed that Muslim men have the desire to highlight their Britishness alongside their original ethnicity and religious identity; moreover, this proved to be particularly common among second- and third-generation Muslim men. This finding is also similar to that reported in Jaspal and Coyle's (2009: 155) research, which determined that emphasis on Britishness strengthens the distinctiveness principle of identity, and may therefore provide 'a sense of positive distinctiveness' to those with immigrant origin. Similarly, Jaspal and Cinnirella (2012: 514) contend that referring to diverse socio-psychological resources (e.g., self-identification in national rather than ethnic terms) could generate a positive sense of distinctiveness. In contrast, Jaspal and Cinnirella (2012: 522) note that in socio-psychological contexts, hybrid self-identification (national, ethnic, religious, etc.) might enhance the distinctiveness principle of identity among second- and third-generation immigrants, who may

consequently seek to differentiate themselves from their first-generation ancestors. As discussed in the section on continuity, first-generation Muslim males are typically concerned about their children, because they tend to identify as British rather than with their ethnicity. This poses a challenge to the identity continuity principle of first-generation Muslim men as discussed above. Nevertheless, the hybrid self-identification of second- and third-generation Muslim men appears to be important in strengthening the distinctiveness principle of their identity.

The distinctiveness principle can also be thought of 'as a motive pushing toward the establishment and maintenance of a sense of differentiation from others, with implications for cognition, affect, and behaviour' (Vignoles et al., 2000: 338; Vignoles et al., 2002: 203). Accommodation/assimilation and evaluation processes combine to generate uniqueness or distinctiveness for an individual (Breakwell, 1986: 34; Timotijevic & Breakwell, 2000: 355). Thus, one's sense of distinctiveness can be established in various ways, at both the individual and group levels of identity, in terms of separateness from others, being or acting differently from others (Vignoles et al., 2002: 203). Therefore, distinctiveness is necessarily a core value for both individuals and groups. Although distinctiveness can give engender a strong sense of value either individually or as a group, feeling too similar to others can have negative effects, even resulting in a sense of worthlessness, and so people frequently attempt to differentiate themselves or their groups (Vignoles et al., 2002: 203). According to Vignoles et al. (2000: 337), distinctiveness can be constructed in multiple ways generating a variety of implications for identity and behaviour, using dimensions of "position", "difference", and "separateness" on both individual and group levels. In simple terms, "difference" refers to qualities intrinsic to the individuals and criteria defined for groups; "separateness" signifies distance from others and the negation of a relationship; and "position" refers to a person's place within their social network (Vignoles et al., 2000: 347).

Specifically for religious groups, religious commandments serve as a symbolic border between the group and the outside world. The separation afforded by such boundaries has a significant impact on the attitudes and behaviours of group members. This study revealed Muslim men are highly conscious of the boundaries that distinguish them as Muslims, especially when negotiating their relationships with others, constituting the separateness dimension of the distinctiveness construction. To adhere to religious commandments, Muslim males refrain from drinking and going to bars. This behaviour is a strong manifestation of the distinctiveness identity principle, although it can make socialising and mixing with non-Muslims challenging.

Religious symbols can be considered another important separateness feature that coveys genuine distinctiveness (Vignoles et al., 2000: 347; Brock & Tulasiewicz, 2018). Even within the same religion community, some group members prefer to use symbols to distinguish themselves from other group members. For Muslims, such religious symbols are considered important signifiers of Muslimness and are given a sacred meaning (Allen, 2020). Physical religious symbols such as Islamic attire, specifically headscarves for women and beards for men, are prominent signifiers of Muslimness, highlighting one's distinctiveness. During the interviews, I inquired as to the significance of the beard, and my participants all described it as a distinctive feature of Muslim men. Many participants emphasised that growing their beard is a Sunnah (way of Prophet Muhammad), making it a physical manifestation of Muslim men's distinctiveness. However, having a beard can add to the challenges faced by Muslim men, potentially even threatening the distinctiveness identity principle of Muslim men.

4.6. Belonging

All people typically desire to feel close to other people and to feel accepted by others. One way in which individuals endeavour to maintain their overall well-being is by belonging to a group and fitting in with group norms. Any attack on an individual's sense of belonging is therefore undesirable, and the source of that attack treated as an adversary. In this section, I present the research findings associated with belonging as an identity principle and discuss how Muslim men in the UK maintain their sense of belonging and respond when it is challenged.

4.6.1. Research findings and analysis regarding belonging

Overall, the current research findings revealed that Muslim men in the UK have a strong sense of belonging. They indicated in particular their strong feelings of belonging to their families, friends, local neighbourhoods, ethnic groups, religious groups, and British society. This may imply that Muslim men in the UK have a strong sense of group belonging, and that this provides them with a good sense of well-being and ease in their lives.

The first of these, their sense of family belonging, seems to play an important role in Muslim men's lives. Javed stated:

> I'm a happy man. I'm a family man. I'm just more connected to the family. I'm more connected and I'm also very social. (Javed, Pakistani, first generation)

The above quotation reveals how Javed's strong familial bond positively impacts his life and contributes to his self-improvement. He explained that his parents and extended family have always supported him and his siblings. Javed indicated with pride that he and his siblings are now all professionals in their respective fields. Faisal also drew attention to the fact that belonging to his extended family is fundamental to his identity, and that he has a positive relationship with his family:

> Alhamdulillah (Thanks to God) all good relationships I have in my family. And as you know as a Muslim family, we are very extended and large numbers specifically if you are coming from Somalia background as well. I had (back in Somali) a good relationship with my family. (Faisal, Somali, first generation)

Notably, having a large extended family proved to be extremely important to the participants, and they frequently referred to it proudly.

Developing the significance of family, Salman emphasised that having a good relationship with his family is also something that is important from a religious perspective:

> My family is like something as really important in my life. Because Islam tells us about respect for the parents. Especially, to help them, to listen to them to take the advice because they are the best adviser. We all had (their advice), they gave advice, ... my parents brought me up, but I help when I go there and gave them gifts and stuff. So I have a good relationship with my family. I have good relation. We keep the relation of respect, helping each other, and then enjoying good time together, parties, family parties. (Salman, Algerian, first generation)

Salman emphasised how his emphasis on belonging to his family and maintaining strong familial bonds throughout his life is heavily influenced by his religious beliefs. As he indicated, Islam commands that believers maintaining strong family ties and care for their families. This finding may imply that Muslim men with a strong identity association with their religious beliefs also have a strong sense of belonging to their families. Indeed, Bilal stated that adhering to religion and family is the best approach for Muslim males to take to overcome the negative effects of racism and Islamophobia:

> (After any racist or Islamophobic attack) I think it's very hard to overcome the negative effect because once something happens to you, it makes you weak. It can make you stressed. It makes you to think about why this happened to you. But I think it's, stay strong. Stick with the religion. Stick with the family. I think that make you all overcome those kinds of things. (Bilal, Pakistani, first generation)

This implies that, because Muslim men have a strong sense of belonging to their families, communities, religion, etc., this provides them with a form of protection and coping mechanism in the face of challenges posed by racism and Islamophobia.

On the other hand, belonging to a group and being a member of a group brings with it responsibilities, such as the requirement to represent the group appropriately or defend the group or its members should they come under attack. Ghaffar described how he felt about expressing his Muslimness after 9/11:

> Some events they triggered, maybe one or two years behind the 9/11 as well. When Islam, as Muslims, our reputation was under attack, reputation of Islam was basically as well under attack. So, I think that was a call to action that you say you're Muslim. In reality, you need to be practicing Islam in order to show why you choose what you choose. (Ghaffar, Pakistani, third generation)

Ghaffar expressed how terrible he felt when his religious group came under attack following 9/11. Clearly, his sense of belonging was threatened, and he interpreted this as a call to action. This suggests Muslim men feel compelled to act when their sense of belonging is threatened. Such threats increase their focus on their groups and further reinforce their sense of belonging.

The interview data suggested that when their sense of belonging is threatened, Muslim males typically take additional steps to preserve their group membership. In a similar vein, maintaining strong group belonging demands appropriate group representation:

> I think young Muslims have a responsibility to act responsibly, not abuse their power, not portray a bad image of Muslims. For example, when I'm outside I don't do anything silly. I don't drink or you see sometimes Muslims smoke for example, like sort of going against their responsibilities and their responsibility to portray us in a good way. (they) should be good to their families and friends and then older Muslims, … and then to do good to their friends and their neighbours help out in charity and the inactive member, help the community. (Elyas, Pakistani, second generation)

Being a member of a group invariably entails responsibilities, and Muslim males in particular appear to place great importance on portraying their communities favourably. For example, Muslim males seek to strengthen their group belonging by attempting to represent their Muslimness positively.

According the evidence collected for this study, the individualistic nature of British society creates difficulties for Muslim males, as it directly threatens an individual's relationship to their sense of belonging. This was expressed by Wasam, who emphasised that individualism compels individuals to focus solely on themselves in the UK:

> I think society now is a lot more individualistic, Sort of we're all taught to like, "just focus on yourself, focus on your career, focus on making money. You can worry about a family after", but that's not how it should be. I don't think like this. I think if you have a strong support system, a strong family system, then it will make those other things, your goals easier for you. Because in your tough times there'll be someone there to help you or there'll be someone there to push you, motivate you. (Wasam)

Wasam also discussed the individualistic nature of British society extensively, sharing his experiences and opinions. He drew attention to how individualism conflicts with a sense of belonging. He observes that a strong sense of belonging (particularly to family) provides an effective support system. This may suggest that unity and togetherness are essential in the lives of Muslim males, as they strengthen one's sense of belonging. He provided an illustration of how small details are crucial to his sense of belonging:

> I feel like they're (British society) very individualistic. So one thing I notice as well is when I go to their house, for example, they'll eat everyone by themselves. So the mom will eat by herself. Dad will eat by himself. The kids will eat by himself, but in my household, my mom, she always makes sure we eat together as a family every day. You have to eat dinner together at the table. And if you try to have it different, if I say to my mom, for example, I'm going to come in one hour and I'll eat after. She'll say no you're eating now, or she'll wait until I finish what I have to do. And then we'll eat. (Wasam)

Wasam believes that always dining together as a family at the table inculcates a strong sense of belonging. This is also a prevalent practise among Muslims, and is regarded as a respectful act, as the Prophet Muhammed advised everyone to eat at the same table. It appears that the individualistic pattern of British society poses challenges for Muslim men's sense of belonging, suggesting that even small details can critically inform their sense of belonging.

4.6.2. Discussion on belonging

Individuals desire for a sense of relatedness and proximity to and acceptance by others denotes the need for belonging (Vignoles, 2011: 419). As explained above, Easterbrook and Vignoles (2013) identified a sense of belonging as an essential human need for maintaining optimal psychological functioning. Muslim men in the UK seem to be able to maintain a strong sense of belonging, and that this improves their overall psychological wellbeing. The data reveals that Muslim men benefit from their sense of belonging as it helps them to surmount the negative effects that can arise when they encounter challenges in the UK. Baumeister and Leary (1995) contend that all humans in all cultures appear to (should) develop a sense of belonging; however, the extent to which people are able to express and satisfy their need to belong in

individual and cultural contexts may vary. This study's findings revealed that Muslim men in the UK have a strong sense of belonging and can express it in both individual and group contexts. Specifically, they expressed a strong sense of belonging to their families, friends, neighbourhoods, religions, cultures, ethnic groups, religious groups, etc.

IPT contends that individuals can hold multiple group memberships to maintain their sense of belonging (Jaspal, 2012). In order to maintain and strengthen their sense of belonging, Muslim men rely upon their numerous identities, including ethnic, religious, national, and cultural identities. Meanwhile, any threat or challenge to their sense of belonging appears to enhance Muslim men's identification with their own communities. Increasing identification with one's own group is a prominent coping strategy that individuals employ when confronted with a threat to their sense of belonging (Picket et al., 2002; Vignoles, 2011). Moreover, they appear more inclined to act by exhibiting their strong group affiliation when their sense of belonging is threatened or comes under attack.

4.7. Meaning

The desire to find meaning in one's life is a defining characteristic of human nature, and all individuals generally seek significance or purpose in their existence and lives. Finding a sense of meaning is also essential for maintaining overall psychological well-being, and any threat or challenge to people's sense of meaning may negatively affect them. In this section, I present and discuss research findings regarding how Muslim men maintain a sense of meaning in the context of the UK, as well as how their challenges influence their "meaning identity principles." The research findings revealed that Muslim men in the UK have a strong sense of coherence and purpose in their lives, and that challenges such as prejudice and Islamophobia can undermine their sense of meaning and negatively impact their lives.

4.7.1. Research findings and analysis relating to meaning

Overall, the research findings revealed that Muslim men in the UK maintain a strong sense of significance and purpose with regard to their existence and lives. They typically indicated that they perceive their lives to be meaningful, and their interview responses demonstrated coherence and purpose in their lives. They typically expressed that their sense of meaning proceeded from their religious beliefs, and they appeared to view their lives, existence, life events, and experiences variously as fate, God's (Allah) will, and Allah's test. Intriguingly, some of the participants indicated that their difficulties and problems in the UK, such as prejudice and Islamophobia, are in fact Allah's test, and that they are encountering such challenges for a reason.

When questioned, Bilal emphasised the importance of belonging to family and religion when describing how difficult it is to surmount the negative effects of racist or Islamophobic assaults. He also highlighted how discriminatory or Islamophobic assaults cause Muslim men to question why this has occurred to them:

> (After any racist or Islamophobic attack) I think it's very hard to overcome the negative effect because once something happens to you, it makes you weak. It can make you stressed. It makes you to think about why this happened to you. But I think it's, stay strong. (Bilal, Pakistani, first generation)

Bilal eloquently reasoned that any racist or Islamophobic assault against a Muslim man threatens their entire identity and causes them to question why such a thing has occurred. This could imply that any racist or Islamophobic assault threatens Muslim men's sense of meaning, leading to the question "why". Bilal also introduced mitigating strategies to address the problem: adherence to religion and adherence to family. Religion and family appeared to provide Bilal with a foundation from which he can attribute meaning, coherence, and purpose to his life and life events. The evidence he provided implies that the challenges and problems Muslim men encounter in the UK can enhance their sense of meaning, as Muslim men typically seek the meaning or purpose behind such incidents or in their coping strategies they employ when responding to these incidents.

Similarly, Ghaffar indicated that he thinks of the Islamophobic attacks he experienced as a test from Allah, offering a broader interpretation of the incidents. With regard to the experience referenced above, in which he was mistreated by a female security officer at an airport mosque, he explained how he interpreted the incident:

> …because only Allah knows the best. It's like, we just don't know what connections is taking place. So, I looked at this one… a difficult time for me… But I also said to the woman, because I said I wanted to report her, but I was walking back to the car park. I said to her, this is a test. (Ghaffar, Pakistani, third generation)

According to Ghaffar, all of life's events are interconnected in some way, and only Allah has the complete picture. After arguing with the airport security officer, he told her, "This is a test." Throughout the interview, Ghaffar repeatedly asserted that every occurrence or experience in this world is a test from Allah, who examines how individuals respond or react. Ghaffar attributes a great deal of significance and meaning to his life experiences, and this appears to enhance his sense of meaning. These findings may imply that some Muslim men characterise

all their experiences through the lens of their religious beliefs, attributing a great deal of significance to them.

Another significant finding of this study is that Muslim men appear to attribute importance to their migration to the UK. Finding decent employment, living a better life, and improving their economic conditions are among the most prevalent reasons why Muslims immigrate to the UK. However, Muslim men appear to ascribe a loftier and more comprehensive purpose to their migration to the UK. Wahab explained:

> We came here for a reason. I tried my best to get educated. I want the best universities in the country to get my degree, trying to get a job, uh, trying to get back to my parents, trying to get back to my own community. (Wahab, Somali, second generation))

Wahab mentioned that his parents' migration to the UK, as well as their struggles and sacrifices for him and his siblings, have left him with a strong sense of responsibility to them. On the other hand, he mentioned not only his family's immigration to the UK, but also that of his ethnic and religious group. Wahab feels a sense of responsibility not only to his family, but also to his community. According to Wahab, his parents, families, and communities would be pleased to know he received a good education, had a prestigious career, achieved success in and for the community, and contributed to society. In this manner, he can contribute to his community and positively represent Muslims. He stated that this is and should be acknowledged as a requirement for all British Muslims. Similarly, Imran criticised some Muslims for typically lacking a meaningful purpose:

> Most of the Muslims are not successful because they have no idea, no goal. Number one, they are not directed properly. Number two, they are not inspired, or they are not guided or not rightly educated as well. For that purpose, because it (education) is a unique purpose. Many Muslims came from abroad from Muslim countries to this country only to survive, to earn money. Yeah. And that's it. They have no future goal. They have no goal for afterlife. They have no goal with their creator... So very few Muslims have their own goal. They have their goal afterlife, they have their goal to achieve... They have their own goal to explore Islam, to face the challenges... If you are in London, then you can find your comfort zone is minimal, but challenges are more, more, more, and challenges coming towards you to, to grab you. Not only grab you but also to engage you, to involve you. (Imran, Somali, first generation)

Imran is an imam and religious teacher in London, and he indicated that he is very active in his community, noting that he is able to assist and support the members of his community as they encounter challenges. He stated that life is extremely difficult for Muslim men, particularly

those living in large cities such as London, and that the challenges they encounter may mislead Muslim men and erode their religious convictions. According to him, one of the greatest challenges for Muslim men in the UK is that they may easily become captivated by British culture and lose sight of their purpose as Muslims. Then they would only living to survive or to accrue possessions, with no higher purpose in life. He emphasised that if Muslim men have a strong aim to fulfil their life's purpose according to Islam, focusing on the afterlife, they will be more successful and will more easily navigate challenges.

4.7.2. Discussion on meaning

'The need to find significance or purpose in one's own existence' is referred to as meaning motive (Baumeister, 1991; Vignoles et al., 2006: 311). Individuals seek meaning in order to maintain and improve their psychological well-being and meaning-seeking is typically regarded as a defining characteristic of human nature (Vignoles et al., 2006: 311). The findings of this study revealed that Muslim men in the UK have a strong sense of the significance of their existences, lives, and life events. They typically associate their sense of meaning with their religious beliefs, and find Islam to be a significant source of their sense of meaning. They further stated that they perceive their lives, existence, life events, and experiences as fated, being God's (Allah's) will, and Allah's test. Baumeister (1991: 205) argues that religion is uniquely capable of providing high-level meaning to human existence, and that religion is the most reliable method employed by people to find meaning in their lives. Consistent with this, the findings of the present study indicate that Islam provides Muslim men with a strong sense of meaning, and that they typically approach their coherence and purpose from a religious belief perspective.

Further research into the IPT tradition revealed that the meaning motivational identity principle has 'a variety of direct and indirect effects on cognitive, affective, and behavioural dimensions of identity' and should not be subsumed under the category of self-esteem (Vignoles et al., 2006: 324). Indeed, the findings of this study indicated that a desire for meaning is important to Muslim men, and that having a greater sense of meaning in their lives appears to improve their psychological well-being. The meaning motive also has an extensive and potent influence on definitions of identity, and consequently all individuals in diverse societies seek meaning in various ways (Vignoles, 2011: 417). In different cultures different kinds of meaning are strived for (Heine et al., 2006), and religion, as an essential component of cultures, plays an important role in the search for meaning (Baumeister, 1991). As immigrants who are accepted as other, Muslim men in the UK seem to benefit from their religious beliefs as a way to overcome the negative effects generated by the obstacles they face.

Moreover, they appear to identify themselves more strongly with the groups to which they belong as a way to maintain their motivation to seek out meaning. Subjective uncertainty typically compels individuals to identify with groups with highly well-defined meanings (Hogg, 2007; Vignoles, 2011: 417). Consequently, adhering to a community or group can provide Muslim men with a means of coping with the challenges that could generate ambiguity in their lives.

According to Vignoles (2011: 417), in order to avoid 'descending into paralysing feelings of anxiety or hopelessness,' it is crucial for people to maintain a sense of meaning in their lives, as viewing the events of one's life as random and arbitrary creates a sense of powerlessness. Specifically, when people are confronted with traumatic or unpredictable events, having a sense of coherence and purpose is protective (Vignoles, 2011: 417). When encountering obstacles such as prejudice or Islamophobia, Muslim men in the UK appear to derive meaning from their religious beliefs, which also serve as a powerful source of meaning.

4.8. Psychological Coherence

'The psychological coherence principle refers to the need for compatibility and coherence between pre-existing identities' (Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2010: 865). Jaspal and Cinnirella (2010) proposed this as an additional identity principle, distinguishing it from Breakwell's (1986) continuity principle. Individuals typically seek subjective perceptions of compatibility between their numerous identities. Individuals may have a number of distinct identities, and attaining harmony and coherence among these identities is crucial for ensuring overall psychological wellbeing. Any threat that generate inconsistencies in a person's numerous identities is deemed undesirable, and as such it is natural to resist the source of such threats in order to preserve the coherence of their identities. In this section, I present and discuss the research findings regarding how British Muslim men maintain compatibility between their various identities, in particular how their challenges impact their psychological coherence. According to the research findings, Muslim men appear able to maintain a high level of psychological coherence among their numerous identities; however, any threat to this coherence impacts their lives negatively.

4.8.1. Research findings and analysis on psychological coherence

Overall, the research findings indicate that Muslim males in the UK have a high degree of identity compatibility and coherence. They have multiple identities, including ethnic, gender, religious, national, etc. The coherence across these different aspects appears to enable

them to build a stronger and more resilient identity. Any threat that targets one or more of their identities also threatens their other identities and their overall identities.

According to the findings of this study, Muslim males typically define themselves by juxtaposing their ethnic or national identity against their religious identity and their Britishness. When I inquired about their identities, they typically responded, "British Muslim", "Algerian Muslim", or "British Pakistani", thereby emphasising their numerous identities. Dawood self-identified by indicating his three defining identities:

> First of all, (I am) Muslim and then British Pakistani. (Dawood, Pakistani, first generation)

Dawood also highlighted his three identities when describing his self-identification, and it was clear that his religious, ethnic/national, and British identities cohere. Much like the other participants, he prioritises his Muslim identity in his self-identification, but this does not appear to compromise the compatibility of his other numerous identities. It was common for the participants to prioritise their religious identity as Muslim in their self-identification; however, they also proudly emphasised their ethnic/national identities and their Britishness. This may imply that prioritising their religious identity does not impact the psychological coherence of Muslim men's identities, and that as such they are able to maintain psychological coherence.

Muslim men's identification with diverse identity components are usually context-dependent, and as a result their Britishness appears to provide them with a more comprehensive and reliable identifier in the UK context. They frequently juxtapose their Britishness with their ethnic or religious identity, as when identifying themselves as "British Muslim" or "British Pakistani/Algerian/Somali"; for example, Bilal self-identified as a British Muslim:

> I think I can identify myself as a British Muslim. (Bilal, Pakistani, first generation)

Similarly, Wahab indicated that:

> I think, as a Somali person, I've also integrated quite well with the British culture. Um, I'm as much Somali as I'm British. (Wahab, Somali, second generation)

Wahab explained that he has successfully integrated into British culture and consequently considers himself both Somali and British. The participants frequently reflected that they have embraced or adopted British culture, and this act appears sufficient for Muslim men to identify

as British. Specifically, second- and third-generation Muslim men appear to have adopted a sense of Britishness considerably more than first-generation Muslim men, and so were more willing to express their Britishness during the interviews. The data collected may suggest that identifying as British has positive effects on the psychological coherence of second- and third-generation Muslim men.

On the other hand, multiple identities appear to result in distinct understandings of loyalty among British Muslim men. For some Muslim males from the second and third generation, embracing, adopting, or integrating into British culture is relatively common, and they express their Britishness with pride. However, respecting British values may be sufficient for some first-generation Muslim males to identify as British, as fully embracing, adopting, or integrating into British culture may jeopardise their ethnic/national and religious identities. In this sense, their divergent understandings of their multiple identities appear to generate identity dissonance. Hamza indicated that:

> We sometimes have worries for them (children), that raising them with our own cultures, traditions and religion. (Hamza, Algerian, first generation)

Hamza drew attention to significant aspects of his identity (culture, tradition, and religion), and observed that it is very challenging to raise children in the UK to observe their own cultures, traditions, and religions. Hamza and several other first-generation Muslim males indicated that the British culture and way of life may appeal to young Muslims and may encourage them to engage in conduct that is incompatible with their ethnic/national and religious identities. For example, drinking is a prevalent and acceptable behaviour in the British culture and a way of life. Bilal stated that this contradicts against his identity as a Muslim:

- I won't go to pubs on Friday night, I won't go to regular day.
- Why?
- Because I think by religion it is wrong. So if I'm pretty good human, good Muslim, I shouldn't be drinking. I couldn't be in a nightclub at night time. And when people know that senses, that's all I want. I won't go there. (Bilal, Pakistani, first generation)

Bilal disclosed that in order for him to feel like a respectable Muslim, he must abstain from alcohol and not visit nightclubs. His Muslim identity necessitates that he refrains from engaging in certain activities that are commonplace and acceptable in British society. Although Bilal identifies as a British Pakistani, he chooses to avoid certain British activities that are in

conflict with his Muslim identity. Muhammed also stated that he perceives certain Muslim males as primarily Western British rather than Muslim:

> We have some Muslim men who are seen and identify more as Western British, and Islam is not visible from them. If you ask them, they're Muslim, but it's not visible. I think they are more accepted; I think in society because they are more part of the British culture. You know, they go out maybe to the pubs or whatever, they socialize with them... In this country, if you assimilate into the British culture, they're very accepting people. But if you don't assimilate into the culture and you don't integrate, they're not necessarily rude or disrespectful, but they're more cautious. (Muhammad, Somali, second generation).

Muhammad's account reveals that Muslim men whose conduct or actions are more British than Muslim, are subject to criticism from their Muslim peers. It may also indicate that Muslims in the UK exert social pressure to question the identities of other Muslims who conduct or appear more British than Muslim.

This also draws attention to the various identities of Muslim men within the Muslim community, and may influence the psychological cohesion between their distinct identities. It appears that each of their identities necessitates unique and sometimes difficult requirements, which may impact their psychological cohesion. It may also be implied that their numerous multiple identities may be interpreted differently by various individuals, and that some of the characteristics or requirements associated with each identity component may prove incompatible with those identity components they share with those with a similar identity. In this context, certain aspects or requirements linked to being British may conflict with the ethnic/national/religious identity of Muslim men. Specifically, first-generation Muslim males appear to be more hesitant about identifying as British, and also express concern about their children's (over) identification as British. They appear to fear that their children may engage in thoughts and actions that are incompatible with their ethnic/national and religious identities. These worries also appear to influence the psychological coherence of their multiple identities.

4.8.2. Discussion about psychological coherence

The psychological coherence identity principle was suggested in further studies in the IPT tradition as an additional identity principle by Jaspal and Cinnirella (2010). The principle refers to the need for 'compatibility and coherence between pre-existing identities' (Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2010: 865) and is considered distinct from Breakwell's (1986) continuity principle. Although the continuity principle proposes a temporally coherent and continuous sense of self, particularly resilient in response to unexpected and abrupt events (Breakwell, 1986), the

psychological coherence principle emphasises compatibility and coherence among pre-existing identities (Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2010: 865). In their interesting study, Jaspal and Cinnirella (2010) demonstrate that despite the sexual (gay) and religious (Muslim) identities they examined were perceived as incoherent and incompatible, many of their Muslim participants appear to have reconciled their incoherent pre-existing identities. Thus, Jaspal and Cinnirella (2010) assign a specific meaning to the psychological coherence principle: 'it refers to the individual's subjective perception of compatibility between their identities' (p. 865).

The findings of this study indicate that Muslim males in the UK exhibit strong compatibility and coherence between their multiple identities, in particular their ethnic/national, religious, and British identities. Typically, they prefer to identify and define themselves with their ethnic/national, religious, and British identities using hyphenated categories. This is consistent with Jaspal and Cinnirella's (2012) claim that using hyphenated identities can reconcile immigrants' multiple identities by delivering coherence and compatibility, thereby enhancing the psychological coherence principle of identity. Moreover, not only does use of multiple hyphenated identity categories increase the psychological coherence principle of identity, but hybrid self-categorization also has apparently positive implications for the psychological coherence of immigrants (Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2012: 520-522). Britishness as a hybrid self-categorization appears to provide Muslim men, particularly second and third generation Muslim men, with a mechanism by which to strengthen their psychological coherence principle, as Muslim men appear to articulate their Britishness differently to develop compatibility and coherence between their pre-existing (ethnic/national and religious) identities.

In contrast, as Verkuyten (2005: 179) suggests, different identities may bring about varying understandings and loyalties, as the multiple identities of Muslim men introduce different understandings and commitments with regard to their identities, which may result in psychological conflict. Britishness also seems to be perceived differently by the various generations of Muslim men; specifically, first-generation Muslim men appear more hesitant about self-identifying as British, and also somewhat concerned about their children's (over) self-identification as British. Although Britishness improved the psychological coherence of second and third generation Muslim men, first-generation Muslim men were concerned about their children's (over) self-identification as British, thereby threatening their psychological coherence. However, according to Jaspal and Cinnirella (2010: 866), 'psychological coherence is in the eye of the perceiver and not some objective quality of the identities under scrutiny';

and in order to achieve it, individuals must ignore any incompatibility or conflict present in their interconnected identities (Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2012: 519).

4.9. Discussion regarding Motivational Identity Principles and Conclusion

This chapter has portrayed and reflected on how the motivational identity principles of IPT operate within the lives and identity constructions of Muslim men in the UK, as well as how the challenges Muslim men face affect and threaten their motivational identity principles as well as their overall identity constructions. Certainly, Muslim men in the UK seem to have a strong desire to maintain their motivational identity principles, and challenges such as racism, discrimination, and Islamophobia represent threats as they negatively impact their lives. Maintaining an appropriate sense of having a motivational identity principle seemed to improve the overall psychological wellbeing of Muslim men; however, any threat or challenge affecting these principles had a negative effect on their overall psychological wellbeing.

IPT was originally developed by Breakwell (1986, 1993) as a theoretical research framework to explain identity threat and coping mechanisms (Vignoles, 2011: 410). IPT posits that 'identity—which encompasses both personal and social aspects— is the dynamic outcome of cognitive processes occurring over time within particular (and changing) social, cultural, and historical contexts' (Vignoles, 2011: 410). IPT also suggests that identity construction typically comprises two parallel processes; assimilation-accommodation and evaluation (Breakwell, 1986; 1993). Assimilation-accommodation is best understood as a memory system, and refers to the absorption of new elements into one's identity configuration (Breakwell, 1986; Breakwell et al., 2022). The novel content of such elements can be both personal, such as values or behaviour, and social, such as interpersonal networks or group membership (Breakwell, 1993). The evaluation process 'entails the allocation of meaning and value to the contents of identity' (Breakwell, 1986: 23; Breakwell et al., 2022). During the operation of such processes, individuals strive to attain a sense of identity, and both processes are guided by identity principles, which refer to the motivational basis of identity and dictate which end states are most desirable for the structure of identity (Breakwell, 1993; Vignoles, 2011: 410; Breakwell et al., 2022). Self-esteem, distinctiveness, and continuity were the initial three identity principles suggested by Breakwell (1986). Subsequently, based on additional research, self-efficacy (Breakwell, 1993), meaning, belonging (Vignoles, et al., 2002) and psychological coherence (Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2010) principles were added. In the case of the participants in this study, Muslim men in the UK, a strong motivation to maintain and enhance

all identity principles existed, with each identity principle seeming to be almost equally important in their identity constructions.

According to Vignoles et al. (2006: 329), the motivation to maintain and/or enhance identity principles may be applicable at the individual, relational, and group levels of self-representation. Although identity principles manifest differently in various societies, they all remain significant across cultures (Vignoles et al., 2006). According to the findings of this study, ethnic, national, religious, and British identities play a significant role in the configuration of Muslim men's identities in the UK. The participants actively endeavour to strengthen their identity principles, as suggested by Breakwell et al. (2022), and specifically, their religious identities and beliefs offer a solid foundation that strengthens their feelings with regard to their identity principles. Consequently, any threat that specifically targets their religious identity is perceived as a threat to all their identity principles.

IPT suggests that when identity processes cannot satisfy identity principles, the feeling of identity principles is thereby undermined or becomes insecure; consequently, individuals experience identity threat, which can be perceived as unpleasant and detrimental to their psychological well-being (Breakwell, 1986; Jaspal, 2012; Vignoles, 2011; Breakwell et al., 2022). Any factor or change in social and/or individual circumstances can constitute an identity threat. Individuals in this situation attempt to employ coping strategies to mitigate the threat (Breakwell, 1986; Jaspal, 2012). A coping strategy is defined as 'any activity, in thought or deed, which has as its goal the removal or modification of a threat to identity' (Breakwell, 1986: 78). Individuals develop various intrapsychic, interpersonal, group, intergroup, and societal coping strategies when responding to identity threats in order to preserve their identity principles (Breakwell, 2015b, Breakwell et al., 2022). In the context of this study, Muslim men in the UK were found to engage in a variety of coping strategies in response to challenges and threats, such as strengthening their beliefs (becoming more religiously conscious) and heightening their adherence to their groups.

One of the key hypotheses of IPT is that when one identity principle is threatened or under pressure, other identity principles may form the basis of a coping strategy by assuming a more prominent role in relation to the threat (Breakwell et al., 2022: 178). When any identity principle of Muslim men in the UK is imperilled, they appear to be skilled at highlighting their other identity principles to mitigate the threat. For example, when their distinctiveness principle of identity is threatened, they prioritise their belonging principle; if their self-efficacy principle is under stress, their self-esteem principle is brought into play.

In recent research, Breakwell (2021) presents a model of "identity resilience" developed within the field of social psychology and specifically derived from the fundamental principles of IPT. Identity resilience is defined by Breakwell (2021) as follows:

> Identity resilience refers to the extent to which an individual possesses an identity structure that: facilitates adaptive coping in the face of threat or uncertainty, can absorb change while retaining its subjective meaning and value, and is perceived to be able to cope with threat or trauma without experiencing permanent undesired change. Identity resilience is defined as a relatively stable self- schema based on self-esteem, self-efficacy, positive distinctiveness and continuity. (Breakwell, 2021: 573)

According to Breakwell et al. (2022:178), the relationship and reciprocal contribution among the four constituent identity principles may change over time and in response to circumstances, constituting the foundation of identity resilience. The findings of this research therefore seem consistent with Breakwell's (2021) "identity resilience" model's suggestion that identity resilience is highest when people perceive their four constituent identity principles (their self-efficacy, self-esteem, continuity, and distinctiveness) as both coherent and strong.

The participants in the present study reported a strong belief in their ability to interpret and overcome challenges (self-efficacy), viewing themselves as valuable and dignified (self-esteem). They assert that they are certain about who they are and will continue to be so, despite individual and social changes (continuity), and they view their own self-identity construction as distinctively unique (distinctiveness). However, the present research dates to 2018, and when Breakwell (2021) proposed the "identity resilience" model, the data for it had already been collected, and so there was no opportunity to revise the research and interview questions. Although this research on Muslim men in the UK did reveal some significant outcomes consistent with the "identity resilience" model, further research specifically based on the "identity resilience" model could uncover useful data.

Chapter 5

The Masculinity Identities of Muslim Men in the UK

5. The Masculinity Identities of Muslim Men in the UK

5.1. Introduction

Gender is one of the most important identities, and other identities such as race, nationality, class, religion, and culture interact with it to significantly influence its construction (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005: 839). Gender identity is now understood to be a construct that changes throughout a person's life, rather than remaining static and having developed according to socialisation processes during childhood (Hakak, 2016: 12). The gender issue is extensively discussed in minority group studies, because gender identities profoundly inform the lives of minority group members (Reid & Comas-Diaz, 1990). According to Alkhammash (2020: 92), gender is key component in the construction of contemporary Muslims' identities in the UK. Gender also appears to present Muslims in the UK with numerous obstacles. In the case of Islamophobic attacks in the UK, Muslim women comprise the majority of victims (Hopkins, 2016: 187). Therefore, numerous studies have been conducted regarding the experiences of Muslim women in the UK in a variety of disciplines, exploring their victimisation, personal lives, thoughts, emotions, etc. On the other hand, research on the experiences of Muslim men in the UK is limited, with Muslim men and masculinities receiving little consideration (Britton, 2019: 37).

To address this gap, this study examines how Muslim men in the UK construct their identities, in particular exploring the significance of the gender dimension. Masculinity plays a significant role in the lives of Muslim males in the UK, and is one of their strongest self-identifiers. Muslim men display a strong desire to maintain traditional masculine identity characteristics, which are frequently based on their ethnic, racial, religious, cultural, and traditional backgrounds. These masculine requirements and responsibilities can complicate their lives, and challenges targeting their masculine needs, understandings, and responsibilities can threaten their whole identity construction and affect their lives in a negative way.

In this chapter, the research findings and analysis of the masculinity identities are presented according to three themes: the construction of Muslim masculinities in the UK, the responsibilities of Muslim men in the UK, and how Muslim men in the UK view Muslim and British (non-Muslim) women, their immediate peer group of men, other Muslim men, and British men. Each theme contains a number of subthemes, which are discussed in depth with

verbatim excerpts from the interviews with research participants provided. Following this, in the discussion section, the research findings are discussed in reference to the relevant literature.

5.2. Research Findings and Analysis

The findings of this study revealed how the construction of Muslim masculine identities in the UK vary, being typically based on their ethnic, racial, religious, national, cultural, and social class backgrounds. In particular, their religious identities are demonstrated to have a significant impact on the construction of their masculinities, as is evident in their discourses and practises. Muslim men in the UK also seem to have a strong desire to maintain their traditional masculine identity characteristics. According to the research findings, men's conceptions and interpretations of their masculinity identities centre primarily around the concept of "responsibility", including caring, protecting, and sacrificing. Their understanding of masculinity seems to bestow significant responsibilities upon them, and they appear to feel accountable for meeting them. As men (or Muslim men), fathers, brothers, sons, breadwinners, protectors, and family leaders, the participants typically indicated that they experience a sense of responsibility. Furthermore, any challenge related to their masculinity understandings, responsibilities, and requirements seems to complicate their lives in the UK, also threatening their motivational identity principles.

In this section, I will present the research findings as set out in three major themes. First, I will discuss how Muslims construct their masculinities and the factors that influence these constructions in the UK. Second, I will explain how Muslim men practise masculinity in the UK, concentrating on their responsibilities as men (and as Muslim men) as well as on how they manage these responsibilities. Finally, I will detail how Muslim men in the UK see Muslim and British (non-Muslim) women, British men, and Muslim men. Each section will introduce the difficulties Muslim men face in relation to their masculine identities in the UK, and how they impact their lives.

5.2.1. The construction of Muslim masculinities in the UK

The construction of Muslim masculinities in the UK varies, and a number of factors appear to be influential. Although their masculinity configuration is typically rooted in their ethnic, racial, religious, national, cultural, and traditional backgrounds, their lives and experiences in the UK have a profound effect on their masculinities. First, religion seems to have a huge impact on Muslim men's masculine identities.

5.2.1.1. The role of religion

In the UK, Muslim men's masculine identities appear to be significantly influenced by their religion. Religion is central to the participants' identities, and this is how they perceive and interpret their masculine identities, as evidenced in their narratives. First, the majority of the interviewees emphasised that the Prophet Muhammad is their role model not only as a Muslim, but also as a man:

> I consider Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) as a role model in my life that he, he's perfect identity in the world and a perfect role model for anyone. So, he was a good son. He was a good father; he was a good husband. (Bilal, Pakistani, first generation)

In his explanation, Bilal assigns positive manly qualities to Prophet Muhammad. Certainly, based on the interviews, consideration of the Prophet Muhammad as a role model appears to be a distinguishing characteristic of Muslim masculinity. It seems inevitable that adherents will develop a conception of masculinity intertwined with religion if they view a prophet as a role model possessed of worthy characteristics. Indeed, according to Abbas, the responsibilities of Muslim males are derived from their religion:

> In Islam you have to look after your family and your parents, as a father. This is quite huge responsibility for me. (Abbas, Pakistani, first generation)

Islam assigns responsibility to men to take care of their families as fathers. Abbas described this responsibility as a huge one, and further detailed that he sometimes feels pressure to fulfil his responsibilities. It appears that he takes his masculine responsibilities seriously, because they are based on religious commandments. The findings of this research demonstrated that Muslim men's conceptions of masculinity in the UK are primarily centred on a sense of "responsibility," which is explicitly attributed to men by religion. In a similar vein, Uzair referenced religion when detailing how parents explain to their children the responsibility of being a man at a young age:

> It's like, when you're 16, your parents, they don't leave off you, but they say you are essentially all man... The religion teaches you that when you reach the age of, then you essentially become responsible for your own personality. (Uzair, Somali, second generation)

Uzair described how his parents raised him to be responsible, and how they treated him as a grown-up man from a young age. As Islam assigns responsibilities to Muslims when they reach

the age of maturation, parents typically reference religion when teaching their children responsibility. It seems that Muslim men's conception of masculinity is typically characterised by a sense of responsibility derived primarily from Islam.

5.2.1.2. How Muslim men describe "being a Muslim man" – the importance of honour

In their discourses, the participants frequently used the term "a Muslim man", suggesting a distinct meaning and conceptualisation. Thus, to investigate how the participants comprehend and interpret "being a Muslim man," I asked them to define "being a Muslim man" and describe a Muslim man they respect in the UK, such as their friends, relatives, or role models.

> My closest friend, he's from Afghanistan. How would I describe? Loyal, caring, funny. I think that the main thing is loyal and caring that his main characteristics are that very loyal, very caring. Whenever I've ever had an issue in my life or anything, what I've ever had to do is ask him. (Zain, Algerian, third generation)

Zain was clear that his closest friend's most prominent qualities are loyalty and a caring nature. In his explanation and throughout the interview, he emphasised that a man should be loyal and considerate of his peers, families, and social environment.

Vasam described his uncles as role models, and seemed to be highly affected by their virtuous characteristics:

> My uncles are very like honourable. They always tell the truth. They always make sure they do what they have to do for their family... They're always very honest. Like they always have the truth is what matters to them. They don't put their own interests first. I like people who have principles. When you have principles, it makes you very like strong person, a very solid person. And nowadays you see a lot of people who they kind of give up their moral or they're willing to give up their principles for money or fame. When you see people stand by their values, it's good to see. (Vasam, Algerian, second generation)

In his explanation, Vasam emphasised that being honourable and principled are essential qualities for a Muslim man. Certainly, according to Vasam, caring for one's family is a very important responsibility for a Muslim male, and it is important to do everything for one's family. Taking care of their families was mentioned by almost all the participants, and it appears that they viewed this responsibility as Muslim men's greatest and most essential characteristic. This may imply that some Muslim men in the UK tend to describe and understand their masculinities primarily in terms of their responsibilities, such that caring for their family emerges as the most prominent feature of Muslim masculinities.

5.2.1.3. Their relationships with their families and their fathers

Examining their relationships with their families, particularly with their fathers, also provided a deeper understanding of how Muslim men construct their masculinity. This study also revealed that Muslim males in the UK usually have strong and positive relationships with their families, and that these relationships appear to influence and shape their perceptions of masculinity. Additionally, the knowledge they gained from their parents, families, and specifically their fathers, shapes the formation of their masculine identities.

> I just let them (my siblings) to do what they want, but obviously make sure them that we have certain principles at home, as like in my relationship with my mom and dad. I think it is good. (Yousuf, Somali, first generation)

Yousuf stated that as the firstborn child, he had many responsibilities at home and frequently took care of his younger siblings. He explained that he not only babysat, but also guided his siblings through the demands of life and education. He also stated that he ensured his siblings adhered to certain principles at home while also allowing them to do as they wish. Although he is single and 22 years old, he seems to be very responsible, with the attitude of a father.

Bilal expressed that he had a very good relationship with his father:

> It was very good relationship. He was a good friend. He was a good father. He was loyal to the family … and you can go up to him. He was open. You can talk to him in terms of your problem. (Bilal, Pakistani, first generation)

Bilal stated that he is open to his children's problems, and that they can easily discuss them with him. Bilal also emphasised that his father was very family-oriented, just as he himself was very family-oriented. It appears that he follows in his father's footsteps in his role as a father. This may imply that Muslim men's relationships with their fathers influences their own attitude to fatherhood and their relationships with their own children.

Zain declared his father to be his role model:

> My father was always a role model for me. Especially with regards to religion because he's always carried himself with high morals, and just the high aspirations as a human being. And obviously seeing that growing up and being the oldest child of three, it was always something that I looked up to and something that I aspired to be like. (Zain, Algerian, third generation)

It is especially noteworthy that Zain was highly influenced by his father's morality and that this inspired him. Zain appears to have realised at a young age that his father's attitudes and

character stemmed largely from his religious beliefs, and so he has since followed in his footsteps.

However, not all the participants reported having positive relationships with their fathers. A number of the participants reported that their relationships with their fathers were somewhat strained.

> Uh, good, but maybe we're not as close as I'd like to be. Because he's from Pakistan. He doesn't necessarily understand things that British people do. As an elder, like a slightly older Pakistani man might think some of the things we do is like, he doesn't understand it. So he doesn't really talk to us about it. He just sort of does his thing and then we try and talk about things like that he likes, but he doesn't, it's tough to explain. (Elyas, Pakistani, second generation)

Elyas' account is very helpful in advancing understanding of the generational differences between first- and second- or third-generation Muslim men. Elyas expressed his wish that he had had a closer relationship with his father, but stated that his father rarely communicates with him. Interestingly, when Elyas explained why they are not close, he stated explicitly, 'because he's from Pakistan. He doesn't necessarily understand things that British people do'. Based on this explanation, two conclusions could be reached. First, Elyas emphasised that his father has failed to integrate into British culture, persisting instead in maintaining his Pakistani heritage, which can be incompatible with the British way of life. Second, Elyas indicates that he is himself well-integrated into British culture and identifies as British. When Elyas says, "Some of the things we do, he doesn't understand," he appears to identify himself as British and his father as Pakistani, that is they have two distinct identities. Elyas introduced himself as a British Muslim (rather than a British Pakistani) at the outset of the interview, and repeatedly emphasised his Britishness throughout.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the (over)self-identification of some second and third generation Muslim men as British strengthens their distinctiveness principle of identity, although doing so appears to threaten the continuity principle of identity for some first-generation Muslim men. Although Elyas' father was not directly involved in the research and was not interviewed, his account correlates with my research findings regarding first generation Muslim men; namely that they have a strong desire to closely identify with their backgrounds (which also shapes their masculinities) when in the UK and are concerned about their children (over)identifying as British.

Similarly, Ghaffar explained that his relationship with his father is somewhat problematic:

> My, my relationship with my father is, uh, uh, it's one of, I can't explain it. How do I explain it? Um, it's uh, this, uh, there's a friction, like, uh, say like a, we don't always see eye to eye. We communicate more through my mother. He's a man of good morals, few words, and I'm, I have more thing with my mother's genetics. I'm more outspoken and more free spirited you could say in that sense. So that's why I communicate more through my mother, and I don't always see eye to eye with him because he's more matter of fact, I'm less matter of fact. (Ghaffar, Pakistani, third generation)

When I asked Ghaffar about his relationship with his father, he was initially hesitant, and then took some time to reflect, before describing it as characterised by friction. Ghaffar echoed Elyas, mentioning that his father is a quiet man. Although Ghaffar acknowledges that his father has excellent morals, he indicates that he and his father do not necessarily share the same opinions. Ghaffar mentions having a stronger relationship with his mother than with his father. Ghaffar is not alone in this; several other participants who reported strained relationships with their fathers indicated that they have stronger bonds with their mothers. This may imply that Muslim men who have strained relationships with their fathers are more likely to have positive relationships with their mothers.

Similarly, Uzair mentioned his mother when explaining his family relationship:

> My mom and my dad, but to be honest, my mom was more active. So my dad was of course in my life, and he was around, but my mom was more active. So that's why I (usually) mentioned my mom. My mom had more of like a grasp of like the way the UK worked than my dad. So naturally she would sort of understanding of how things should be. ((Uzair, Somali, second generation)

Uzair frequently emphasised throughout the interview how his mother had guided him through every stage of his life. He also mentioned that his mother had raised him to be a man able to take on great responsibility. This evidence suggests that mothers have a significant influence on Muslim men's upbringing, encouraging them to be responsible males with a strong sense of responsibility.

5.2.1.4. Place

Where Muslim men were born, raised, and currently reside appears to play a significant role in their lives and identity constructions. Their masculinities seem to be largely shaped by place, and their interactions with their social surroundings appear to influence their perceptions of masculinity. The majority of the participants indicated that they feel safer and more comfortable in places where there are a lot of Muslims or other people from diverse backgrounds. In contrast, if there are fewer Muslims and diverse cultures around them, they

typically report feeling less at ease, more cautious, and isolated. This variable also appears to influence how they construct their masculinity.

As mentioned above, Vasam likened his primary school environment to that of a family, but mentioned that his secondary school years were difficult because his family had moved to a new neighbourhood with fewer Muslims and people from multi-cultural backgrounds. This threatened his identity continuity principle, as discussed in the previous chapter (see Section 4.3.2.1). In addition, he further indicated that the difficulties he encountered during his secondary education affected his construction of masculinity identity:

> In secondary school, one of the problems kind of was that they (students) thought, "if we're racist to everyone or if you make bad race jokes to everyone, then it's fine because everyone has the same treatment". So like sometimes they make like terrorist joke like you're going to blow yourself up. Like I said, because I had this kind of inferiority complex. I didn't really care too much. But if I hear that now I'll challenge it. I'll say like, what kind of joke is that? Like, why you are making that joke? By the time, I never really thought anything of it, but like subconsciously kind affects you because like, you started compromising your identity. (Vasam, Algerian, second generation)

Vasam continued by explaining that after he left sixth form, he made a conscious decision to make more Muslim friends, and once he began surrounding himself with Muslim individuals who shared his mentality, he became more confident and proud of his identity. He stated that when he was around 18, he became much more confident than ever before, reflecting on his time in secondary school as marred by an inferiority complex. It appears that the environment in his secondary school, where there were fewer Muslims and diverse cultures, contributed to this, preventing him from confronting his racist peers. Vasam appears to have lost his fear of confrontation when around people making racist jokes after he began surrounding himself with Muslims.

Ghaffar is another individual whose place and environment appear to have had a substantial effect on his masculinity formation. He was born in Wembley, Brent, in London, which is a very varied and diverse neighbourhood, comprised of people from all different backgrounds, ethnicities, and religions. Wembley is the most diverse place in the world, according to Ghaffar, and he is extremely proud of his community. He also emphasised that his upbringing in Wembley is largely responsible for who he is today. When describing an argument during a football game, he mentioned that he told his opponents that he was from Wembley, Brent (London).

> I hit him, hit another person, and running and like just finished. And then my team, my team says go red card. Do you go? I said, okay. Then when I'm going, somebody shouting Paki. And I said, yeah, I'm Paki. Yeah. From Wembley. Because they were from same London. I think, this was Leeds, but they are from London. Yeah. So they, I said, yeah, I'm from Wembley because they're from near. (Ghaffar, Pakistani, third generation)

According to Ghaffar, Wembley, Brent is very diverse, famous and well-known by other Londoners, and no one is willing to make trouble with people from Wembley. He was unafraid of confrontation, and uses his place, Wembley, as a form of self-defence in his discourses. He does not seem at all hesitant about mentioning that "he is from Wembley" as a way to intimidate others.

5.2.1.5. Confrontation – bravery

Confrontation (or the level of confrontation) when encountering incidents or individuals that pose a challenge or threat to them appears to be a manifestation of Muslim men's masculinity. As they gain confidence in their identities, Muslim males appear to become more courageous and willing to counter challenges to their identity. Specifically, as they become more conscious of their religious identities, they appear to become braver:

> … just through the ages, I've become like more protected of like my Muslim religion of Islam. So like if anyone makes a joke or something inappropriate, I'll call them out for it. I'll be like, that's, don't do that again. That's my strong, shouldn't say these things. (Yousuf, Somali, first generation)

Yousuf indicated that he had encountered numerous discriminatory jokes, and was frequently referred to as a "Somalian pirate" during his school years, but rarely responded. As he grew older, he stated that he became more conscious of his identity, specifically his religion, and began to believe that he should no longer tolerate bigoted jokes. Yousuf indicated that he is not hesitant about confronting anyone who makes racist jokes about him, and is extremely protective of his identity components. It appears that during his childhood and secondary school years, he was adversely affected by remaining silent in response to racist jokes, although at the time he preferred not to confront the incident or the individual. However, he now appears very protective of his identity and unafraid of confrontation. This may indicate that Muslim men who have experienced racist or Islamophobic incidents in their youth but chose not to confront the perpetrators may become more protective of their identities and more confrontational as they age and become more aware of their identities and religion.

The participants also typically stated that they are extremely protective of their families and religion. They appear unafraid to confront any incident or assault against their families or their religion:

> Well, I'm not going to keep it in my mind. I act. I act. If someone say something racist swear to me. I would back to him, and he will be in trouble. I will not let him go. No. If he swears, I will swear badly. And, uh, especially if he was saying something about Islam. And I would hawk. (Salman, Algerian, first generation)

Salman explained that he had encountered prejudice several times in the UK. He mentioned that he is able to defend himself well, because he speaks English proficiently and will not allow himself to be humiliated. He continued by stating that if he detects tension, such as shouting, he will respond strongly in kind; sometimes driving others crazy by what he says. Salman drew attention to the fact that whenever someone spoke negatively about his religion, Islam, he would become especially defensive and fearless in confronting them. This may imply that any assault specifically against their religion triggers Muslim men's sense of protectiveness, causing them to act defensively, aggressively, and fearlessly.

5.2.1.6. Sports

Sports also appear to play a significant role in the construction of Muslim masculinities in the UK, especially for second and third generation Muslim men. Numerous participants from the second and third generation indicated an interest in sports and sporting characteristics. In particular, football is the most popular sport among Muslim males from the second and third generations. It appears that first-generation Muslim fathers encourage their sons and other Muslim boys to become more interested in football and famous football players.

> I have seen, especially in the UK, my younger son plays football, and he was really keen. He started football at the age of eight and, … but I haven't seen any Asian footballer so far in any of big teams. So I think that there might be existent of racism maybe. But then again, if we look at the statistics, how many Asian families support their children to go forward in football? Not many. (Dawood, Pakistani, first generation)

Dawood suggested that prejudice can exist in football. He stated that he has not seen an Asian footballer in any of the major teams, and criticised Asian families for not encouraging their children to advance in football. It appears that first-generation Muslim males would like their sons to be more interested in football. Further, that second- and third-generation Muslim males in the UK appear to have a strong interest in sports and have numerous sporting role models.

> And then I think towards adolescents, then I think up until maybe 18, 19. So all of my teenage is I think just like sports personalities. A lot of the time would have been my role models. Like I would be more engrossed by school team. (Ghaffar, Pakistani, third generation)

Ghaffar described his life in terms of stages, indicating that his adolescent years were dominated by sports. Ghaffar valued the chance to participate on the school team, and had numerous role models.

Mo Salah, Paul Pogba, and Karim Benzema were frequently cited by the respondents as their football role models.

> Mo Salah best in the world right now. Karim Benzema, two Muslims, best football players in the world right now. (Wahab, Somali, second generation)

Although several participants expressed admiration for well-known football players such as Cristiano Ronaldo and Lionel Messi, a large number of respondents proudly mentioned Mo Salah, Paul Pogba, and Karim Benzema. Wahab stated that Mo Salah and Karim Benzema are Muslims and also the greatest football players in the world at the moment. It appears that Muslim males are especially proud of prominent Muslim football players, and consider them as suitable role models.

When I asked Uzair why he identified Paul Pogba and Karim Benzema as his role models, he did not mention their playing styles but focused on their personalities, providing a lengthy explanation and citing several significant factors:

> Those guys are sort of confident in it. I'm a confident guy. The thing is they're confident Muslim guys and they're unapologetically Muslim. They don't really care what you think in it. They're going to post quotes of Quran, going to post. They don't care. They're just who they are. And it doesn't matter who don't like them. The reason why I like Paul Pogba specifically is because the media attacks him. They're always attack him for doing nothing. Right. And obviously naturally as a human, you prefer the underdogs. When someone's being oppressed, you take a side of them. Same with Benzema. The Spanish media used to get on to him for no reason. Cause he was an Arab footballer. And people don't like you because you're too good. Sometimes, isn't it? That's just a reality. And they'll use your identity against you... they may not like us cause we're just really, really good at our jobs and we're Muslim or we're black. People maybe can't accept the fact that you are this and that. So obviously I'd say it's probably their confidence, not arrogance, but it's their confidence. Cause arrogance is a different term that the media brands on these like sorts of black players specifically. Especially black players, like obviously here styling what they do to staring Muslim players as well. And now imagine being black and Muslim, like I said, it's a tough

> combo, but I feel like a lot of the racism right nowadays, and it's Islamophobia. (Uzair, Somali, second generation)

Uzair explained that his admiration for both Paul Pogba and Karim Benzema stems from their exceptional confidence in their Muslim identity, and their unapologetic attitude with regard to being Muslim. Uzair also stated that he is a confident individual, and so likens himself to Paul Pogba and Karim Benzema in this regard. Throughout the interview, Uzair repeated several times that he is very confident and rooted in his religious identity, and is fearless about demonstrating and protecting it. It could be suggested that prominent Muslim sportsmen in the UK provide Muslim men with confidence and courage to display and preserve their identities, especially their racial and religious identities.

5.2.1.7. The racialized media representation of Muslim men

The media's portrayal of Muslim males has usually been problematic exacerbating bias and prejudice against them. The negative depiction of Muslim men in the media appears to also influence the construction of Muslim masculinities in the UK, potentially causing Muslim men to be more protective and cautious. Almost all the research participants criticised the negative media portrayal of Muslim males. They noted that the media typically portrays Muslim men with long beards and in lengthy traditional clothing, also presenting them as terrorists.

> When people see the news on the Sky or the Fox or the Guardian, they mainly put the photo of a person who has long beard and has long dress and et cetera. So when people see these people, they think they connected with the attack. (Abbas, Pakistani, first generation)

Abbas indicated that the media easily misleads the general public, leading them to believe that all males with long beards and long clothing may be involved in terrorist attacks. He stated that whenever terrorist attacks occur around the globe, the media employs similar images of suspects with long beards and long clothing, affecting people's perceptions. Abbas also indicated that anyone influenced by the media's negative portrayal of Muslim males may assault him simply because he has a beard, and he also expressed concern for the safety of himself and his family. Abbas further emphasised that he is more vigilant and protective of his own and his family's safety.

5.2.1.8. Beard and men's clothing

Dawood indicated that negative media portrayals of Muslim men may also provoke individuals to assault bearded men who are not Muslims.

> People had been attacked. They attacked the bearded men, thinking he is Muslim, but he turned out to be the Sikh with a turban. I have come across news that they said, "Oh no, I've been attacked because they thought I'm Muslim." And then the beard plays a role. When someone attacks you, they clearly thinking he's a Muslim man. What they hear in media and everything. Or what image is being present as a bad image. (Dawood, Pakistani, first generation)

Dawood further emphasised that the beard is a significant symbol of Muslim males identity, and integral part of to their identity. However, he believes that bearded Muslim men are more vulnerable than beardless Muslim men, as the beard negatively impacts their lives by making them more vulnerable, protective, and cautious.

As Dawood indicated, the beard is an essential symbol, and part of the identity of Muslim men. Although many participants indicated that they have beards because they adhere to the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad and primarily for religious reasons, some of the participants stated that they have beards for aesthetic purposes. Among the participants, having a beard appears to be considered a component of Muslim male identity, and is associated with both religious and masculine identities. Religious beliefs and perceptions of masculinity appear intertwined in the motivation to grow a beard. It appears extremely difficult to distinguish between religious and masculinity motivations for beard-growing among Muslim males. The beard is referred to variously by "Muslim men" as both a religious and a masculine identifier. Muslim men seem to consider their beard a distinguishing feature of Muslim men (as discussed in the previous chapter in relation to distinctiveness, see section 4.5.1.5.). The beard also seems to be a distinguishing feature of Muslim masculinities.

> I think I'm very strong with my beard. So like, if somebody says something to me or try to even with a knife or something, I don't care. I'm not scared. (Ghaffar, Pakistani, third generation)

It appears that Ghaffar's beard gives him the same sense of courage as his religious faith. Ghaffar's and many other Muslim men's beards are influenced by both religious and masculinity factors. Thus, Muslim men in the UK have beards not only for religious but also for masculine reasons, and their beards are a manifestation of both their religious and masculine identities.

Dawood further explained that the beard is a part of a man's identity, and a distinguishing characteristic of manhood:

> Especially, especially LGBT. What's going on in now in this country and maybe worldwide as well, where they think transgender and everything. Yeah. Beard is something for a male. (Dawood, Pakistani, first generation)

Dawood emphasised the ability to grow a beard as a significant masculine trait, noting that it differentiates men from other genders. Although many LGBT individuals have beards, Dawood interestingly regards beards as a distinguishing characteristic for only heterosexual males.

In addition to the beard, clothing plays a significant role in the construction of Muslim masculinities. Having a beard is not considered the only physical representation of Muslim men; the participants also mentioned that they wish to wear correct attire and dress in a style compatible with Islamic tradition.

> My wife covers like more and more now, like modest clothing Mashallah (wonderful! magnificent! what Allah has willed has happened). Same for me. We say a woman should wear hijab, but man doesn't cover his head. I only, now I cover my head, I try all the time. Because I think, why am I saying to my wife wear hijab, where Prophet Muhammad always covering the head. We didn't see, but maybe always covering the head. So it's for health, maybe hygiene as well. We say, women should wear loose and wear hijab but in UK, everywhere, man is not following this one. Me. I'm not following this one. Even now I have still like, I want to wear like coats, like a Sahaba (the companions of prophet Muhammad) or something, but okay. I live in UK. I want to show my identity. The Imams say you should dress according to the custom of your local. We live in a global society, sweatshirt, sweats, trouser jeans are okay, but best thing is have loose fitting clothes. It doesn't matter if it's shirts or Shalwar or tracksuit bottom. Best thing is a little bit loose, is more for modesty and colour, et cetera. (Ghaffar, Pakistani, third generation)

In his detailed explanation, Ghaffar first expresses his appreciation and respect for his wife because she dresses more modestly. He appears to seek to establish a direct connection between his identity and Islamic dress norms. He also offered a religious justification for his attire, which included sweatshirts, sweatpants, trousers and jeans, citing the Imams' advice that one should dress according to local customs. However, he added that a Muslim man's attire should be loose and modest. Ghaffar's explanation provides some elucidation of how clothing influences the construction of Muslim masculinity.

5.2.2. The responsibilities of Muslim men in the UK

This research revealed the extent to which "responsibility" is central to the understanding, interpretation, and practises of Muslim masculinities in the UK. The majority of men's responsibilities, such as caring and protecting others, appear to stem from their

understanding of masculinity, and they appear to feel responsible about fulfilling these responsibilities and requirements. As men (or Muslim men), fathers, brothers, sons, breadwinners, protectors, and family heads, the participants typically indicated that they experience a sense of responsibility.

5.2.2.1. General responsibilities

Prior to discussing the specific responsibilities of Muslim men, it would be beneficial to address some of the more general issues for which Muslim men appear to feel responsible. It appears that their sense of responsibility for some more general issues stems from their identities as Muslim men, which includes both their religious and masculine identities. Muslim men seem to feel responsibility as they are living in the UK as a Muslim man.

> I think a Muslim man who is living in the UK has a bigger responsibility than any other Muslim man who's living anywhere else. So with us living within the society, Western society, we may appreciate that we belong to the same society, but also, we appreciate that we differ in some, in a respectful way in some issues. It could be religion and it could be some other cultural issues that we differ. But as a Muslim person, as a Muslim man who is living the UK, that responsibility is quite bigger. You need to balance; I have to balance between my religion and living within this society. I have to respect the society, at the same time, practice my religion which is not whatsoever contradicting each other. As long as you are balancing that the right way. As a Muslim man, I think that's how I identify a Muslim man, someone who can balance religious and cultural backgrounds with this new society that he's living in. (Faisal, Somali, first generation)

In the above quotation, Faisal drew attention to the balance between religious and cultural backgrounds, to which he attributed a considerable degree of importance and responsibility. It appears that he emphasised both the difficulty of living in a country with a non-Muslim majority, and the importance of maintaining multiple identities as an immigrant in the UK. Intriguingly, he identifies Muslim men as able to successfully uphold this balance, holding them accountable for its establishment. Faisal further explained that Muslim men should continually strive to improve themselves and their personal qualities to convey a positive image to other people of the Muslim man. He then went on to describe Muslim men as follows:

> … more human, more feelings, more responsibility than others and more caring. What Muslim man looks like is that a person with principles stemming from religion, truthful, caring and living with the society in a positive way. (Faisal, Somali, first generation)

Faisal appears to assign the responsibility to Muslim men to represent Muslim men positively. Responsibility and care were mentioned frequently as virtues or qualities of Muslims by the

participants, and were most typically attributed to Muslim men. This does not mean Muslim women are not ascribed a sense of responsibility and care, but rather that these traits are primarily associated with the masculine identities of Muslim men.

5.2.2.2. Family leader / breadwinner

Almost all the participants indicated that, as Muslim men, they have many responsibilities, which they must fulfil in their daily activities. Providing for their family is one of the first responsibilities for which Muslim males feel accountable.

- In Islam you have to look after your family and your parents, as a father. Yeah, of course. This is quite huge responsibility for me.
- Have you ever felt uncomfortable?
- No, I never felt uncomfortable, but I, of course you may face some challenges when you, only the man is responsible for the money and bringing money and the wife is just looking after children. And then because living in London quite expensive. So I sometimes feel (have) hard times to bring money home. (Abbas, Pakistani, first generation)

It seems the direct responsibility afforded to Muslim men by Islam when looking after family members is usually considered a huge responsibility by the participants. Although the participants seem to accept this responsibility willingly, they encounter many challenges when seeking to fulfil their responsibilities in the UK. In the interviews, the majority of the participants stated that they do not experience discomfort when performing their responsibilities, despite mentioning a number of obstacles. It may be that Muslim men are unwilling to unfavourably represent their ability to fulfil their responsibilities because doing so could be viewed as a sign of weakness. Abbas also emphasised that London is quite expensive and so residing there requires he earn substantially more income than if he lived in another city. Thus, it was apparent that living in London can make it more difficult for Muslim males to fulfil their financial obligations, as reported by Dawood:

> I mean, (I take) all sorts of responsibility, like many other, like many of the countries, the men of the house they do, that going out and earning, paying for household, looking after kids, bringing up to them according to our faith. (Dawood, Pakistani, first generation)

All of the responsibilities emphasised by Dawood appear to be family-related, with family care emerging as one of the most essential responsibilities for Muslim men. Muslim men appear to feel responsible for their families because they are the provider, protector, family leader, and

educators of the children, among other responsibilities. Similarly, Bilal outlined similar responsibilities:

> Men have a lot of responsibilities. Men are responsible for the financial side of the house. For looking after the family, looking after the kids, looking after their parents. looking after your wife because your wife left her house and she came to your house. So you have to look after her. You have to look after your kids, look after your family. (Bilal, Pakistani, first generation)

Earning a living for one's family is described as an ongoing obligation for Muslim males, who must labour or operate their businesses to generate a continuous income. This usually necessitates that Muslim males maintain regular employment. Offering additional insight, Bilal provided an intriguing explanation: "Your wife left her home and moved to yours; therefore, you must care for her." This view appears to impose significantly more responsibility on Bilal, and he appears to experience a greater sense of obligation to fulfil his responsibilities, such as providing for his family.

5.2.2.3. Protector / providing safety

The issue of safety appears to be one of the greatest obstacles for Muslim men in the UK, and protecting and ensuring the safety of those under their care seems to be a particularly crucial responsibility noted by Muslim men in the UK. In an environment where they are generally viewed as foreigners or immigrants, and where bigotry and Islamophobia are on the rise, Muslim males in the UK frequently have valid and serious concerns regarding the safety of themselves and their families. This inevitably has a negative impact on their lives, increasing their responsibilities. Muslim men appear to feel an immense responsibility to protect their families, and any problem or challenge that threatens this has a profoundly negative impact on their lives. In the UK, safety concerns and a strong sense of responsibility to protect their families appear to influence the construction of Muslim men's masculinities.

Almost all the participants expressed concerns regarding safety and their responsibility to protect their families. Although some of the participants indicated that their families have not been the target of direct racist or Islamophobic assaults, they appear concerned about their families' safety. They reported having heard or seen numerous racist or Islamophobic assaults against Muslims, particularly Muslim women, in the news or on social media, enhancing their concerns for the safety of their own family. As men, family leaders and protectors, Muslim men appear to experience a strong sense of responsibility to safeguard their families.

> The worrying things as a Muslim man I have, it could be the safety of my family for an instance. So my wife for instance, she may have, she may be pulled (off her hijab), pull it. That makes me sometime worried. (Faisal, Somali, first generation)

In particular, Muslim men whose wives wear hijab tend to be more anxious and cautious about their wife's safety, since ladies wearing hijab are more recognisable as Muslim, and consequently more vulnerable to racist or Islamophobic assaults. It is also important to mention here that it is not only married Muslim men who feel anxiety about their family's safety, but even single Muslim males seem to be highly protective of their family members.

> Whenever I'm out with my mom and my sisters, I'm extra defensive. Like when I'm by myself, I don't think about anything. No one's really going to come up to me or say anything to me. But like when I'm out with my sisters and my mom, so I'm really aware of my surroundings. Like if anyone tries to say anything, especially cause my mom, she wears hijab. So, you hear stories about a Muslim sister, she has hijab or wherever you hear these kinds of stories, and it makes you a bit scared. I'm always like making sure that there's no one going to do anything or say anything. So luckily, I've not really had that around me. (Vasam, Algerian, second generation)

As Vasam's story demonstrates, Muslim males take extra precautions and adopt a more defensive stance when around their female family members (including spouses, mothers, sisters, and daughters). Although Vasam mentions generally feeling confident and courageous when he is by himself, he is anxious and careful whenever he is with his mother and sisters. Thus, the data suggest that much like Vasam the majority of the other participants are extremely protective of their identities, religions, and families, particularly their female relatives. Their protectiveness relates to one of their most important responsibilities, and has a direct and interdependent relationship with their masculinities. Many respondents indicated that they are adopt an extremely courageous stance when protecting their families:

> So I've always been a bit by the sword type of person and I'm there to protect my family. (Ghaffar, Pakistani, third generation)

Muslim males also appear to be extremely protective of Muslim women they do not know personally. For example, Ghaffar shared his experience defending a woman wearing a head scarf against a discriminatory assault.

> Two guys, driving in the car and in another car, one Asian woman wearing scarf. She's driving okay. The guy he's impatient and he's beep beep beep, whatever, maybe she's driving okay, a little bit slow, but then he said something like, you know, you Paki Paki

> words like that. So I stopped, talking to him. Then he stopped. He came to me, tried punch me. I punched him. He fell on the floor. (Ghaffar, Pakistani, third generation)

According to Ghaffar, he physically intervened in a discriminatory assault to defend the Muslim woman. He engaged in a physical fight with the perpetrator in order to defend here. This may imply that Muslim males are extremely protective not only of their female relatives, but also of other Muslim women, and that they do not hesitate to intervene physically against the perpetrators. The reactions of the participants when asked about Boris Johnson's statement regarding Muslim women, in which he compared women wearing the niqab to letter boxes, is another significant illustration of this. Many participants harshly criticised Johnson's remark.

> Boris Johnson, he did say about the women in this country are the letterboxes and despite having huge criticism, he never apologized because he doesn't think that whatever he said is it was wrong. (Dawood, Pakistani, first generation)

Dawood and the other participants criticised the remarks made by Boris Johnson regarding Muslim women. Muslim males found this statement unacceptable, and advocating for Muslim women in the UK, they harshly criticised Boris Johnson.

5.2.2.4. Fatherhood / sacrifice

When Muslim males become fathers, their responsibilities increase significantly. Fatherhood requires them to make numerous sacrifices to benefit their families.

> A Muslim man should be the leader of the family, he protects his family, looks after, takes care. He should earn money and raise children as a Muslim. He should provide what his family needs ... Family, family is important, family is sacred. A father, a Muslim man should do everything for their families, prepare a good life for children, keep them safe, uh, money, I mean a father needs to earn money for his family. It is, it is his duty, in Islam, it is father's duty. Fathers should work, bring food, make their children educated, spend money for their education. A father should protect their children, family. (Tahir, Algerian, first generation)

Tahir emphasised that a father has many responsibilities, and that Islam assigns duties and responsibilities to Muslim men specifically in relation to family care. Even for single Muslim males, fatherhood plays an essential role in the construction of Muslim masculinity. According to Wahab:

> I think when you become father, it's always your children, your wife at the front of your mind, you become almost a secondary, a tertiary person. Your hunger, your fatigue, your tiredness, your problems not at the front of your mind. It's your children,

> your wife. So there's a lot of sacrifices. And there a lot of sacrifice that I think I'm not yet ready to… Just for example, if you're tired today, you can't just quit in work. I say, I'm tired. You have to go to work cause your kids need food. It's just like almost putting your life almost two steps back. So you start to worry about the problems, your kids' school, their upbringing, if they're hungry, if they have adequate clothes, their emotions, their mental health, their physical health, their wellbeing, their spiritual health. It's just at the forefront of your thing. There's a lot of sacrifice to be made with your time. A lot of your time goes to your children. (Wahab, Somali, second generation)

Although Wahab is not yet a father, he appears to be well aware of the responsibilities involved in fatherhood. He notes that he is not yet prepared to meet the responsibilities of fatherhood.

Wahab also drew attention to an essential aspect of fatherhood: sacrifice, and it appears that Wahab's perception of fatherhood is that it centres primarily on accepting the need for sacrifice. It appears that fatherhood and the sense of sacrifice it involves has a significant impact on Muslim masculinities in the UK. In contrast, sacrifice appears to extend to encompass aspects of emotional wellbeing also. It appears that Muslim men conceal their emotional struggles from their families to avoid upsetting them.

> No, I did not (tell my family). And this affected me a lot actually. I had a very, very big fight… I didn't want to tell my family, … my wife knew, but my family (parents) did not. And I just said, it's a small job. I didn't tell anyone. I would just kick again to other job and finished, but then slowly I just tell them. (Ghaffar, Pakistani, third generation)

Ghaffar indicated that after getting into a fight at work, he felt unable to share his feelings with his family. He stated that the inability to share this experience with his family caused him deep emotional distress. Interestingly, he stated that his wife had been aware but not the rest of his family, specifically not his parents. It may suggest that, for Muslim males, avoiding bothering their parents takes precedence over personal concerns.

5.2.2.5. Education for children

The education of their children is another responsibility Muslim males in the UK take seriously. When discussing education, the participants typically mentioned both formal education and moral education (tarbiyah). Educating their children in accordance with their own values (ethnic, religious, national, traditional, etc.) and moral standards is considered a crucial duty for Muslim males. Muslim men's identity continuity principle also emphasises the importance of passing on their values to future generations, and all the respondents expressed a strong desire to fulfil this obligation. Although mothers appear to be primarily responsible for their children's education at home, fathers appear to be primarily responsible for their

general education. Ghaffar described how he and his wife collaborated on the education of their children at home.

> I hope the seeds that we planted outgrowing these young sapling trees are going to be mighty Oak trees. The only Allah intends them, only Allah intends them, hundred percent... We have a balance because my wife is very good with the world (worldly things), I'm very good with the religion and I am very bad with the world. (Ghaffar, Pakistani, third generation)

In his explanation, Ghaffar mentioned both academic and religious (moral) education as crucial for children, and also that they receive a balanced education at home. He stated that he also typically supervises the religious education of his offspring. He likened educating his children to planting seedlings, and expressed his optimism that they would grow into mighty oak trees. On the other hand, Ghaffar appears to acknowledge that, despite his and his wife's best efforts, everything is in Allah's hands and only unfolds as Allah intends. Salman explained how a father should behave towards their children:

> The mom teaches, the mom educates, the mom teaches the behavior. The father needs to be friendly with his kids and the mom too, that you (need to) know what your son doing outside at school. Like, you need to be very friendly or very clear that how to get that information from them … Then you can let your kids grow up where they're good Islamic behavior. (Salman, Algerian, first generation)

Salman indicated that mothers are responsible for instructing and educating their children about what constitutes proper behavior, while fathers are expected to supervise their children's activities outside of school. Fathers are therefore most concerned with their children's wider environment.

Reflecting on the influence of UK society, Vasam expressed similar concerns despite not being a parent yet:

> I think it (to raise children in the UK) would be very difficult just because I know a lot of Muslims who are from good homes, good families and their parents really try to teach them Islam. But because of their friends and society, they still turned out a bit, you know, not really practicing or not really understanding the religion. So I mean, I'll try my best as a parent, but I will always have that fear that because of their surroundings. Yeah. I can never really know how they truly think or how they truly are. (Vasam, Algerian, second generation)

Vasam shared his thoughts, which appeared to be informed by his own experience. He indicated that despite Muslim families and parents doing their best to educate their children,

society and the children's peers have a significant influence on them, which can in turn impact their understanding of the religion. It appears that Vasam views the environment in which children are being raised as a factor with potential to adversely influence their moral and religious development. Vasam stated that he will always feel this way, even once he becomes a parent. It appears that Muslim fathers are more concerned about instilling their children with their own values in the UK, due to the environment their children are being exposed to.

5.2.3. How Muslim men in the UK perceive women and men

According to Connell (2005: 71), masculinity can be comprehended by analysing the processes and relationships through which men and women live gendered lives. The gender relations that exist between Muslim men and women, other Muslim men, and British men could provide a deeper understanding of Muslim masculinities in the UK. In the following section, I detail the research findings regarding how Muslim men in the UK perceive women, other Muslim men, and British men.

5.2.3.1. How Muslim men See Muslim and British (non-Muslim) Women

As explained in previous sections, Muslim males in the UK are extremely protective of their female relatives, and even other Muslim women they do not know. Muslim males appear to be negatively affected emotionally whenever Muslim women are under attack. When I inquired as to how incidents involving Islamophobia or any Islamophobic assault, perhaps against Muslim women, impact him, Dawood responded:

> I mean, how do I say that, mentally. Sometimes they are pressured, when you see in media, especially Muslim women being attacked on train stations. That really worries me. (Dawood, Pakistani, first generation)

It appears that Muslim males in the UK are influenced by seeing of Muslim women being assaulted, as this awakens their protective responsibilities. Moreover, they also experience such attacks as a threat to their masculinity, as it is the responsibility of all Muslims to defend Muslim women against attack. From another perspective, Muslim males also appear to feel responsible for any behaviour on the part of Muslim women, which they believe is inappropriate according to Muslim.

> Some Muslim ladies they smoke, smoking and that is not good to see a Muslim woman smoking. She's free, totally! But it is bad to show it to the others. Women hijab wearing smoking. That would not be good. For example, Edgware Road pavement and the

> coffee shops. We always see women hijab and shisha. People may say to the others, they may say, well, look, they are Muslims. (Salman, Algerian, first generation)

Salman indicated that Muslim women who wear hijab should not smoke, because their hijabs represent Islam, and anyone may then judge Islam and all Muslims if they see hijab-wearing Muslim women smoking. Salman appears to feel a sense of responsibility as a Muslim man to prevent negative representations of Muslims. Interestingly, he only mentioned and criticised hijab-wearing Muslim women smoking in front of others. He did not mention Muslim male shisha smokers. Despite the prevalence of smoking in Muslim societies, smoking is typically viewed as a negative and unwelcome behaviour from both a traditional and religious standpoint. In Islam, smoking is regarded as makrooh (discouraged or reprehensible); however, there is ongoing debate about whether it should be regarded as haram (entirely forbidden). In Muslim societies, smoking by women, particularly women wearing the hijab, is regarded as more reprehensible, despite there being no gender-specific religious commandment prohibiting smoking. This seems to be an issue more related to gender relations, and the masculinity perception of a Muslim man seems to require that he stop his female relatives from smoking, to avoid bringing shame on him.

When the participants described experienced when they encountered challenges, I observed that they reacted more aggressively and reported feeling more degraded when the challenges came from British (non-Muslim) women (specifically, women in a higher position than Muslim men in that particular incident). According to Ghaffar, his dispute with the British (non-Muslim) female airport security officer in the airport prayer room infuriated and traumatised him. This incident appears to have targeted Ghaffar's various identity principles (as discussed in the previous chapter) as well as his understanding of masculinity. Ghaffar further indicated that he felt fury, possibly because of the dog, but also he accentuated the words "the woman" with an angry tone of voice multiple times. Ghaffar appears to be more irritated by the fact that the offensive and impolite conduct came from a woman.

Similarly, Wahab and Yousef shared school-related experiences in which they encountered unique obstacles posed by female British (non-Muslim) teachers.

> The way teachers spoke to some of us, if you didn't understand something, and then you asked the question, your questions won't really be welcomed. When you compared to some other students, especially, girls in our school, I think there's a gender problem as well. A lot of the men, you don't get treated the same as women, in schools. I don't know why I feel our teachers a little bit more harsh on us. Specifically, I was asking a question and the teacher said, don't be stupid. She didn't even answer me the question.

> I don't know, it's a place where you're meant to be learning. No question is a stupid question. Especially race is a big problem as well. I feel like definitely Somali boys were really looked down upon, really looked down upon for some reason. (Wahab, Somali, second generation)

It emerged from the interview with him that Wahab had faced many obstacles during his years in education, which he attributed to both his Somali heritage and his gender. He emphasised that his and his Somali classmates' queries were unwelcome, and that the female British (non-Muslim) teacher did not even respond to him. As a Somali (nationality), a black (ethnicity/skin colour), a Muslim (religion), and a male (gender), Wahab's numerous identifiers appeared to exacerbate his difficulties. Interestingly, the majority of the participants who experienced difficulties with teachers in school mentioned female British (non-Muslim) teachers.

> Just something that I didn't quite understand at that time was I had a teacher and she let everyone in my class, like improve their coursework. A lot of people had the opportunity to do it. I got like a C in that coursework at that time and I wanted to improve. I wanted to get like a B and so and so on. And at that time she just said no to me. She just didn't give me, she couldn't give me a good enough reason as to why I couldn't improve me. Why can't, why shouldn't you be able to improve grades, if you have the opportunity to do so. (Yousuf, Somali, first generation)

Yousuf appears to be profoundly affected negatively, and as he described this event, he appeared to still feel the same; furious and anxious. He indicated that he still does not know why his teacher did not give him the opportunity to improve his grades, despite the fact that he appears to feel quite degraded and worthless as a result of the incident. Yousuf indicated that his teacher was a British (non-Muslim) female teacher.

5.2.3.2. How Muslim men see British men

I asked the participants to describe or characterise their relationship with British men to determine how they perceive British men in the UK. Muslim men were found to appear to perceive themselves as more courageous, more confrontational, more family-oriented, more responsible, and more honourable than British men. The participants typically described British men as passive, indirect, passive-aggressive, reserved, fearful of speaking up in arguments, non-confrontational, half-hearted, having microaggressions, awash with denial, unwilling to hear an opposing viewpoint, etc.

Vasam indicated that Algerian men are considerably more principled than British men, and offered the example of buying supplies for one's family. According to him, Algerian men are directly responsible for providing for their families, whereas British men share the cost of

doing so with their wives. Vasam also described British males as significantly more materialistic, and focused on short-term gains. In contrast, Muslims and Algerian men prioritise long-term gain. Vasam also drew additional comparisons between Algerian and British males.

> I feel like they (British men) don't really value sort of honour. They're a lot more sort of, how do I say it, reserved. So for example, Algerian men, um, the good thing with us that, I notice is for example, if we see a woman being like harassed in a street, like I know most Algerian men will say, will defend her. They'll go to the man and say what you are doing or leave her alone. But English people, a lot of the British, British men, especially I've seen so many times. Like so many videos where like a woman would be like harassed or abused, for example, in public. And then every man on the train is like on their phone or they don't say anything or it's like bystander. They have a very sort of passive culture. (Vasam, Algerian, second generation)

Vasam emphasised that Algerian men do not hesitate when they see a need to defend a victim and confront an offender, especially if they observe any form of harassment against women. Vasam appears to believe that protecting or defending women is a matter of honour for men, and he observed that British men are very reluctant to display this type of honour. He characterised the culture of British males as very passive. Vasam emphasised further that British males are afraid of face-to-face confrontation, and typically express their emotions or thoughts on social media, where there is no opportunity for face-to-face interaction.

> British men say things in social media, but really like, they're very scared to say it. Oh, why? Because they don't like confrontation. People they're not confrontational people. If you address someone and say, why are you doing this? Or why do you say? They look you are crazy like and they say I never said that, or I didn't mean it. It was just a joke. It was very like half-hearted. It was weird. (Vasam, Algerian, second generation)

Vasam characterised British males as half-hearted due to their fear of confrontation when it is explicitly called for. In addition, he drew attention to the fact that British males are prone to deny what they have said when confronted, or claim they did not intend their words as they sounded.

Likewise, Zain believes that Algerian men are more masculine than British men:

> Algerians definitely have more masculinity. Definitely more. I just think for a British man, British values, and obviously masculinity is subjective. Some people might think masculine, or some people might think other, um, but as Algerians, obviously I think we believe that as a man, your role is to take care of a household. Your role is obviously to take care of the household. So you are the head of everything. So everything goes through you. Um, and that's what makes you a man. Whereas in British household

> that's changed, because you have two workers. The modern nuclear family has changed, whereas in Algerian culture, um, the traditional nuclear family is still what is desirable. (Zain, Algerian, third generation)

According to Zain, the roles and responsibilities of males in Algerian culture are clear and unquestioned; they are not a matter of opinion. Thus, the construction of Algerian masculinities is largely influenced by the dominant cultural understanding of masculinity, and Zain appears to consider this the primary distinction between Algerian and British males. According to him, masculinity is highly subjective in British society, and certain behaviours can be perceived as masculine or feminine varying according to the individual's perspective. According to Zain, in Algerian culture, masculine practises, such as caring for the household and being in charge of everything are readily apparent, and are what define a man. Similar to Vasam, Zain appears to view women working and the division of household expenses as contradictory to his conception of masculinity, denoting a lack of manliness.

Wahab indicated that culture and religion play an important role in distinguishing Somali men from British men. He stated that Somali males are very proud of their culture, and that their religion and culture contain numerous taboos and rules. He then elaborated:

> We're quite protective over our sisters, our mothers, our cousins. We are kind of protective of them, very protective in a sense to the extent where if they did something out of line. It would be really upsetting to us if you someone did something to them, if people come and try and hurt them. (Wahab, Somali, second generation)

Wahab emphasised, when comparing Somali and British men, that Somali men are especially protective of their female relatives. It appears that when Wahab uses the word protective, he is also referring to control over women. He stated that Somali males are extremely upset when Somali women behave inappropriately. He also indicated that any assault on Somali women would be distressing for Somali men. Wahab appears to believe that being extremely protective of women and controlling their conduct are the primary distinctions between Somali and British males. Wahab then provided a very intriguing example to illustrate the primary distinction between Somali and British men:

> I think the only big difference would be … There's a new thing called OnlyFans. Now it's like an online pornographic, platform where a lot of men and women post their things, and they make a lot of money on it. And it's quite lucrative. I feel like a lot of white people may towards liberal stance now. So they have a lot more freedom with their women and their men. So I feel like from a male perspective, if your brother or your sister was doing that it would be very bad … there's still a lot of traditional people,

> but I think more of them would be a lot more relaxed in comparison to a Somali male. I think that's, again from a cultural perspective, because there's a lot of honour. A lot of honour... It's because Somali man is a lot more linked to his extended family. So the way they perceive is different, but the white man is very individual. They don't care about what other people think. So it's a little bit more, you know, free. A little more freedom they have. I think that's the main difference. Yeah. (Wahab, Somali, second generation)

Wahab provided an extremely interesting illustration, mentioning a new online platform called OnlyFans. Wahab argued that this is a cultural issue and emphasised that in Somali culture, honour plays an important role and Somali men are not relaxed about their women's behaviour. Later, Wahab drew attention to the fact that Somali males also have stronger ties to their extended families, which helps them maintain a sense of honour. He described British males as highly independent and lacking in concern over what other people think. It appears that Somali males who have stronger ties to their extended families care more about what others think and speak. This appears to also affect their conception and the construction of their masculinities.

Uzair gave a very long explanation when comparing Somali and British men.

> French people, they're very upfront with the Islamophobia racism. Same with Germans. …They're more upfront. Right. But England, the thing with English men, they're very, very passive in nature of their personalities. They're very passive. ... Once you go to their sort media platforms, you'll see what they actually think about you... When they know they can't get away with it and they can't say that face to face, because they don't want to lose their jobs or they don't want to like affect their status or they don't want to cause friction in the situation. They don't want to say it to your face, but they'll speak to your colleagues … behind and back. They'll just try and sabotage you. But they will never those words will never come out of their mouth... Like my whole life, when people are been indecent towards me, it's always been a passive thing. People being aggressive to me towards me, but not directly. Indirectly. What are you guys doing now? Or you've been doing all that sort of stuff. They'll try to embarrass you amongst your peers. But once you are with them, one to one basis, people not sort of had that energy towards you. They basically thrive on this like indirect sort of nature. (Uzair, Somali, second generation)

Uzair indicated that he has lived in other European countries and has had many racist and Islamophobic experiences as a result. In terms of Islamophobia, he compared the French, the Germans, and the British, asserting that French and German males are very upfront with their racism. On the other hand, according to Uzair, British males are extremely passive-aggressive and indirect when being Islamophobic, and do not typically express it face-to-face, but rather on social media platforms. He defined the Islamophobic behaviour he encountered in the UK

as indirect and passive, typically from British males. Interestingly, Uzair indicated that British men may try to embarrass him when among their peers, but once they are alone on a one-to-one basis, they do not display the same energy towards him.

5.2.3.3. How Muslim Men See Their Own Group's Men

To gain a comprehensive understanding of the construction of Muslim masculinities in the UK, I asked the participants about their relationship with Muslim men from their own group, and how they would describe their characteristics as Muslim men.

Somali Men

I asked Somali men how they perceive other Somali men in the UK, and how they might define their characteristics. They typically described them as confident, educated in terms of religion, struggling, less well-educated academically, welcoming, humorous, extremely proud Muslims, expressive, outgoing, religious, etc.

> I'd say Somalis are more confident. I'd say we're more confident sort of... Somali guys very educated when it comes to the, even if it doesn't look like it, cause that's one of the first things we learn as a kid. And the religion. So the religion... So maybe if they're involved in sort of gang in the sort of lifestyle, you'll still find them very educated about their religion. It's a cultural thing for us to learn. It it's very important. That's why I'd say one unique thing about us is because we'd always sort of be educated about religion. Another thing about us I'd say we're just struggling. We're struggling in it because we're new to the country and where we're struggling in it, but not like our other Muslim counterparts who have established families and sort of generations here. We are new to here in it. So naturally it's only natural that you'd find Somali is maybe that Somali men being the least educated. (Uzair, Somali, second generation)

Since they have received an intense religious education since childhood, Somali males appear more religiously confident. In Somali culture and masculinity perception, religious education appears to be extremely important. Uzair also described the challenges faced by Somali men in the UK, which appear to have a significant impact on their lives. According to Uzair, Somali males have a very high level of religious education but a very low level of schooling.

All of these obstacles appear to affect and threaten their identity motivational principles, as well as their masculinity beliefs and practises.

> I think Somali men are very welcoming people. They welcome a lot of people into their culture... I think also we're very proud Muslims. Majority of women, Somali women wear hijab. Wherever you see Somalis, you see Islam. So we're very proud people of our culture, our religion as well. I think as one individual Somali men, I feel there's a stigma that Somalis are very funny, very expressive. (Wahab, Somali, second generation)

Wahab stated that Somali males are extremely proud Muslims and then emphasised that the majority of Somali women wear the hijab. He appears to be proud to be a Muslim, and notes that the vast majority of Somali women wear the hijab. He seems to base his sense of pride of on the fact that Somali Muslim women wear the hijab. Wahab added that there is also a stereotype that Somalis are very funny. Despite the reality that being humorous and expressive could be viewed as a positive trait, overemphasis on this trait seems undesirable because it could be considered to denote an area of vulnerability. Wahab indicated that this is a stigma, and he appears to dislike being continuously characterised as funny. Likewise, Yousuf indicated that Somali males are very humorous:

> I'd say comedy, like one thing that like my people are quite known for is like what quite funny people, comedy. I think what quite identifiable from like other African people... I'd say the things that we have quite in common, like the comedy fact, and we keep Islam close to our hearts. Mainly those things. And obviously our features, like what I think we're quite identifiable from like most people. (Yousuf, Somali, first generation)

Yousuf emphasised that the primary characteristics of Somali males are their humour and their steadfast religious beliefs. According to Yousuf, Somalis are easily distinguishable from other Africans due to their humour.

Algerian Men

Algerian men appear to characterise their own group of Muslim men (Algerian men) as having more traditional masculine characteristics, such as being extremely proud of their culture, honourable, able to resist, willing to sacrifice, very traditionally masculine, providers, and extremely protective.

> So typical Algerian man, myself included, we're very proud of our culture. Very, very proud, mainly cause of colonization. It's like we have to resist so long and sacrifice so much that we really appreciate who we are. I feel like some of the values we really cherish, like honour. So for example, it comes to typical Algerian man when it comes to like his wife and stuff, like sort of very respectful. It all comes down to like, honour. Like very typical masculine. So the Algerian man is like now in the UK, for example, you see a lot of people, they like the man and the woman they'll go 50 50, for example, the, the bills, the rent, everything it's like split. The man's working, the women's working, but Algerian man will feel really like bad if you do that. We like to be the provider. We want to provide for our wife, like the traditional household … We're willing to defend our families for anything, like even if someone like says something disrespectful in the streets or something like, it's not acceptable for us, we don't tolerate that kind of thing. (Vasam, Algerian, second generation)

It is evident from Vasam's accounts that Algerian males manifest more assertive and confrontational characteristics in their daily lives. Vasam indicated that Algerian males are primarily proud of their cultures, due to their experiences of colonisation, and that resistance, sacrifice, and honour are their defining traits. In the discourses of almost all (seven) Algerian participants, the masculine characteristics of Algerian men were dominant and manifested in various forms. Vasam demonstrated plainly that Algerian males care enormously about their masculine responsibilities. Whereas, in the UK, both men and women typically work and share expenses such as rent, utilities, etc., which Vasam found peculiar. He then stated that Algerian males would feel terrible if they behaved in this manner, as they consider themselves the family's breadwinners and feel responsible to provide for and cover all expenses alone.

Similarly, Zain described Algerian men as having very masculine traits and also characterised them as crazy:

> Crazy man, Algerian. Algerian man. Very crazy. Usually.
> - Why?
> They are angry people. Algerians, they're just angry. It's probably, it comes from the fact that we were colonized by France. We have that hot blood, we have a resistance type, where in our personality we try to fight against other people. We're with the person that's being oppressed and anti the person oppressing just because of our experiences. So if let's say an Algerian man was to see injustice on the road, he's going to fight. That's the first thing he will do. I think that's where the anger stems from... Algerians, they don't use their brain when it comes to working out things in life, they just act off emotion. That's the main thing in terms of experiences. I've seen it so many times... In terms of masculinity, I would say Algerians think they have the most masculinity. Just because they think that obviously as men, there's a big culture in oppressing women and telling women what to do and being the man who does everything. (Zain, Algerian, third generation)

According to the Algerian participants, the characteristics of Algerian men include willingness to fight against injustice, emphasis on safeguarding victims, and acting emotionally rather than rationally. Interestingly, Zain emphasised that Algerians believe they have the most masculinity, and that their cultural heritage plays a significant role in attributing a strong meaning to masculinity. Referring to hegemonic masculinity, Zain also drew attention to gender relations in Algerian culture, and the oppression of Algerian women. It appears that the traditional and patriarchal hegemonic masculinity model remains prevalent among Algerians and as such is a significant component of their masculinity construction.

Pakistani Men

The Pakistani participants characterise Pakistani men as hardworking, having a strong desire to make their family proud, struggling with identity, identity-conflicted, friendly, helpful, respectful, etc.

> Hardworking a British Pakistani man, I know they are very hard working. They make something of themselves perhaps to do their family proud or maybe they want to send money to their relatives back in Pakistan. I suppose identity is something that they might struggle with as a British Pakistani. They always been of two different nations that always leads to a bit of a struggle with identity. And then you throw in the religion as well. And that obviously makes things even harder. British Pakistani is probably quite conflicted within themselves. Generally quite friendly, helpful. They're quite modern, I would say in lot of respect as well, seeing a lot of them, once they get enough money, they buy nice cars and things, which nice to see. (Elyas, Pakistani, second generation)

When I asked Elyas how he would characterise a Pakistani man, he asked whether I meant a Pakistani man who resides in Pakistan or a British Pakistani man. This revealed that Elyas distinguishes between Pakistani men who reside in Pakistan and British Pakistani men. When describing his relationship with his father, he stated that it is not particularly strong because his father retains his Pakistani heritage. Elyas further explained that his father does not comprehend the British way of life. Generational differences among first and second/third generation Pakistani men in the UK seem to affect all aspects of their identities, including their self-descriptions. Interestingly, Elyas also drew attention to the role of religion in the formation of British Pakistani male identity, claiming religion complicates things, making them more difficult.

5.2.3.4. How Muslim men see other Muslim men

I asked the participants how they perceive males from the other two ethnic background categories; what their relationships with them are like, and if it were possible, how they would compare them. Generally, the participants' comments and descriptions regarding the other two categories of males were positive. Some of the participants drew interesting comparisons and explained the distinctions made. In particular, Algerian and Somali males highlighted some interesting comparisons.

> Well, I think Muslim men, depends. We can find some are easy Muslims. They are like connected to others. They don't mind about Christian, Muslim, Jewish there. Like accepting others, they are open minded, in my way. Some others, they are not. Most, especially from Pakistan, India, this type of Muslims, they are like strong characters,

> they don't like getting like included this culture. They don't mix, they're not mixed. Muslim man in this country depends on situation. Depends on the characters we got, most of them are strong character. If you are strong character, then it guarantees problems and face the problems again, like sometimes hard with people. Um, but if you are easy-going can, um, then like they're following the religion, they are kind. So no one going to target you. No one have problem with you. (Salman, Algerian, first generation)

Salman indicated that Pakistani and Indian Muslim males in particular, have strong personalities, do not interact with society, and dislike being integrated into British culture. It appeared that when Salman mentioned a "strong character," he was referring to Muslim men who are resistant to change and not well integrated into British society, as well as Muslim men who interact exclusively within their own ethnic groups. Salman appears to view himself and other Algerian males as sociable, and open to interacting with people from various backgrounds.

According to Vasam, strong familial ties and a sense of honour are defining characteristics of Pakistani, Somali, and Algerian men.

> Somalis really value family. They have bigger families, and it's like a really important thing for them... with Pakistanis, we share like the same value of honour as well. Very family based as well... but I feel like the only difference is sometimes in their culture it can be a bit overboard. Sometimes it can be a bit too much. It's not all Pakistanis, it is very small percentage, but you hear it a lot. For example, a lot with honour, they might take you a bit too far when it comes to women. For example, like they'll, I don't know to describe it, but it's like, so it, Islam teaches you go to this limit and sometimes they'll go a bit more, you know. (Vasam, Algerian, second generation)

As illustrated above, Vasam indicated that all three categories (Pakistani, Somali, and Algerian) of males place considerable importance on family and honour. However, Vasam believes Pakistani males are overly concerned with this, and may sometimes go too far in the name of honour. According to Vasam, Pakistani males sometimes go beyond what Islam teaches in reference to respect for women and honour. Vasam's account appears to parallel Salman's views about Pakistani males.

Interestingly, similar sentiments were expressed by some of the Somali participants regarding Pakistani males.

> Pakistanis are more family oriented. I say a lot more family oriented. They have better family unit than Somalis. So like Somalis are very tribal, but Somalis in the west, I'd say they don't have a family unit as good as Pakistanis. Pakistanis have a huge family unit where they rely upon each other, and they support each other. Somalis I'd say some

> of those extended families are sort of fractured and segmented... Somali guys that I met; I'd say quite more independent... I'd say probably we are more independent. Obviously, we have different attitudes towards like women in the household. (Uzair, Somali, second generation)

Uzair described both the difficulties Somali men face in the UK, and distinctions between Somali and Pakistani men. He stated that Pakistanis are more family-oriented than Somalis, and that Pakistanis have more dependable and supportive family connections. Uzair emphasised that Somalis lack strong familial ties because they are still establishing themselves there. Uzair contends, however, that Somali males are more independent than Pakistani men. It also appears that a relative lack of strong family ties makes Somali males more independent. Uzair explained further that Somali males have a more distinct view about women than Pakistani men. First, he hesitated to clarify his ideas, because he believed they would be considered highly controversial.

> I'm about to say they would be deemed quite controversial. I don't want people thinking I'm talking bad about specific communities when these are communities that I grew up with and I love. That's why I'm being a bit paranoid. Somalis I'd say are more relaxed on women. Pakistanis are more strict when it comes to their women... Somalis, I'd say they place more importance in the education of women in their communities than Pakistanis would do. I've met a lot of Pakistanis women that weren't quite interested in education because they would say I'm getting married quite young anyway. So I'd say that was a very huge, obvious difference. I wouldn't say they're more like importantly like independent in the Somali community because we still have traditional cultural values. So the mother, the father, the kids, the mother looks after the kids. But I'd say women are in our communities are more sort of, I don't want to say free because free is not the word. I feel like that's quite derogatory. I'd say their roles are more flexible. But of course all within line with as best as we can with the religion, but I'd say sometimes I find some of the ways they treat women oppressive. I'm still firm believe in traditional roles and values, but I'd say I don't think that extreme is with Somalis... I'd say like where we have more of a relaxed approach. (Uzair, Somali, second generation)

Uzair apparently finds the manner in which Pakistani men treat women oppressive. This may imply that Muslim males do not take a uniform approach to women, and additionally that their approaches to women in the UK may vary.

When responding to questions on this topic, Yousuf then drew attention to another issue:

> There's also the issue of like marriage, for example. Somalis and Algerians married from each other, there's not necessarily a lot, but there are these kind of marriage. But with Somali and Pakistani; Pakistanis, I think they like to marry within themselves. So that's also sometimes something that I see that the parents might stop the child from

> marrying a certain, like someone from a certain community. And, and as a result, they don't get married. (Yousuf, Somali, first generation)

Yousuf emphasised that even though Somalis and Algerians may marry each other, Pakistanis typically marry other Pakistanis and prefer not to marry Muslims from different ethnic backgrounds. Yousuf also highlighted that some Pakistani parents may prevent their children from marrying a member of a specific community. Thus, it appears that attitude to marriage outside the community is a significant issue for all three Muslim groups.

Interestingly, the Somali males indicated that they share a stronger cultural affinity with Algerians than with Asians.

> Algerians are, in terms of culture, more similar to Somalis than to Asians to be fair. Like there's a lot of overlap so much. I feel like north Africans and Somalis in the UK that the most closely knit community in terms of like ethnicities. Because a lot of our sort of cultural things, our cultures are very, very, very similar. Our attitudes are very, very, very similar. Even as men, like the way they act is very similar (Uzair - Somali).

Although the three different groups of Muslim men generally described the other two groups as possessing positive characteristics, it appears they have generally good relationships, and that there are cultural differences between Asian (Pakistani) and African (Algerian/Somali) Muslim men that may impact these relationships.

5.3. Discussion

The main objective of the present study was to investigate the difficulties faced by Muslim men in the UK. The research findings detail how Muslim men in the UK construct their masculinities, and the related challenges they experience. According to Connell (2005), research on various social groups, such as ethnic communities, regions, or socioeconomic classes, can be utilised to investigate various forms of masculinities. Social categories such as race, ethnicity, religion, and social class significantly inform the construction of masculinities (Addis & Cohane, 2005). Effectively understanding both genders requires an understanding of the intersecting relationships between masculinities and femininities and other social categories, such as class, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, age, and religion (Hakak, 2016: 18). According to Ouzgane (2006), although men must navigate universal concerns, such as fatherhood, balancing work and family, defining masculinity in relation to a globalising economy, sexuality, and violence in diverse contexts around the world, they identify different priorities and approaches to addressing these issues in their local contexts. Siraj (2014: 102)

argues that men do not necessarily share a unified experience of masculinity and therefore differ in terms of factors such as religion, class, nationality, ethnicity, social class, and race, which influence their masculinity constructions and practises.

The construction and practices of Muslim masculinities are multifaceted and Muslim 'men are not born; they are made; they construct their masculinities within particular social and historical contexts' (Ouzgane 2006: 2). To examine the processes and relationships that cause masculinities and religion, as a social category that profoundly affects gender roles, research to date has placed considerable emphasis on the role of religion in the shaping and reshaping of masculinities within particular contexts and traditions (Hakak, 2016: 18). In contrast, minimal research has been conducted concerning the concept of masculinity among Muslim males, or the probable influences of Islam on their conception of masculinity (Chaudhrey, 2020). Gender studies rarely examine Islamic masculinity, and when they do, they typically connect it to deviance-related phenomena, rather than considering religion among the essential, non-reductionist components of contemporary Islamic masculinity (Fedele, 2013). The findings of this study revealed that the construction of Muslim masculinities in the UK varied, and were typically influenced by their ethnic, racial, religious, national, cultural, and social class backgrounds. In particular, their religious identities appear to have had a significant impact on the construction of their masculinities, as evidenced by their discourses and practises. Religion also assigns Muslim males significant responsibilities as men and fathers, influencing their gender relations with in-group and out-group members.

The findings and analyses in the current research on masculinity were presented according to three subordinate themes: the construction of Muslim masculinities in the UK, the responsibilities of Muslim men in the UK, and how Muslim men in the UK perceive both women and men. The main findings of this study are that Muslim masculinities in the UK are multifaceted and that several factors (specifically religion) influence the constructions and practises of their masculine identities. Moreover, their understanding and interpretation of their masculinity identities revolves primarily around feelings of "responsibility" such as caring, protecting, sacrificing, etc. Additionally, their thoughts on gender relations with in-group and out-group members appear to play an important role in their construction of masculinities.

5.3.1. Construction of Muslim masculinities in the UK

5.3.1.1. The role of religion

Several factors appear to be influential in the construction of Muslim masculinities in the UK in terms of shaping and configuring masculinity understanding and practises. Muslim masculinities in the UK are diverse, informed by men's ethnic, racial, religious, national,

cultural, social class, and traditional backgrounds. In particular, Muslim men's religious identities appear to have a significant impact on how they construct their masculinities, as evidenced by their discourses and practises. Siraj (2014: 101) proposes that religion should be acknowledged as one of the most influential factors in the construction of Muslim masculinities, as studies of Muslim men adopt a broader perspective to include discussions on masculinity based on and negotiated through religion. The gender identities of Muslim males continue to be heavily influenced by their religious beliefs and family expectations (Dwyer et al., 2008: 130). The findings reported here align with those of Modood et al. (1997: 301), who asserted that a very high proportion of Muslims consider religion is "very important" to them, and that the intensity of religion in their characteristics and lives is evident. The research of Mac-an-Ghail and Haywood (2015) offers an explanatory framework that postulates a transition from ethnicity to religion as a means of comprehending changing public perceptions regarding the Muslim community in Britain.

There is however, a dearth of studies exploring the relationship between religion, ethnicity, and masculinity among Muslims, despite growing academic interest in Muslim minorities. The majority of those studies of Muslim men that do exist, outline religion's role in the construction of Muslim masculinities as a means for men to assert and maintain their hegemonic masculinities. Samad (1998)'s research in Bradford revealed that despite Muslim men their having limited knowledge of Islam, they utilise religion to construct and maintain their masculinity, and perceive and practise masculinity as "hard" men. In contrast to these findings, this study found that Muslim men appear to have a greater understanding of Islam and their religious identities, suggesting that in recent decades Muslim men in the UK have improved their religious knowledge, presumably due to the high quality of their education. Thus, the understanding of masculinity as being predicated on being a "hard" man, appears to be have been transformed into "being a Muslim man" primarily characterised by exhibiting responsible, honourable, loyal, principled, respectful, and caring, characteristics.

Further research revealed that Islam served as a powerful resource for Pakistani Muslim men in Bradford to justify their control over and even violence against women (Macey, 1999). According to Archer (2001), power and privilege are desired by Muslim boys, leading to the construction of locally hegemonic masculinities associated with Muslim masculinity. Despite advocating that Islam views men and women as equals, young Muslim Pakistani men in Scotland develop contradictory masculine subject positions, locating women within the home setting (Hopkins, 2006). According to Siraj (2010), religiously informed patriarchal gender roles place men at the head of the family, verifying hegemonic definitions of masculinity, and

interestingly, some women approve these gender roles and assist men in feeling masculine. In additional research, Siraj (2014) concludes that religion plays a significant role in the construction of Muslim masculinity, specifically with regard to reinforcing notions of gender difference in terms of marriage and parenthood.

Although numerous studies, including those mentioned, have demonstrated that religion appears to provide Muslim men with a justification for asserting and maintaining their hegemonic masculinities, this study demonstrates that religion also provides Muslim men with a distinct description and characterization of what it means to be a man. During the interviews, the participants emphasised and referred to being "a Muslim man," citing a much more distinct, comprehensive, and authentic (or lofty) meaning, including the perfect and excellent characteristics of the Prophet Muhammad, such as being honourable, loyal, caring, responsible, trustworthy, and principled; distinguishing it from the conventional and common perceptions of masculinity and the Muslim man. The participants typically referred to themselves as being a "Muslim man" rather than simply a "man," implying that being a Muslim man involves significantly more responsibilities than simply being a man.

5.3.1.2. Their Description of Muslim Man – The Importance of Honour

As discussed in the previous chapter, Muslim males in the UK identify themselves as Muslims first and foremost. Multiple studies indicate that British Muslims increasingly define themselves by prioritising their religious identity over their other identities (Gardner and Shukur, 1994; Shaw, 1994; Modood et al., 1997; Archer, 2001). When the participants were asked to describe a "Muslim man," they frequently used the terms honourable, loyal, caring, responsible, trustworthy, and principled. Specifically, honour was identified as the most prominent and desirable virtue among the Muslim men interviewed. In the Islamic tradition, masculinity emerges as a set of distinctive practises, requiring men to pursue both honour and responsibility (Ouzgane, 2006: 4). Taking responsibility for caring for their families in every way (providing, earning, protecting, sacrificing, etc.) appears to be a source of honour for Muslim men in the UK.

In different societies, the concept of honour has a more gender-specific meaning frequently being more generally associated with masculinity (Madhar, 2019: 5). In classical Latin, the word *honos* or *honoris* has a gender-neutral meaning denoting respect, esteem and prestige (Dogan 2014: 367). From the cultural perspective of Muslim societies, the concept of *izzat* is commonly used when referring to collective honour, prestige, and reputation (Mitha et al., 2020: 756). This gender-specific understanding of honour is primarily associated with how men are expected to conduct themselves or act, and it is believed to be sacred, with loss of

honour equivalent to social death (Madhar, 2019: 5). In both the construction and practises of masculinity by Muslim males in the UK, the feeling of having and preserving one's honour appears to be very strong. In their own descriptions of a Muslim man, in their relationships with their families or fathers, in the role of place, in their sense of bravery or confrontation, in their passion for sports, and in their wearing of beards and Islamic/traditional/cultural attire, honour appears to play a significant role.

5.3.1.3. Relationships with their families and their fathers

Muslim men's familial relationships, particularly with their fathers, appear to significantly influence their masculinity configurations. Numerous respondents identified their fathers are their role models, typically viewing them as exemplary individuals. It appears that Muslim males acquire and develop a sense of honour within their families. According to Mansoor (2015: 57), Muslim males are subject to familial socio-cultural norms and expectations, one of the most important being honour. Several participants' accounts, on the other hand, revealed indications of tension in their relationships with their fathers. Hopkins (2006) contends that some young Muslim men attempt to construct masculinity distinct from that of their first-generation fathers because of their awareness of generational differences.

Although some second and third generation Muslim men appear to acquire and enhance their masculinity characteristics within their families specifically as a result of being influenced by their fathers, they also appear to be well aware of the generational differences that differentiate them. Some of the participants alleged that their fathers fail to understand the lifestyle and culture in the UK, and that consequently they need to construct alternative identities and masculinities. Second- and third-generation Muslim men appear to view the notion of "balance" as the central tenet of their alternative forms of identities and masculinity, suggesting that maintaining and proudly expressing the core values associated with their ancestry identities, while simultaneously embracing and adhering to the requirements of a British lifestyle (as long as it does not contradict the core values of their ancestry identities) is key to their alternative forms of identities and masculinity. Consistent with findings reported by Siraj (2014), Muslim men were found to be confident in their ability to define themselves as masculine through both their familial roles and, more importantly, their positions in the public sphere. Differing from Hopkins' (2006) findings, the majority of the Muslim males I interviewed appeared to be confident in their ability to establish and negotiate their masculinity identity, and their understanding and construction of masculinity were not complicated by the balance of their identity construction.

5.3.1.4. Role of Place

According to Ouzgane (2006: 6), in order to understand Islamic masculinities, it is necessary to be mindful of several location related factors realities; i.e., religious and political agendas, and the consequences of Western colonialism and imperialism. In their research Mac-an-Ghail and Haywood (2015) investigated how young Muslim men in the UK critically engaged with contextually based local meanings of Muslim, Islamophobia, and racialization in order to secure complex masculine subjectivities. They found that Muslim men's constructions and practises of masculinity in the UK were profoundly influenced by their strong attachment to the place in which they were born or raised. Hopkins (2007) contends that locality is one of the distinguishing characteristics of social distinction, one that interacts with Muslim identities. Muslim males appear to also have a high sense of self-esteem, due to their strong ties to their local neighbourhoods, which they exhibit with great pride. Even during reported confrontations, place appears to play a substantial role in the development of coping strategies.

5.3.1.5. Confrontation – bravery

According to Ouzgane (2006: 6), the effects of Western colonialism and imperialism are important and relevant influences when seeking to understand Muslim masculinities. Specifically, French colonialism and imperialism in Algeria appear to have had a significant effect on the construction of identity and masculinity among the Algerian participants. They appear more courageous, confrontational, and inclined to intervene in any discriminatory incidents they observe than the other participants. Although all three ethnic groups (Pakistani, Somali, and Algerian) have undergone experiences of colonialism and imperialism as a nation, Algerian men seem to lend greater significance to this experience and seem more affected. This affect is evident in their lives, discourses and actions. Algerian men typically define themselves in terms of their resistance to all forms of injustice. Algerian males resist their women adopting a Western lifestyle and disregarding religious/cultural values in order to become more modern. Protection of traditional ideals of femininity is perceived as a fundamental duty and characteristic of Muslim masculinity. Archer (2001: 97) suggests that 'young Muslim men's resistance to the "westernisation" of Muslim women may be interpreted as a form of resistance to the psychological "colonisation" of Asian/Muslim women by the dominant (white male) culture'. Controlling and exploiting women from another group is regarded as the ultimate manifestation of power (Alexander, 1996, cited in Archer, 2001: 97). All the Muslim men interviewed for this study were found to be extremely protective of their women; however, Algerian men were the most resistant to the idea of their women adopting a more modern, Western lifestyle, arguably as a result of their French colonialism and imperialism experiences.

5.3.1.6. Sports

According to Connell (2005: 54), sport, which has a very rigid hierarchical and competitive structure, has become the primary determinant of masculinity in popular culture. Sardar (2013: 3) argues that sporting events contain war imagery, and provide endlessly renewable symbols of war and masculinity to suit the modern era. He (2013) notes that wars were fought in the name of religion and ideologies, but primarily the aim was to gain power and territory. On the other hand, participation in sports appears to offer minority groups protection against violent behaviour or victimisation (Taylor et al., 2010). The findings of this study revealed that Muslim males, particularly those from the second and third generations, display a keen interest in sports. This result is consistent with Hopkins' (2009: 305) conclusion that participation in sport is critical to the construction of young Muslim masculinities, as it reinforces masculine identities and associates them with public spaces. Through physical education and sports, Muslim males can embrace and embody their sense of self and convey more generally diverse Islamic aims (e.g., self-discipline) (Farooq & Parker, 2009). Moreover, sports appear to boost their self-efficacy and self-esteem, making them more willing to confront racist or Islamophobic assaults. Specifically, Algerian Muslim males from the second and third generations have a strong interest in sports, and it appears that sports play a significant role in the construction of their masculinities. Sports also seem to offer a form of protection for Muslim males, enhancing their self-efficacy and self-esteem, thereby making them more resilient when confronted by difficulties. Muslim men in the UK appear to take pride in famous Muslim sportspeople, who serve as role models for young Muslim males.

5.3.1.7. The racialized media representation of Muslim men

The portrayal of Muslims in the media has usually been problematic. Islam is predominantly depicted as a violent religion, and Muslims are frequently portrayed negatively (Ahmed & Matthes, 2017). According to a large corpus of research, the majority of the images and discourses associated with Islam and Muslims in mainstream Western media tend to be negative (Ameli et al., 2007): 'The negative images of Islam and Muslim in the media and in the construction of news stories have a significant impact on the overall impression they leave behind' (Akbarzadeh & Smith, 2005: 36). Due to their culture, young British Muslim males are frequently portrayed as alienated, deviant, underachievers, and potential militants in contemporary media and policy debates (Dwyer et al., 2008). Specifically, in the post-9/11 era, media portrayals of Muslim men with long beards have associated them with fear, backwardness, danger, and terrorism, and this stereotype has been widely preserved by the media (Culcasi & Gokmen, 2011: 92). This study found that Muslim men in the UK strongly

reject the media's racialized portrayal of Muslim men as backward, dangerous, terrorists, oppressive, violent, etc. Such negative depictions of Muslim men in the media appear to also influence the construction of Muslim masculinities in the UK, potentially leading to Muslim men being more protective and cautious. According to the participants, Muslim men in the UK are aware of the media's racialized portrayal of them, and as a result are more cautious and protective of themselves and their families.

5.3.1.8. Beard and men's clothing

The majority of the participants indicated that beards are an important symbol for Muslim men, and a part of their identities. 18 out of the 21 participants had a beard, and some of them had been wearing one for a very long time. Despite the fact that the majority of the respondents stated that they have beards because they adhere to the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad and primarily for religious reasons, a number of respondents indicated that they also have beards for fashion reasons. Beards appear to be linked to both religious identification and masculinity in Muslim men. It was therefore quite challenging to distinguish between religious and masculinity-related motivations for having a beard. As a result of the Prophet Muhammad's emphasis on the significance of growing a beard, 'the beard is strongly associated with masculinity, wisdom, and piety and is presented in Islam in religious terms' (Siraj, 2014: 110). Participants in Siraj's (2014) study of Muslim men revealed that they wear beards to distinguish themselves from women and other age groups, attributing significance to beard growth as indicators of maturation and development (distinguishing from children). In addition to the findings reported by Siraj (2014), this research suggests that for Muslim men, the beard not only signifies the difference between age groups and other genders, but also distinguishes heterosexual men from LGBT individuals. Growing a beard appears to be viewed as a masculine privilege and a means of projecting masculinity by Muslim males. Having a beard also appears to have a significant religious and masculine meaning for Muslims, despite the fact that in the post-9/11 era, Muslim men with long beards were specifically associated with fear, backwardness, danger, and terrorism in the media (Culcasi & Gokmen,2011: 92). In addition to their facial hair, males can be distinguished from women by their conduct, attire, and demeanours (Siraj, 2014: 111).

5.3.2. The responsibilities of Muslim men in the UK

The results of this study revealed that Muslim men in the UK perceive and interpret their masculinity primarily in terms of "responsibilities", which include caring, fatherhood, providing for their family, making sacrifices, etc. Muslim males' notions of masculinity and religious beliefs are at the root of their feelings of responsibility, which includes emphasis on

caring, providing, and protecting. The participants appeared to take pride in upholding the responsibilities and expectations of manhood. The majority of the interviewees stated that they felt a sense of responsibility because they are males, and in particular Muslim men, fathers, brothers, sons, breadwinners, protectors, and family heads. As Muslims, Muslim males experience a broad sense of responsibility, although their feelings are typically associated with their families. As Muslim men, the participants indicated that they should act and behave responsibly towards everyone in every sphere of life, specifically in a non-Muslim majority country, such as the UK, where their responsibilities also include representing to other the qualities of a proper Muslim and a Muslim man.

Religions typically promote particular types of masculinity and its physical manifestations, justifying the dominance of the masculine over the feminine (Connell, 2005: 46). In the Islamic tradition, however, masculinity emerges as a set of distinctive practises. Both pride and responsibilities are assigned to males as breadwinners, protectors of the family honour, and providers of the family's needs (Ouzgane, 2006: 4). In Islam, the family is the fundamental institution in which men and women have defined roles and responsibilities as husband and wife, complementing each other, with the emotional, financial, and psychological bond at the core of their relationship (Siraj, 2014: 105). The majority of the study participants acknowledge the specifically defined family roles and responsibilities of husbands and wives in Islam. To fully comprehend the role of the Muslim male, it is necessary to consider the physiological and psychological differences between men and women; despite both genders having equal claims and rights, there is one exception: the man takes responsibility for leadership and accountability (Badawi, 1992). Muslim men's conception of masculinity is centred on the responsibility of married men, who, according to the Quran, must provide for and protect their wives and children. Thus, marriage becomes a means for Muslim men to demonstrate their masculinity, as they dedicate themselves to performing their duties as the family's primary provider (Siraj, 2014: 105): 'As fathers and husbands, they accept the prevailing obligations in this way; marriage is a religiously approved way for the enactment of men's masculinity' (Siraj, 2014: 105).

In her research examining the roles of Pakistani men, Aslam (2014: 146) argues that Islamic texts and narratives reinforce traditional gender roles, identifying men as financial providers and protectors of individual and societal honour. The most prominent and most-discussed gender role assigned to men by the key religious text, the Quran, is that 'men are custodian in relation to women' (Quran 4: 34). A Muslim man is obligated by his religion to assume responsibility for his wife, by virtue of his custodial responsibility as a guardian for

women, providing for their overall socio-economic and emotional welfare, keeping his family well-fed and comfortable, having a moral character and the ability to earn lawful (halal) income to support his family (Aslam, 2014: 146). The participants in this study appear to be aware that their responsibilities are assigned according to their religion, and that fulfilling them is a religious obligation. Some of the most important responsibilities required by Muslim males in the UK include providing for their families as breadwinners, protecting their family members from any threat, devoting and sacrificing for his family as a father, and educating and raising their children according to their own values.

In modern Britain, traditional depictions of men as "heroes" and "breadwinners" (Connell, 1995) no longer carry the cultural weight they once did (Baker & Levon, 2016). On the other hand, Muslim men's roles and responsibilities as providers for their families and head of the household continue to exist, and are generally recognised as a way to help them develop their masculinity and retain their privilege as men by affording them power, position, and authority (Siraj, 2010: 212). In reference to religious duty, Hakak (2016: 19) emphasises that although religion has less influence in Western society as an explanation for the disparities in the distribution of resources and inequalities between men and women, it nonetheless fills the gap in religious societies. Islam structures every aspect of daily life, allocating gender-specific roles and responsibilities, which reinforce hegemonic masculinity. Consequently, Muslim men have a religious obligation to provide for their families (Inhorn, 2012). A man acquires masculinity in the eyes of other Muslim males when he assumes responsibility for others, particularly his mother and wife.

In accordance with the concept of responsibility, males are held specifically accountable for their leadership, and the provision, and protection of women (Siraj, 2014: 109). According to Siraj's (2014) research, Muslim men acquire and uphold hegemonic masculinity primarily by providing for, protecting, and caring for others, particularly their spouses (p.114). In a similar vein, Hopkins (2006) contends that the capacity and strength to provide for one's family is an essential obligation for Muslim men. This research suggests that Muslim males in the UK acquire and practise hegemonic masculinity, including exhibiting responsibility, demonstrated by working, providing for, protecting, and caring for family members. In many academic studies, the hegemonic masculinity of Muslim men is primarily associated with power, position, and authority over women. However, this study suggests evidence concerning Muslim men's feelings, and the challenges and difficulties they face fulfilling their responsibilities are frequently overlooked. Almost all the participants indicated that they are happy and proud to assume responsibilities for their families as Muslim men; however, taking

on these responsibilities is not always simple, and appears to be more difficult for them in the context of the UK, where racism and Islamophobia are increasing.

In the mainstream media, as well as in the vast majority of academic studies, Muslim men are rarely portrayed as vulnerable or displaying positive emotions, and are frequently characterised in the news solely as violent offenders (Britton, 2015). In the extensive history of racialized media portrayals of Muslim men, the media portrays and labels Muslim men as violent, harsh, insensitive, or heartless. In addition, the individual, personal, psychological, and emotional differences that differentiate Muslim men from one another appear to be overlooked. Research by Britton (2019) on Muslim men in Rotherham suggests that a more comprehensive understanding of Muslim men, beyond the narrow focus on negative emotionality, could be obtained by examining details relating to the under-researched relational, emotional, and intimate dimensions of Muslim men's lives and exploring their personal lives. Britton (2019) asserts that 'focusing on personal life enhances understanding of changing gender and generational relations in Muslim families and shifting masculine roles and identities' (p.36). The child sexual exploitation crisis in Rotherham resulted in predominantly negative narratives of racialized Muslim masculinities, but according to Britton (2019: 37), Muslim men resisted these narratives and emphasised their caring roles, responsibilities, and affective ties to portray a more caring and positive image of their lives. This study supports previous evidence that underscores how Muslim men emphasise and prioritise their familial responsibilities and caring duties, indicating the emotive dimension of their masculine identities. Additionally, Muslim men seem to challenge and resist the dominant narratives of racialized Muslim masculinities that typically depict Muslim men as constrained by rigid cultural forms (Britton, 2019: 46).

Furthermore, Britton (2019: 46) notes that expressing concerns about the well-being and safety of family members is an additional way in which Muslim men demonstrate caring masculinities. According to the study findings, Muslim men in the UK experience stress, fear, and anxiety when performing their responsibilities; their protection and safety-related duties also appear to cause substantially high levels of stress, fear, and anxiety. Muslim males appear to experience a greater sense of responsibility as father and family head, as it is their duty to ensure the safety of their family members (particularly women). Any direct (e.g., physical or verbal) or indirect (e.g., gaze or online) threat against family members appears to affect them emotionally in a very negative manner, causing them to become extremely angry. Moreover, any public incidents involving Muslims that exacerbate negative stereotypes about Muslims appear to have an impact on the private lives of Muslim men (Britton, 2019: 47), leading them to become more defensive and cautious, with adverse effects on their emotional well-being.

Muslim men's concerns and anxieties regarding the well-being and security of their family members offers more comprehensive insights into the construction of Muslim masculinities, which are typically (or almost always) characterised as hegemonic masculinity primarily associated with power, position, and authority over women. In debates addressing Muslim (hegemonic) masculinities, the terms "power", "position", and "authority" are typically highlighted, implying men hold superiority over women, and giving the impression that all Muslim males enjoy or practise hegemonic masculinities equally. In contrast, this research finds the sense of "responsibility" appears to be significantly more influential than that of power, position, and authority in the construction of Muslim masculinities in the UK, and this may also bring significantly higher levels of stress, fear, and anxiety. Firstly, it is a religious commandment that comes directly from the Quran; secondly, being granted responsibility is an honour as is fulfilling those responsibilities; thirdly, family is sacred in the Islamic tradition and responsibilities relating to one's family are highly significant; and finally, fulfilling one's responsibilities in a non-Muslim majority country (in the UK in this case) adds an additional layer of difficulty, necessitating much more sensitivity and attention.

5.3.3. How Muslim men in the UK perceive women and men

According to Connell (2005: 71), masculinity can be comprehended by analysing the processes and relationships according to which men and women live gendered lives. Similar to other aspects of identity, masculinity is shaped relative to femininity and other masculine models (Hakak, 2016: 14). In the UK, Muslim men's perspectives concerning women and men (in- and out-group members) can reveal evidence demonstrating how they construct their masculinities, and how they position themselves regarding in- and out-group relationships.

5.3.3.1. How Muslim men see Muslim and British (non-Muslim) women

The findings in this study indicate that Muslim males are extremely protective of their women (mother, wife, daughter, female relatives, and other Muslim women). This finding is consistent with Archer's (2001: 83) assertion that Muslim men construct their masculine identities in relation to women, and practise "ownership" and "control" of women. It also aligns with Wetherell's (1993) suggestion, cited by Archer (2001: 83), that masculine identities can be formed through a discourse that promotes the "protection of femininity," which portrays masculinity as strong and defined by "caring for" and "controlling" women. On the other hand, some of the participants criticised Muslim women who wear the hijab but smoke in public, indicating that Muslim men appear to view their women (any Muslim women) as the bearers of their collective identities (including racial, national, religious, cultural, and traditional

identities) and their honour. In their study, Yuval-Davis and Anthias (1989) emphasise that women are constructed as cultural bearers because they embody collective honour.

In accordance with the above, Muslim males appear to view any inappropriate behaviour on the part of Muslim women as especially reprehensible, because it misrepresents Islam and Muslims. This is because they believe that such behaviour undermines their ethnic, national, religious, cultural, and traditional heritage. In addition, the participants appear to believe that Muslim women's inappropriate behaviour can arise from their disengagement from traditional, ethnic, national, religious, and cultural norms and values due to Westernisation. According to Archer (2001:97), young men's resistance to the "westernisation" of Muslim women, may be viewed as resistance to the dominant (white male) culture's internal and psychological "colonisation" of Asian and Muslim women. Alexander (1996) further asserts (cited in Archer, 2001: 97), 'the ability to control and exploit another group's women is seen as the ultimate expression of power'. Their resistance to their women becoming westernised, and their efforts to exert control over their Muslim female counterparts through understandings of "tradition" appear to reflect the position of Muslim males in opposition to white men (Archer, 2001: 97).

The negotiation of various power relations, with regard to both women and other men, leads to the construction of various masculine identities (Connell, 2005). Masculinity contested norms not only indicate a desire for competition among men, but also position women as outsiders and interlopers in what is a normative masculine culture, with the result that the structural advantages enjoyed by men may be threatened by women's achievements and higher position (Kuchynka et al., 2018: 532). Within this context, Muslim men appear to feel significantly more threatened and annoyed if they become engaged in a clash with British (non-Muslim) women in a superior position to themselves. It seems that an intersecting domain is constituted when Muslim men clash with or are targeted by women. Their disadvantaged masculine position in relation to white men (as an immigrant having a different race, ethnicity, language, religion, culture, etc.) is already perceived as a threat, one that is added to if targeted or threatened by a woman, as this represents a further threat to their masculine identity.

5.3.3.2. How Muslim men see British men

Muslim men in the UK seem to perceive themselves as more courageous, more willing to confront threats, more family-oriented, more responsible, and more honourable than British men. In terms of their masculine traits, and when comparing them to themselves, the participants typically described British men as passive, indirect, passive aggressive, reserved, very scared to speak up in arguments, non-confrontational, half-hearted, using microaggressions, prone to denial, unwilling to hear opposing opinions, etc.

According to Archer's (2001:88) research findings, Muslim boys differentiate themselves from white males by emphasising the perceived differences between unstable, continuously reconstituting white families and cohesive Muslim families. Accordingly, many participants in the present study brought attention to the fact that Muslim men are more family oriented as they shoulder all domestic responsibilities, whereas British men share expenses with their wives, which Muslim men consider represents a lack of masculinity. In their research, Baker and Levon (2016) contend that traditional depiction of males as "heroes" and "breadwinners" (Connell, 1995) has diminished in contemporary Britain, as women have assumed a greater role in the workforce. Masculinity is typically associated with being a breadwinner, and failure to earn sufficiently places pressure on men (Connell, 2005: 90). Muslims also appear to continue to emphasise the traditional role of the man as the family's primary provider (breadwinner), and any failure to fulfil this role is viewed as a deficiency in his masculine identity.

Muslim men feel compelled to protect and keep a watch over "their" women to preserve their honour, which defines their highest status and control; losing control of a woman would then jeopardise their honour (Madhar, 2019: 5). According to the participants' accounts, safeguarding their women is a matter of honour for Muslim men, as they are especially protective and controlling of their partners. In contrast, the participants asserted that British men do not place a premium on honour, and are not particularly protective of their partners. Wahab also provided an intriguing example of a new online platform called "OnlyFans" in which couples share pornographic videos and earn substantial amounts of money for doing so. Wahab describes British men as having a more liberal stance, and being more relaxed towards women (sharing their private recordings), which would be considered reprehensible for a respectful and protective Muslim man.

At this juncture, it seems useful to clarify that the "protection of women" for Muslim males does not merely mean shielding them from danger. It also implies the protection of all aspects of the family's privacy. In Islam, the family (including all its components such as family members, familial relations, and family difficulties) is referred to as "mahram," which in this context essentially means "private." Mahram is a concept that, as Göle (1991: 20) correctly notes, is difficult to translate across boundaries and cultural contexts; while "private" offers a common translation, it does not adequately convey the full meaning of mahram. According to Göle (1991: 20), mahram is the term used to describe how Muslim societies define sexual segregation, public morality, and privacy, referring to the "private sphere" in place of "mahram", as this will obscure the distinctions between Muslim family members and

their intimate lives relative to what we see in the Western context. It is the sacred duty of Muslim males in Muslim families to protect the privacy of their families. Muslim men appear to position themselves in opposition to British men by rigorously protecting the mahram (privacy) of their families, just as they appear to locate themselves in opposition to white men by opposing the westernisation of Muslim women (Archer, 2001: 97).

5.3.3.3. How Muslim men see other Muslim men

These research findings further revealed that the construction, understanding and practices of Muslim masculinities are various and multifaceted in the UK context (Archer, 2001; Hopkins, 2007; Dwyer et al., 2008; Hopkins, 2009; Farooq & Parker, 2009). Monolithic approaches that treat Muslim males as a homogeneous group with a set of shared traits are insufficient to investigate Muslim masculinities in the UK. Although participants' accounts have already revealed that Muslim masculinities are multifaceted, their thoughts on other Muslim men also suggest that Muslim men are well aware of the differences associated with Muslim masculinities in the UK. At first glance, Muslim men could generally be seen to have similar understandings of masculinity, as they share similar experiences and challenges; however, the interviewees identified different priorities and approaches to addressing them and experiencing them in the individual context.

The participants in the current study frequently commented positively when describing their own group's men and the other two groups of men. They typically describe men from their own group and the other two groups as honourable, loyal, responsible, religious, family oriented, etc. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that Pakistani, Somali and Algerian men generally seem to have a good relationship with each other. On the other hand, some of the participants, specifically the Algerian and Somali men, made some interesting comparisons and revealed notable differences. In particular, some of the Algerian and Somali participants claimed that Pakistani men have overbearingly strong personalities and do not like being part of the local culture, and as such they take the issue of honour a little too far when it comes to women. Although the majority of Algerian men described themselves as much more masculine and seemed to assign much more meaning to the concept of "honour", they also asserted that Pakistani men take the honour issue 'a bit too far' in the case of women. Besides, Pakistani men seem not to be open to intermarriage, not only between Muslims and non-Muslims, but also between Pakistanis and people non-Pakistanis, even if they are Muslims. Notably, British Pakistani Muslims in the UK have long resisted full integration in a manner similar to other minority communities, due to their persistent practise of group endogamy (Shaw, 2000: 3). British Pakistani Muslim groups depend on endogamous marital arrangements to maintain and

strengthen group cohesion (Allas, 2018: 42). Destroying this kinship system could jeopardise all the positive aspects of community cohesion, because endogamous kinship networks serve as a sort of alliance minimizing "outside" threats relating to possessions, wealth, and ideology (Allas, 2018: 42). This approach distinguishes Pakistani men from Somali and Algerian Muslim men, who are more amenable to intermarriage.

Due to numerous factors, including the length of time they have been living in the UK, the political or social climate in their home countries, the size of their own groups in the UK, and their interactions with both in-and out-group members, the three distinct groups in this research shared different experiences of life in the UK. Pakistani Muslims have a long history in the UK relative to Muslims from other backgrounds, and are currently the largest Muslim population in the UK. Pakistanis constitute 40% of all Muslims in the UK (Population of England and Wales - Office for National Statistics, 2022), while black African Muslims make up only 7.7% of the Muslim population, according to the 2011 Census (The Muslim Council of Britain's Research & Documentation Committee, 2015). Pakistanis' first began arriving in the UK in the 1950s (Ben-David, 2009), and today fourth and fifth generations of Pakistanis reside in the country in a setting that is relatively established and settled.

By contrast, the history of Somalis and Algerians in the UK is much briefer, and their relative populations are considerably smaller than that of Pakistanis. Furthermore, the recent political unrest and civil war in Somalia during the last several decades has had a profound impact on Somali men. Several of the participants indicated that they previously lived as refugees in other countries before arriving in the UK. Markussen (2020: 1456) argues that, combined with age, gender, class, and ethnic minority status, Somalis' previous social position in their home country shapes their perceptions of masculinity. Refugees' gender constructions and gender roles are subject to numerous conflicts and crisis as a result of overlapping dominant discourses on race, gender, and social class (Mills, 2012: 29). Therefore, Somali must negotiate many more challenges specifically in terms of establishing their lives in the UK; including finding jobs, poverty, housing, education, discrimination, etc. The majority of the challenges outlined related to Muslim men's basic responsibilities, such as providing for family members as the breadwinner and protector. Having difficulty fulfilling their chief responsibilities seems to affect Somali men in a negative way. Although many Somali men attribute their sense of humour (being funny) to being Somali, their difficulties, particularly their economic difficulties, seem to affect how they create and practise their masculinity, making them more anxious, nervous and sensitive (they seem to be more protective and cautious regarding threats or jokes related their identity components). Their several identity

components, such as race, ethnicity, religion, social class also seem to intersect creating more challenges in their lives.

5.4. Conclusion

This chapter has presented and discussed the research findings regarding the masculinity identities of Muslim men in the UK. It has explained how Muslim men construct their masculinities and the challenges they face. As one of their strongest identity components, masculinity has been shown to play a significant role in Muslim men's lives in the UK. They usually seem to express a desire to maintain their traditional masculine identity characteristics, which are typically associate with their ethnic, racial, religious, cultural, social class, traditional backgrounds. Specifically, their religious identities seem to have a huge impact on the construction of their masculinities, as is clearly seen in their discourses and practices. The chief findings from this research are that several factors inform the construction of Muslim masculinities in the UK, and that Muslim men's understanding and interpretation of their masculinity identities mostly centres on "responsibility", involving caring for, protecting, sacrificing, etc. Moreover, their views about gender relationships and in- and out-group members are also instrumental in their masculinities practices. On the other hand, their masculine requirements and responsibilities sometimes seem to complicate their lives; and any challenge that targets their masculinity requirements, understandings and responsibilities threatens their motivational identity principles, adversely affecting their lives.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

6. Conclusion

6.1. Introduction

This thesis has sought to determine how Muslim men in the UK perceive, experience, and feel about the challenges they face in a society where prejudice, discrimination, and Islamophobia are escalating. This chapter summarises the research findings, presents an overview of the theoretical framework, and describes the research implications and proposes directions for future research.

6.2. Summary of Research Findings

Muslims living in the Western world have been the target of bigoted and discriminatory attitudes for decades, which makes their lives more challenging as a result. Academic studies investigating the experiences of Muslims in the West, including in the UK, have attracted attention, with Islamophobia being a relatively widely debated topic. To date, the majority of academic research on Muslims and Islamophobia has focused on the victimisation of Muslim women, who are more vulnerable to Islamophobic assaults due to the visible indicators of their Muslim identity, such as headscarves. However, there has been a dearth of studies focusing on Muslim males, and of those, few have taken a socio-psychological approach to addressing the difficulties Muslim men face. This study was designed to uncover and evaluate the challenges navigated by Muslim men living in the UK, to gain an in depth understanding of their lives, and how they construct their identities in an environment in which they are gendered, racialised, and discriminated against.

In preparation for this research project, I investigated the general challenges faced by Muslim men in the UK by conducting a pilot study (involving four semi-structured interviews) with Muslim men from diverse backgrounds to identify specific issues to target. The pilot study's objective was to determine the feasibility of the project, and to select the most applicable theoretical lenses. The findings of the pilot study revealed that: 1) The majority of the challenges Muslim males encounter in the UK are "identity"-related; 2) the difficulties multiply because of the ways in which their identities overlap; 3) their masculine identities appear to confer enormous responsibilities on them; and 4) their identity-related challenges also have a significant psychological impact.

Consequently, research questions and interview questions were developed to investigate identity-related challenges from a socio-psychological (Identity Process Theory (IPT)) and masculinities perspective. Accordingly, research questions were refined as follows:

1. What are the challenges Pakistani, Somali and Algerian Muslim men experience in the UK?

2. How do the intersecting identities of Pakistani, Somali, and Algerian Muslim men (such as their race/ethnicity, gender, class, migrant status, and religion) impact their experiences?

3. How do Pakistani, Somali, and Algerian Muslim men in the UK experience challenges (e.g., threats to one's identity) that affect their motivational identity principles as defined by Identity Process Theory (continuity, self-esteem, self-efficacy, distinctiveness, meaning, belonging, and psychological coherence)?

4. How do Pakistani, Somali, and Algerian Muslim men in the UK construct their masculine identities? How do their experiences and challenges impact their construction and practice of masculine identities?

The research findings indicated that, consistent with the pilot study's findings, Muslim males in the UK face mostly identity-related issues. The participants demonstrated a tendency to associate their challenges primarily with their identities, and they frequently cited discrimination, racism, unequal treatment, and Islamophobia as difficulties they face in the UK. The participants also emphasised the challenges they experience in terms of employment, education, social class, and financial circumstances. However, they typically ascribed these issues to the intersecting aspects of their identities. The intersection of their various identities, such as being Muslim, male, black, Asian, African, British, immigrant, and of low social class, rendered the participants more vulnerable to discourses and actions that threaten and assault their identity. Throughout the interviews and the subsequent analyses, a nuanced portrait of Muslim men emerged, suggesting their lived experiences, challenges, and responses are variable, and dependant on a number of factors. Thus, a holistic view assuming a universal experience cannot adequately explain the challenges individual Muslim men must negotiate.

A further important aim of this research was to explore the feelings of the interviewees, to ascertain how the challenges they encounter affect their psychological well-being (research question 3). As the challenges identified predominantly relate to and are experienced through the lens of identity, IPT was well-suited to evaluating their impact on psychological well-being. Indeed, IPT posits that any identity threat exerts a strain on an individual's motivational identity principles. According to research findings, Muslim men in the UK seem to have a

strong desire to maintain their motivational identity principles (continuity, self-esteem, self-efficacy, distinctiveness, belonging, meaning and psychological coherence), and challenges such as racism, discrimination, and Islamophobia represent threats as they negatively impact their lives. Maintaining an appropriate sense of having a motivational identity principle seemed to improve the overall psychological wellbeing of Muslim men; however, any threat or challenge affecting these principles had a negative effect on their overall psychological wellbeing. The participants actively endeavour to strengthen their identity principles, as suggested by Breakwell et al. (2022), and specifically, their religious identities and beliefs offer a solid foundation that strengthens their feelings with regard to their identity principles. Consequently, any threat that specifically targets their religious identity is perceived as a threat to all their identity principles. Muslim men in the UK were found to engage in a variety of coping strategies in response to challenges and threats, such as strengthening their beliefs (becoming more religiously conscious) and heightening their adherence to their groups. In addition, the findings of this research seem consistent with Breakwell's (2021) recently introduced "identity resilience" (developed within the field of social psychology and specifically derived from the fundamental principles of IPT) model's suggestion that identity resilience is highest when people perceive their four constituent identity principles (their self-efficacy, self-esteem, continuity, and distinctiveness) as both coherent and strong. The participants in the present study reported a strong belief in their ability to interpret and overcome challenges (self-efficacy), viewing themselves as valuable and dignified (self-esteem). They assert that they are certain about who they are and will continue to be so, despite individual and social changes (continuity), and they view their own self-identity construction as distinctively unique (distinctiveness).

Lastly, this research has sought to respond to how Muslim men construct their masculine identities and how their experiences and challenges in the UK impact their construction and practice of masculine identities (research question 4). The findings of this study revealed how the construction of Muslim masculine identities in the UK vary, being typically based on their ethnic, racial, religious, national, cultural, and social class backgrounds. In particular, their religious identities are demonstrated to have a significant impact on the construction of their masculinities, as is evident in their discourses and practises. Muslim men in the UK also seem to have a strong desire to maintain their traditional masculine identity characteristics. According to the research findings, men's conceptions and interpretations of their masculinity identities centre primarily around the concept of "responsibility", including caring, protecting,

and sacrificing. Their understanding of masculinity seems to bestow significant responsibilities upon them, and they appear to feel accountable for meeting them. As men (or Muslim men), fathers, brothers, sons, breadwinners, protectors, and family leaders, the participants typically indicated that they experience a sense of responsibility. Their masculinity-related responsibilities impact their lives, the nature of the challenges they face, and how they respond in the contemporary UK context. Furthermore, any challenge related to their masculinity understandings, responsibilities, and requirements seems to complicate their lives in the UK, also threatening their motivational identity principles.

Additionally, this research provided more comprehensive insights into three distinct ethnic groups of Muslim men in the UK, namely, Pakistani, Somali, and Algerian. This study's findings revealed that Muslim men's intersecting identities exacerbate their difficulties, as the experiences of the three diverse groups of men (Pakistani, Somali, and Algerian) differed. Pakistani men appeared more settled in the UK, mentioning fewer obstacles than the interviewees from the other groups. In their case, Somali men reported encountering more obstacles, observing that their relatively low social class was among the most significant factor. Perhaps some of their difficulties arose from the fact that they are relatively new immigrants to the UK and are still building their lives and communities. It also emerged that the Algerian males in the study identify more rigidly with traditional notions of masculinity. Interestingly, males from the second and third generation of Muslim immigrants stated a desire to migrate to Muslim countries such as Qatar or the United Arab Emirates.

6.3. Overview of the Theoretical Framework

The study data confirms that a socio-psychological approach to identity and identity threat (IPT), as well as a masculinities approach, affords a rich understanding of the issues that influence males from Muslim communities in the UK. The data provided numerous interesting findings, some of which confirmed reports in previous academic research and others that suggested different outcomes. It was apparent that the nature of their multiple intersecting identities (Muslim, immigrant, male, black, first generation, low social class, etc.) exacerbates the participants' difficulties. The challenges identified certainly impact their motivational identity principles (continuity, self-esteem, self-efficacy, distinctiveness, belonging, meaning, and psychological coherence), as well as the understandings/constructions/responsibilities they associate with masculinity (as father, breadwinner, family leader, protector; having pride/honour, and in terms of hegemonic masculinity).

6.3.1. Intersectionality

The primary aim of this research was to investigate the challenges experienced by Muslim men living in the UK to reveal how their intersecting identities shape their experiences and challenges. The notion of intersectionality was developed in this thesis to understand how discrete aspects of male Muslims' identity, such as race, gender, class, and religion, intersect, resulting in unique experiences of discrimination and privilege (Crenshaw, 1989). The current research clarified that multiple identity components intersect and create (or worsen) the challenges faced by participants. The main identity components of Muslim men in the UK are their religion, ethnicity, and gender (as widely discussed in the previous chapters), all of which overlap and bring about difficulties in their daily lives. However, being black, of a lower social class, and poorer socioeconomic level brought more significant challenges to certain communities, such as Somalis, as mentioned above.

Alkhammash (2020) asserts that gender and race are significant identity components for contemporary Muslims in the UK, with the lived experiences of British Muslims gendered, classed, and racialised in accordance with specific identity-groups. Baker and Levon's (2015) study contends that black and Asian (mostly Muslim) working- and upper-class males are further marginalised, not only as a result of their race or social class, but also due to the gendered connotations associated with these racial and social class positions. For example, they discovered that the "beard" is used in the UK print media as part of a more subtle discourse around (Islamic) terrorism (or at least suspicion), symbolising probable culpability when racially profiling potential terrorists. The ideological sphere of masculinity is dominated by Black and Asian (mostly Muslim) masculinities (Baker & Levon, 2015: 135). As stated, for Somali males, being both black and Muslim presumably partly explains why they were subject to significantly more difficulties than Pakistani and Algerian Muslim men. When blackness intersects with Muslim identity difficulties in many areas such as employment are intensified.

'The intersection of multiple social identities (e.g., Muslim, British, Islamic, Male, Asian, etc.), where multiple forms of discrimination, oppression, dominance, and disadvantage interact, places individuals in highly situated positions' (Garden, 2019: 52). Intersectionality posits that all facets of a person's identity interact simultaneously, influencing one's privilege and reception in the social world (Garden, 2019: 52). Connell (2005) believes that research on various social groups, such as ethnic communities, regions, or socioeconomic classes, could be utilised to investigate various forms of masculinities. Social categories such as race, ethnicity, religion, and social class can have a substantial effect on the construction of masculinities (Addis & Cohane, 2005). According to the findings of this research, the various social

categories of the three distinct groups of Muslim males discussed influenced their constructions of masculinity. Somali males struggled more as a result of their skin colour and their low socioeconomic status, which creates a significant barrier to fulfilling their masculine responsibilities, such as providing for their families. This appears to cause individuals more stress, negatively affecting their psychological well-being. Poverty and low socioeconomic status affect women and men differently in Muslim communities, as unlike women, males are expected to be the financial providers for their nuclear and extended families. This means that being in poverty or having a low socioeconomic status places Muslim masculinity in crisis (Aslam, 2014: 145). On the other hand, the vast majority of the current research participants live in city centres and possess high levels of cultural capital as a result of their education, employment, and social circumstances. Others were in the process of enhancing their social standing by studying at university. It is important therefore to note that the experiences of Muslim males in urban Britain are likely to differ in relation to social class (Hopkins, 2009: 309), with class remaining the most influential determinant of social advantage (Law & Mooney 2006: 523).

6.3.2. An Identity Process Theory Approach to Muslim Masculinities in the UK

The current research employed IPT to examine the challenges encountered by Muslim men in the UK. Using the motivational identity principles (continuity, self-esteem, self-efficacy, distinctiveness, belonging, meaning, and psychological coherence) of IPT as a guide provided in depth insights into the consequences of Muslim men's experiences from a socio-psychological perspective. Thus, an IPT approach to Muslim masculinities in the UK is recommended for future researchers seeking a robust and comprehensive understanding of Muslim masculinities. IPT's emphasis on identity threat and the primary motivational principles of identity is ideally suited to contributing to our understanding of the complex, multifaceted structure of ethnic and minority identities (Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2012: 503-520). Masculine identities that are fundamental to Muslim men's lived experience proved to be diverse and multifaceted, and a number of factors emerged as threats for consideration.

Continuity

The research findings further showed that almost all the participants are highly motivated to uphold their religious and ethnic/cultural values, because these are essential to the continuity aspect of the identity principle. Their identities as men are heavily influenced by their religious and cultural values, and maintaining their traditional understanding of masculinity in the UK context is a priority.

The findings highlighted that adapting to life in the UK and worrying about one's children are particular challenges noted by first-generation Muslim men in relation to the continuity principle. First-generation Muslim men's conceptions of masculinity were formed principally within the contexts of their home cultures in their home countries, and they make notable efforts to uphold these notions and behaviours in the UK. This creates a challenge when adapting to life in Britain. Remaining consistent with one's self-conceptions can contribute significantly to integrating into desirable social contexts, in which people can receive self-affirming feedback (Vignoles et al., 2002: 203), resulting in fewer adaptation related challenges. Muslim men's continuity of identity in terms of masculinity are inevitably threatened in the UK, as it is not always possible to maintain prior conceptions of masculinity.

As discussed previously, sense of responsibility is central to Muslim masculinities and this includes raising their children to share their own values (ethnic, religious, national, traditional, etc.) and moral standards. Passing their values on to subsequent generations plays a significant role in Muslim men's continuity principle of identity, and the participants reported a strong desire to fulfil this responsibility. However, the challenges of life in the UK (e.g., British lifestyle, various ideologies, education system, sexual education in schools, raising their children with their own cultural-religious values, concern for their children losing their religious-ethnic identities) appear to both target and threaten Muslim men's continuity principle and by extension their masculine identity (sense of paternal responsibility). Jaspal and Cinnirella (2012: 520-521) argue that first-generation Muslims identify their religious-ethnic identity as "core", and express concern about their children becoming increasingly distanced from those self-aspects associated with their ethno-cultural and religious identities. Consequently, it appears that Muslim men consider their children's disconnection from their own self-aspects as a genuine threat and a deficiency in their parenting, and as such their masculinity.

Self-esteem

This study's findings revealed that Muslim men in the UK have remarkably high self-esteem associated with their own identity constructions, and mostly report contentment with their own qualities and abilities. Individuals strive to maintain high self-esteem, as feelings of personal worth and social value are significant components of identity construction (Breakwell, 1986: 34; Timotijevic & Breakwell, 2000: 355). In the Islamic tradition, the construction of masculinity involves engaging in a set of distinctive practices, resulting in both pride and responsibility (Ouzgane, 2006: 4). The phrase "honour" is frequently used by participants when

characterising themselves and Muslim men more widely; moreover, it emerged from the data as the most prominent and most desired quality. Honour refers to a Muslim man's personal worth or social value and is closely associated with self-esteem. Loss of honour or any threat to one's honour brings shame, which undermines self-image and reputation in the eyes of others, lowering self-esteem (Mosquera et al., 2002: 146). Any deficiency in maintaining family honour, such as an inability to protect one's family's reputation or allowing others to insult one's family, poses a direct threat to masculine honour and is widely regarded as bringing profound disgrace and shame. In societies where honour plays a significant role (e.g., religious or Muslim communities), honour concerns are a core component of one's identity upon which self-esteem depends (Mosquera et al., 2002: 148).

Self-efficacy

People typically believe they are capable of achieving success, and of retaining control over their own lives. The findings of the current study revealed that Muslim men in the UK are strongly motivated to retain competence and control in their lives. This drive is referred to as the self-efficacy principle in the context of IPT (Breakwell, 1993). According to Bandura's (1995: 2) definition, self-efficacy is 'the belief in one's capabilities to organise and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations'. On the other hand, negative feelings such as sadness, helplessness, anger, depression might arise when there is loss, absence of, or threat towards self-efficacy (Breakwell, 1993; Vignoles et al., 2002: 203). The essential nature of masculinity is a 'cognitive focus on getting the job done' (Bem, 1981: 18; cited in Choi, 2004: 151). The degree to which one possesses those traits is typically associated with men, and this cognitive facet of masculinity resembles self-efficacy, contributing to a cognitive evaluation of one's potential performance. The strength of the association between masculinity and self-efficacy, according to Choi (2004:155), 'is substantially greater than the relationship between femininity and self-efficacy, suggesting that masculinity is a better predictor of self-efficacy than femininity'.

Some of the primary traits of masculinity include aggression, assertiveness, competitiveness, independence, all of which are beneficial for maintaining self-efficacy (Choi, 2004: 151). Muslim men have a strong sense of self-efficacy, and this contributes to their self-construction of their masculinity, helping them to fulfil the responsibilities and expectations associate with being a Muslim man. Specifically, in an environment where they are considered foreigners or immigrants, and where understandings of masculinity deviate from their own perceptions, Muslim men require greater self-efficacy to practice their masculinity. This may

mean they integrate components of aggressiveness, assertiveness, competitiveness and independence, which are characteristics of both masculinity and self-esteem.

Distinctiveness

Everyone strives to be somewhat different from their peers at both the individual and group level. Thus, distinctiveness is considered one of the fundamental components of identity development. Overall, it emerged from the interviews that Muslim men's conceptions of their identities, both individual and group, place a high value on distinctiveness. The participants mostly emphasised and expressed their identities positively to demonstrate their distinctiveness. Specifically, their Muslimness afforded them a feeling of pride and uniqueness at the individual level and distinctiveness at the group level. In their research, Vignoles et al. (2000: 337) suggested that 'on a social level, people will act especially in ways that show their distinctiveness to others'. The research data suggests that culturally the participants manifest their distinctiveness by emphasising their Muslimness first, then their original background and then their Britishness. Adopting Prophet Muhammad as a primary role model is another important manifestation of their distinctiveness. The participants strongly emphasised and referred to the fact of being "a Muslim man", attributing to the phrase a distinct, comprehensive, authentic (or higher) meaning that includes the perfect and excellent characteristics of Prophet Muhammed as honourable, loyal, caring, responsible, trustworthy and principled. The description of themselves as "Muslim men," not just men, implies they have far greater responsibilities than the average man.

Belonging

The desire for belonging leads people to seek a sense of being part of a community receiving acceptance and approval from others. Experiencing a sense of belonging as an acknowledged member of a group is a way for individuals to preserve their general wellbeing. Belonging is defined as achieving a sense of affinity with and closeness to other people, as well as being accepted by them (Vignoles, 2011: 419). Easterbrook and Vignoles (2013) contend that to maintain optimum psychological functioning a sense of belonging is fundamental. Thus, any attack targeting a person's sense of belonging is unpleasant, and people typically react by protesting against and confronting the attack's origin. Overall, the research findings revealed that Muslim men in the UK have a strong sense of belonging. They indicated that their strong feelings of belonging are associated with their families, friends, local neighbourhoods, ethnic

groups, religious groups, and other members of British society. This strong sense of group belonging enhances their general wellbeing and affords them greater ease.

Belonging inevitably brings responsibilities, and portraying the groups to which they belong positively seems to be important for Muslim men. In particular Muslim men heighten their sense of group belonging by doing their best to accurately portray their Muslimness; i.e., their identity as Muslim men who embody virtues like honour, responsibility, and loyalty, etc. On the other hand, a Muslim man's reputation may be damaged by any apparent lack of relevant manly traits or familial responsibility, preventing them from being acknowledged as a legitimate group member (group belonging).

The findings of the current study indicate that Muslim men's conceptions and behaviours surrounding masculinity primarily centre on sense of "responsibility," and that their sense of belonging also entails responsibilities. In other words, it seems that belonging, masculinity and responsibility are interwoven in Muslim men's identities. Specifically, being a father which is a core component of masculine identity seems to require feelings of belonging to a family. According to Baumeister and Leary (1995), people appear to (or should) feel a sense of belonging in all cultures, yet the degree to which people express and satisfy this desire varies according to the individual's character and the cultural setting. In the UK context, where their identity components are frequently under pressure or endangered, Muslim men typically identify with strong feelings of belonging (to their families, friends, local neighbourhoods, religions, cultures, ethnic groups, religious groups, etc.) to a high degree. It seems their identity components (masculinity, religious, ethnic, etc.) necessitate strong feeling of belonging to uphold them in the UK context.

Meaning

One of the fundamental characteristics of human nature is the need for meaning, with people typically looking for significance or purpose in their existence and lives. Almost everyone strives for the feeling that their life is meaningful, and as a motive this search has a significant and profound influence on identity (Vignoles, 2011: 417). The "meaning" sought out varies according to cultural norms (Heine et al., 2006), and religion, as a fundamental element of many societies, is a crucial guide in the search for meaning (Baumeister, 1991). According to Baumeister (1991: 205), religion is arguably the most dependable means by which people develop a sense of the importance of their lives. The results of this study reveal that Muslim men in the UK appear to have a high sense of meaning and purpose in their life.

The participants typically expressed that they believed their lives have meaning and are characterised by coherence and purpose. They often expressed that this sense of purpose is imbued by their religious beliefs, and they appeared to view their lives, existence, and life's experiences through the lens of destiny, the "Will of God" (Allah), and a test from Allah. Notably, several of the participants explained that Allah is testing them through their responsibilities, challenges, struggles and difficulties in the UK and that they face these issues for a cause. For Muslim men, the responsibilities and expectations of traditional masculinity are also highly significant, and are also typically viewed as associated with destiny and God's will (Allah). Moreover, the participants assigned a high value in terms of meaning to being "a Muslim man" as opposed to merely a (normal) man, suggesting they adopt significantly more responsibilities and a greater sense of honour as Muslim men.

Psychological Coherence

The desire for compatibility and coherence across pre-existing identities is described as psychological coherence, and is another crucial motivational identity principle (Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2010: 865). People's identities may include a variety of distinct identity related components, but it is crucial for general psychological wellness that these are harmonious and coherent. People may resist threats that create inconsistent behaviour to preserve the coherence of their numerous identities. For Muslim males, the diverse understandings and loyalties connected to their identities may create psychological conflict, in the manner suggested by Verkuyten's (2005: 179).

As discussed in this thesis, the different generations of Muslim men interviewed seem to have developed unique understandings of what it means to be British. For example, some first-generation Muslim men appear to be more cautious about identifying their identity as British, and appear concerned about their children's (over) self-identification as British. Due to the fact that the understanding and practices of masculinity differ in British and Muslim cultures, Britishness creates some inconsistencies with Muslim men's masculine identities, threatening their psychological coherence. The participants' accounts clearly revealed that Muslim men believe their understandings and practices of masculinity differ from those of British men (see the section "how Muslim men see British men"). On the other hand, although some first-generation Muslim men appear to be more cautious about identifying as British, other Muslim men (specifically second and third generation Muslim men) usually identify themselves as British. However, when Muslim men identify themselves as British, they do not necessarily mean a holistic or collective version of Britishness including its all dimensions. Rather they

seem to usually be referring to specific version of Britishness that embraces components that correlate with Muslim men's own characteristics, and exclude those that are incompatible. This enables them to develop a way of navigating the potential for inconsistency between their Britishness and Muslim masculinities that would otherwise threaten their psychological coherence principle of identity. As Jaspal and Cinnirella (2010: 866) frequently emphasise, 'psychological coherence is in the eye of the perceiver and not some objective quality of the identities under scrutiny'; and in order to achieve psychological coherence, people may cease perceiving conflict or incompatibility between their inter-connected identities' (Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2012: 519).

6.3.3. Critical Reflection on the Theories

In this research, a combination of Intersectionality, Identity Process Theory (IPT), and Masculinities Theory has been employed to provide a nuanced understanding of the challenges faced by Muslim men in the UK. These three theories share a common ground in recognizing the multidimensional nature of identity. Intersectionality enabled the analysis of the interconnections between different social categories, such as race, religion, and gender. IPT, however, explored the socio-psychological processes that individuals experience when forming and negotiating their identity. Masculinities Theory provided an additional dimension by specifically examining the gendered components of identity. Together, they established a comprehensive structure that encompasses the complex and interconnected character of the experiences of Muslim males in the UK. This combination provided an effective framework that not only identifies external factors that influence their experiences, but also reveals the internal processes related to their identity.

The choice of these theories was purposeful. The recognition of intersectionality was essential in identifying the multifaceted nature of the Muslim population in the UK, as it highlighted the need to avoid oversimplifying their experiences through a monolithic approach. The use IPT enabled me to examine the ways in which Muslim males shape and navigate their identities in response to different challenges and identity threats. The use of Masculinities Theory was crucial in comprehending the gendered aspects of these identity issues. Masculinities Theory helped me to explore the gendered expectations placed on Muslim men, while intersectionality ensured a holistic understanding by considering how factors like ethnicity and religious identity intersect with these gendered expectations. IPT complemented this by providing insights into the internal processes individuals engage in when navigating these multifaceted identity challenges.

On the other hand, IPT argues that the dimensions of the self are understood to constitute a dynamic social product that resides in psychological processes (Breakwell, 1986). According to IPT, 'the structure of identity is a dynamic social product of the interaction of the capacities for memory, consciousness and organised construal (that are characteristic of the biological organism) with the physical and societal structures and influence processes which constitute the social context' (Timotijevic & Breakwell, 2000: 355). IPT posits that 'identity—which encompasses both personal and social aspects— is the dynamic outcome of cognitive processes occurring over time within particular (and changing) social, cultural, and historical contexts' (Vignoles, 2011: 410). Therefore, IPT emphasises the comprehension of identity through internal cognitive processes rather than focusing on the relational and social aspects of individuals' lives. On the other hand, identity is commonly acknowledged as a social construction, shaped by several elements such as cultural, social, and historical settings. According to Connell (2005: 71), masculinity can be comprehended by analysing the processes and relationships according to which men and women live gendered lives. The present study's findings demonstrate that the dynamics and relationships between Muslim males, and women and other men (both within and beyond their social groups) significantly influence the lives, experiences, and formation of identity among Muslim men. From this perspective, it might be argued that IPT potentially underplays the importance of the social and relational aspects of Muslim men's lives, as well as the structural and systemic variables that influence them. IPT tends to focus on internal cognitive processes, neglecting the influence of external factors such as societal structures, institutional discrimination, and systemic inequalities. External factors can have a profound impact on identity formation, as the research findings of this current study revealed, but they are not fully addressed in the theory. However, the combination of the three theories (Intersectionality, Identity Process Theory (IPT), and Masculinities Theory) provided me with the means to mitigate the limitations of IPT, as discussed above.

6.4. Research Contributions

This qualitative research represents substantial academic contributions. First, this study investigated the challenges faced by Muslim men from the perspective of IPT and how challenges such as racism, discrimination, and Islamophobia influence their motivational identity principles. Examining Muslim men from a socio-psychological perspective was shown to improve our understanding of their lives, challenges, and psychological well-being. This could prove helpful for achieving deeper comprehension of the nature of their beliefs, understandings, identity constructions, motivations, behaviours, reactions, and so on. The motivational identity principles (continuity, self-esteem, self-efficacy, distinctiveness,

belonging, meaning, and psychological coherence) proved to be beneficial tools when examining the socio-psychological nature of the challenges Muslim men encounter and how they respond to the identity threats in the UK.

Secondly, this research addressed Muslim masculinities in depth from the socio-psychological perspective of IPT, which is one of this research's most original scholarly contributions. Motivational identity principles have enormous potential to address the socio-psychological nature of Muslim masculinities, and play a pivotal role in the construction, perception, and practises of Muslim masculinities in the UK.

Thirdly, the research employed a qualitative phenomenological approach to examine the feelings, emotions, and perceptions of Muslim men in relation to their lived experiences. In academia, studies focusing on the lived experiences of Muslim men are relatively rare, so this thesis provides novel insights into how Muslim men perceive, present, and express their lives, challenges, and experiences from their own perspectives. Moreover, adopting semi-structured in-depth interviews to collect data, as opposed to quantitative methods, enabled me to obtain richer, more detailed, and more valuable information to address prior gaps in the literature regarding the perceptions and experiences of Muslim men in the UK.

Furthermore, this study provides empirical knowledge of Muslim males from three distinct backgrounds, namely Pakistani, Algerian, and Somali, detailing their distinctive characteristics, lived experiences, identity constructions and their relationships with in-group and out-group members in the UK. The selection of communities in the present study has the potential to enhance our understanding of three distinct groups: Pakistanis, who have a significant and well-established presence in the UK due to their historical ties with British colonialism; Somalis, who are social subject to stigmatisation and characterised by a lower socioeconomic status; and Algerians, whose visibility and recognition within the UK remain relatively limited, due to their lack of association with British colonial history.

Finally, this research also represents a novel contribution to Islamophobia studies. The socio-psychological nature and consequences of racism, discrimination, and Islamophobia necessitate in-depth examination to fully appreciate their impact on the lives and challenges negotiated by Muslims, and this study contributes significantly to filling this academic gap. There are however, of course, some limitations to this research.

6.5. Research Limitations and Recommendations for Future Researchers and Policymakers

Aside from the limitations in the data collection process (as discussed in methodology chapter), there were several other limitations that affected the research overall. When conducting this study, the lack of socio-psychological literature on Muslim masculinities proved to be the greatest limitation. Although there is a substantial body of literature on Muslim minorities and Islamophobia, socio-psychological literature on Muslim masculinities proved minimal. However, this enabled me to embark on an exploration of a relatively understudied field. From a socio-psychological perspective, more research should be conducted on Muslim masculinities and the associated challenges; this study represents an attempt to advocate for more research on Muslim masculinities. In the research, only three groups of Muslim men residing in London and Birmingham were chosen for reasons of convenience; however, a more diverse group of Muslim men living in different locations in the UK could provide an opportunity to hear from more diverse voices to access more varied life experiences. This research also examined the masculinity identities of Muslim males exclusively. Undoubtedly, IPT could also provide a deeper understanding of the difficulties faced by Muslim women. Further research could examine the challenges faced by Muslim women through the lens of IPT, or IPT could be employed to explore the challenges faced by Muslims of all genders as a means of comparing the gender variable. Applying IPT and masculinity when conducting research on Muslims in other countries could also prove advantageous, as might cross country comparative studies. Furthermore, Brexit, Covid-19, and recent global economic developments, such as high inflation rates and a massive increase in housing and rental prices, have posed additional challenges for everyone, and we have yet to understand what their effects on Muslim communities in the UK will be. Additional research could investigate how these new challenges are impacting Muslim males in the UK to further our understanding.

The findings of the current research could be used to assist policymakers in the UK when considering the public debates on immigration, integration, multiculturalism, racism, discrimination, and Islamophobia which are all pertinent and contentious topics. Policymakers should first understand the multifaceted nature of the Muslim community, encompassing factors such as race, nationality, social class, and particularly gender. Policymakers may specifically find the research findings useful for gaining a deeper understanding of Muslim males and Muslim masculinities in the UK. The research findings revealed that Muslim masculinities in the UK differ and that various factors, in particular religion, play significant

roles in the construction and practices of Muslim masculinities. Therefore, in the debates related to Muslim men, policymakers should first recognise the role of religion in the construction and practices of Muslim masculinities and should consider Muslim men's religious sensitivity when addressing certain issues. The research findings demonstrated that some Muslim males show a hesitancy in reporting instances of racist or Islamophobic attacks, often concealing these incidents and refraining from receiving support from relevant organisations. The primary motivation for their concealment of such incidents and avoidance of seeking support seems to mostly stem from their adherence to traditional masculine norms, as they are unwilling to display weakness or failure in their masculine identities. In this regard, it could be suggested that policymakers should develop strategies that encourage Muslim men to report instances of racist or Islamophobic attacks and seek relevant support, which may also serve to address the actual level of hate crimes in wider society.

Secondly, any analysis of the relationship between Muslim masculinities and the motivational identity principles (continuity, self-esteem, self-efficacy, distinctiveness, belonging, meaning, and psychological coherence) of IPT could afford for policymakers deeper and more comprehensive insights into the issues or problems of Muslim men in the UK. This would allow policymakers to understand the socio-psychological factors that inform their behaviours, attitudes, reactions, and responses more fully. Policymakers should consider that not only external factors influence Muslim men's experiences, but also the internal processes related to their identities play a significant role in their lives. For instance, the immigration process itself frequently threatens the continuity identity principles of first-generation Muslim men, which may make them feel isolated. This also creates a tough barrier for their integration into British society. Therefore, policymakers should consider the significant impact of the continuity identity principle on first-generation Muslim males. By doing so, policymakers may more precisely address first-generation Muslim men's challenges and establish more comprehensive policies for Muslim men who are new immigrants. In addition, the use of IPT might provide policymakers with a more profound and thorough understanding of Muslim school children. Research findings indicated that their self-esteem and self-efficacy identity principles are predominantly at risk throughout their school years due to their intersected identities, potentially causing long-term harm to their overall well-being. Policymakers and school administrators should implement measures that mitigate this threat.

Finally, this study revealed that some of the second and third generation Muslim males residing in the UK have intentions to leave the country and relocate to Middle Eastern countries, specifically Qatar and the United Arab Emirates. Their motivations for these plans

mostly revolve around economic factors, identity issues, racism and Islamophobia. This finding should ideally be conveyed to public services and professionals in health, social care, and social work domains, as well as local authorities and policymakers, as the study revealed that a considerable number of young Muslims in the UK are disadvantaged in many ways and consequently feel they do not fully belong to society. Their intentions to leave could also be understood as a warning to policymakers concerning the inefficiency of existing integration policies. The inclination of certain Muslim males of the second and third generations to depart from the country may be interpreted as a feedback mechanism regarding the effectiveness of current integration policies. This data can be used by policymakers to re-evaluate the consequences of existing policies and determine domains that require enhancement. It is critical for the iterative development of integration strategies that this feedback loop exists.

The recognition of financial considerations as motivations for intentions to migrate to Middle Eastern nations underscores the economic inequalities within the Muslim population. Policymakers may use this data to design targeted initiatives aimed at improving economic disparities experienced by young Muslim males, thereby diminishing their perception of disadvantage, and enhancing their social integration. The research highlights the influence of racism and Islamophobia on the motivations of certain young Muslims to emigrate from the UK. Policymakers may utilise this insight in developing measures aimed at combating racism and Islamophobia, both in wider society and within public services. Education, awareness campaigns, and regulations supporting inclusiveness might contribute to building a more tolerant and welcoming environment in the UK. The research outcomes, specifically those pertaining to the obstacles encountered by young Muslims and their intentions to leave, should be disseminated to social workers, health professionals, public services, and healthcare practitioners. Such information may be used to guide the creation of support programmes that are tailored to the particular requirements of this demographic. Such programmes may comprise mental health services, career counselling, and community engagement initiatives. Moreover, policymakers might use the insights provided by the Identity Process Theory (IPT) to develop policies that promote a stronger sense of belonging among Muslim males to British society. In summary, the research has the capacity to impact policy by offering a detailed and multifaceted understanding of the challenges experienced by Muslim males in the UK. Policymakers might employ this data to develop targeted and effective policies that foster social cohesion and financial opportunities in the UK. The results can enhance the ongoing discussion on immigration and integration policy, promoting a more comprehensive and responsive approach.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Ethical Approval

College of Health and Life Sciences Research Ethics Committee (DCS)
Brunel University London
Kingston Lane
Uxbridge
UB8 3PH
United Kingdom

www.brunel.ac.uk

27 November 2019

LETTER OF APPROVAL

APPROVAL HAS BEEN GRANTED FOR THIS STUDY TO BE CARRIED OUT BETWEEN 02/12/2019AND 20/08/2021 20/08/2021 20/08/2021 20/08/2021

Applicant (s): Mr Durali Karacan

Project Title: Muslim Men in the UK

Reference: 17735-MHR-Nov/2019- 21330-4

Dear Mr Durali Karacan

The Research Ethics Committee has considered the above application recently submitted by you.

The Chair, acting under delegated authority has agreed that there is no objection on ethical grounds to the proposed study. Approval is given on the understanding that the conditions of approval set out below are followed:

- Please state on your advert that the study has been approved by the College of Health and Life Sciences Research Ethics Committee and both the date of approval and the expiry date (your end date).
- The agreed protocol must be followed. Any changes to the protocol will require prior approval from the Committee by way of an application for an amendment.

Please note that:

- Research Participant Information Sheets and (where relevant) flyers, posters, and consent forms should include a clear statement that research ethics approval has been obtained from the relevant Research Ethics Committee.
- The Research Participant Information Sheets should include a clear statement that queries should be directed, in the first instance, to the Supervisor (where relevant), or the researcher. Complaints, on the other hand, should be directed, in the first instance, to the Chair of the relevant Research Ethics Committee.
- Approval to proceed with the study is granted subject to receipt by the Committee of satisfactory responses to any conditions that may appear above, in addition to any subsequent changes to the protocol.
- The Research Ethics Committee reserves the right to sample and review documentation, including raw data, relevant to the study.
- You may not undertake any research activity if you are not a registered student of Brunel University or if you cease to become registered, including abeyance or temporary withdrawal. As a deregistered student you would not be insured to undertake research activity. Research activity includes the recruitment of participants, undertaking consent procedures and collection of data. Breach of this requirement constitutes research misconduct and is a disciplinary offence.

Professor Christina Victor

Chair of the College of Health and Life Sciences Research Ethics Committee (DCS)

Brunel University London

Appendix 2: Participant Information Sheet

College of Health and Life Sciences
Department of Clinical Sciences
Division of Social Work

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Study title
An Exploration of the Challenges of Muslim Men Living in the UK in the Age of Islamophobia

Invitation Paragraph
You are invited to take part in a study. Fully understanding the purpose of the research and its scope is very important and before you decide whether or not you wish to participate in this research, please take time to read the following information thoroughly and discuss it with others if necessary. Participation in this study is voluntary, so take your time to decide whether you would like to take part. If you would like more information or if anything is unclear, please do not hesitate to contact me.
Thank you for reading this.

What is the purpose of the study?
The purpose of this study is to investigate the experiences, thoughts, feelings and understandings of Muslim men in the UK currently; and to explore challenges arising from their Muslim male identities.

Why have I been invited to participate?
You have been invited to participate in this study as you are a Muslim man over 18 years old living in the UK. I hope to involve about 20 more Muslim men in the study, so you will be within this group.

Do I have to take part?
As participation is entirely voluntary, it is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part, you are still free to withdraw your data from the study at any time, without giving a reason, until the point at which your data is anonymised for starting the writing-up process of my dissertation. After this point, it will no longer be possible to identify your data. If you want to withdraw your data from the study before the anonymization and writing up process, all data obtained from you will be destroyed/shredded.

What will happen to me if I take part?
If you decide to participate, you will be invited to take part in an interview where we discuss the issues mentioned above. The interview will probably last between 1 hour to 1 ½ hours depending

on your availability and how much information you would like to share. The interview will be recorded and transcribed, and your identity will be protected.

What do I have to do?
The study will require you to openly and truthfully discuss what it means to you to be a Muslim man living in contemporary Britain. You can share your experiences, understandings, feelings, reactions and thoughts on these issues and anything else that you think is relevant.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?
Possible risks of participating include potential strong and negative emotions when recalling certain experiences or discussing certain issues. To minimise this, this participant information sheet has been produced to inform participants of the nature of the questions that will be asked during the interviews. You can withdraw, without giving any reason, at any time and you do not have to answer questions you are not comfortable with. Besides, you may have worries about interview places. To minimise this, you can offer a place for interview or you can ask for extra time to familiarise with the researcher and environment, and you can inform a trusted person before the interview, as to where and when the interview is going to take place and let them know once the interview is over safely.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?
By participating in this research, you could help the understanding of the challenges of Muslim men living in the UK. Some research participants enjoy sharing their experiences and I hope you will.

What if something goes wrong?
If you are not happy with the conduct of this study, you can complain to Professor Christina Victor, Chair of the College of Health and Life Sciences Research Ethics Committee (see below).

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?
Any information which is collected about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential. Any information about you which leaves the University, will have your name, address or any identificatory details removed so that you cannot be identified from it. Your participation in this study will not be discussed with other interviewees. Your name will be changed in the write up and I will ensure that your involvement remains entirely confidential and anonymous. However, I could breach confidentiality if you disclosed any issue that is a risk to you or to someone else (e.g. any risk for your health, safety or wellbeing), and I let you know of my concerns by pausing the interview and if necessary, I could discuss the issue with my supervisor or relevant authorities.

What will happen to the results of the research study?
The research data will be coded (for anonymity) and analysed by the researcher before being reported. The results will be used primarily for my PhD thesis and may be reported at a conference or in a scientific journal or published as a book. The anonymised research data may also be shared with other researchers for further analysis, but at no point will any identifiable data be shared. The data will be stored by myself for ten years from completion of the project (subject to any legal, ethical or other requirements of the funding body). If you take part in this research, I

will offer you a short summary of the overall findings sent by email or paper afterwards if you wish. The results may be reported at a conference or in a scientific journal or published as a book. In that case, I will let you know.

Who is organising and funding the research?
This is not funded research but is conducted for my (Durali Karacan's) PhD in the Department of Clinical Sciences, College of Health and Life Sciences, Brunel University London.

What are the indemnity arrangements?
Brunel University London holds insurance policies which apply to this study. If you can demonstrate that you experienced harm as a result of your participation in this study, you may be able to claim compensation. Please contact Prof Peter Hobson, the Chair of the University Research Ethics committee (Peter.hobson@brunel.ac.uk) if you would like further information about the insurance arrangements which apply to this study.

Who has reviewed the study?
This study has been reviewed and approved by the College of Health and Life Sciences Research Ethics Committee.

Passage on the University's commitment to the UK Concordat on Research Integrity
Brunel University is committed to compliance with the Universities UK Research Integrity Concordat. You are entitled to expect the highest level of integrity from our researchers during the course of their research.

Contact for further information and complaints
For general information
Durali Karacan
Division of Social Work,
Department of Clinical Sciences,
College of Health and Life Sciences,
Brunel University London.
E-mail: durali.karacan@brunel.ac.uk

Supervisor's name: Dr Yohai Hakak
Supervisor E-mail: yohai.hakak@brunel.ac.uk
Supervisor Tel: +44 (0)1895 265844

For complaints and questions about the conduct of the Research
Professor Christina Victor, Chair College of Health and Life Sciences Research Ethics Committee Christina.victor@brunel.ac.uk

Thank you for reading this sheet and considering participating in the study.

Appendix 3: Consent Form

College of Health and Life Sciences
Department of Clinical Sciences
Division of Social Work

CONSENT FORM

An Exploration of the Challenges of Muslim Men Living in the UK in the Age of Islamophobia

The participant should complete the whole of this sheet		
	Please tick the appropriate box	
	YES	NO
Have you read the Research Participant Information Sheet?		
Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study?		
Have you received satisfactory answers to all your questions?		
Who have you spoken to?		
Do you understand that you will not be referred to by name in any report concerning the study?		
Do you understand that you are free to withdraw from the study at any time:		
• until the point at which your data is anonymised for starting the writing-up process of the dissertation?		
• without having to give a reason for withdrawing?		
I agree to my interview being recorded.		
I agree to the use of non-attributable direct quotes when the study is written up or published.		
Do you agree to take part in this study?		
Signature of Research Participant:		
Date:		
Name in capitals:		

Researcher name:	Signature:

Appendix 4: Debrief Form

College of Health and Life Sciences
Department of Clinical Sciences
Division of Social Work
Student: Durali Karacan / 1838449

Debrief Form

I would like to take this opportunity to say **Thank You** for taking the time to take part in an interview. Please be assured, all data collected will be treated in the strictest confidence. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time by contacting Durali Karacan durali.karacan@brunel.ac.uk or his supervisor Dr Yohai Hakak yohai.hakak@brunel.ac.uk without having to give a reason for withdrawing until the point at which your data is anonymised for starting the writing-up process of the dissertation.

The completed research will help the exploration and understanding of the challenges of Muslim men living in the UK. You have been invited to participate in this study as you fulfil our criteria of being a Muslim man living in the UK.

If you were unduly or unexpectedly affected by taking part in the study, please feel free to feed it back to the researcher. If you feel unable for whatever reason what-so-ever to talk with the researcher then please either contact his supervisor Dr Yohai Hakak yohai.hakak@brunel.ac.uk or Professor Christina Victor, Chair College of Health and Life Sciences Research Ethics Committee, Christina.victor@brunel.ac.uk 01895 268730.

The following support services may be of interest to you:

Tell MAMA (Measuring Anti-Muslim Attacks)
T: 0800 456 1226 WhatsApp: 0734 184 6086 E-mail: info@tellmamauk.org

Samaritans of Central London
46 Marshall Street London W1F 9BF T: 116 123 free from any phone

Victim Support
T: 0808 168 9111 https://www.victimsupport.org.uk

Stop Hate UK
T: 0800 138 625. https://www.stophateuk.org

Appendix 5: Interview Schedule/Questions

College of Health and Life Sciences
Department of Clinical Sciences
Division of Social Work

Interview Schedule/Questions

How long have you been living in the UK?

Can you tell me a little bit about yourself? (Education, family background, profession, religious life, …)
How could you describe yourself as a person? Who is ….? What sort of person are you?
Most important characteristics: happy, moody, nervy.
Were you born in the UK or you moved? How did you feel when you moved?
How much do you feel you belong to British society?
How is your family relationship?
How was/is your relationship with your father, brothers and children?
Have you ever had a role model for your identity? Please explain.
Can you tell me about your childhood and early life? When and how did you realise that you are a Muslim?

How could you identify yourself? As a Muslim? British?
How is your relationship with your friends, family, colleagues? Do you like to express your opinions publicly, regardless of what others say?
How important is family, tradition, and culture for you?

What kind of responsibilities do you have as a man in your life?
What do you think about famous Muslim men in the UK? How do you think they represent Islam?
What do you think your other Muslim men fellow? (In general and the same nationality)

Have you had any famous role model in the UK? Would you like your children take them as role model?
What do you think about raising children in the UK? What kind of worries do you have? How do you see their future lives?
What kind of problems, challenges and worries do Muslim men have in the UK? (Job, social life, family, education, religion, …)

What does the beard mean to you? (as a religious or masculine identity)
Have you ever had beard? / How long have you had your beard?

Are you familiar with the terms of 'hate crime' and 'Islamophobia'? How would you describe them?
Do you feel / *Have you ever felt* threatened for your own (or your family's) safety in terms of hate crimes or Islamophobia?
How do you think Islamophobia affects Muslims' lives and identities in the UK? How about your life?
Have you ever had any problem about your religious identity? (If you experienced any verbal or physical Islamophobic attack) Can you give me more details? (such as how were you affected / How did you feel during and after these incidents? How did you feel during and after these incidents in terms of your masculine identity? How were your family and your social environment affected? Did you have a chance to take a break to overcome the negative effects of the attack? Have you ever hidden or considered to hide the incident that you experienced from your family and your social environment? Why? Have you reported any of these incidents to the police? If not, why? If yes, how did the police treat your case?).

Would you like add anything more?

Appendix 6: Recruitment of Research Participants

College of Health and Life Sciences
Department of Clinical Sciences
Division of Social Work

Recruitment of Research Participants

An Exploration of the Challenges of Muslim Men in the UK in the Age of Islamophobia

My name is Durali Karacan. I am conducting research as a part of PhD program under the supervision of Dr Yohai Hakak at Brunel University London. My research aims to explore the challenges of Muslim men living in the UK. Their challenges, thoughts, experiences, troubles and struggles will be explored in a psycho-social perspective.

I am seeking 21 Muslim men over 18 years old living in London. All participants must be willing to be interviewed for approximately 1 hour. The interviews will be recorded and transcribed.

If you are interested in participating, please contact me via e-mail durali.karacan@brunel.ac.uk. Time and place for interview will be arranged.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary, and you may withdraw at any stage or avoid answering questions you feel uncomfortable. No findings which could identify any individual participant will be published, and your privacy will be protected at all stages of the research. If you choose to participate, you will be provided the Participation Information Sheet which contains all information you need to know.

This study has been reviewed and approved by the College of Health and Life Sciences Research Ethics Committee on 27th November 2019. The approval has been granted for this study to be carried out between 02/12/2019 and 20/08/2021.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require further information.