



DProf thesis

**The experiences of the young practicing British Iranian Athna-
asheri Shia Muslims in London**

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**Middlesex
University
London**

**The experiences of the young practicing British Iranian Athna-asheri Shia Muslims
in London**

Khosrow Tajbakhsh

**A research project report submitted to Middlesex University in partial fulfillment of
the
Requirements for the degree of Doctorate in Professional Studies**

September 2022

Acknowledgment

To respect and observe an Islamic recommendation and a cultural habit, we Muslims have been taught to begin everything in the name of Allah, the Highest.

So, I start this acknowledgment in the name of Allah and thank Him for creating me in the form of a human being who can think, learn, and try to make life better for myself, my family, and others during my lifetime. I also thank and praise Him for giving me the ability and opportunity to accomplish this small contribution with all its shortcomings in the field of Islamic Studies.

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I wish a better and more peaceful life for all the people of the world.

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Glossary and abbreviations:

YPBIs	Young Practicing British Iranians Athna-ashari Shai Muslims
RPR	Research Project Report
BIC	British-Iranian Community
BS	The British Society
Athna-ashari Shia Muslims	Twelver Shia Muslims
Ebadaat	Compulsory Islamic duties
Imam	Islamic leader confirmed by the people
Dprof	Doctorate in Professional fields
ICEL	Islamic Centre of England, London
ICAS	Islamic College of Advanced Studies
Mazhab	Islamic sect (Sunni mazhab or Shia mazhab)
Mullah	Islamic clergyman
Ayatollah	High-ranking mullah
Safavid	Persian dynasty ruled Iran for over 250 years
Taqieh	Keeping one's identity and beliefs hidden from others
Ismailis, Zaidies, Suffies	Major Shia Islam, sub-sects
Muslim Ummah	All Muslim groups of people, regardless of nationality
Khojah Muslims	A group of Shia Twelvers from Indian-Asian descendants
Mo'omen	A pious and practicing Shia Muslim
Salat	Daily prayers
Swam	Fasting in the month of Ramathan
Ramathan (Ramazan)	Fasting month in Islamic calendar
Khums	Paying Islamic tax
Zakat	Islamic charity donation
Hajj	Pilgrim to Makkah
Jihad	War against Islam's enemies
Amr-bil-maruf	Advising people to do good deeds
Nahy-amil-monkar	Advising people not to do wrongdoings
Tawalla	Befriending with decent people
Tabarra	Keeping afar from wrong-doers

Abstract:

The Young Practicing British Iranians or YPBIs which is the focus of this work-based research are members of the British-Iranian community with deep religious practical adherence and a tendency toward Shia Islam. The purpose of this study is to shed more light on the characteristics of this group and find out about their religious, social, and cultural needs and expectations from the Islamic organizations and other relevant authorities based in London.

To achieve this goal I gathered data and information from the target group about their experiences in the process of their daily activities within the in-group communication with the Iranian community as well as their intercultural communication with the rest of the members of the British society. In this study, I discuss social and cultural issues faced by this group such as diasporic and religious matters, as well as identity problems arising from their adaptation and integration in London. The results and findings of this study, are presented in the form of recommendations and suggestions, which can be used by relevant and responsible Iranian and British organizations based in London to update and adjust their services.

Overall, it can be concluded that YPBIs are a group of enthusiastic individuals who are well-adapted to the multicultural British society, observing and respecting domestic laws and norms, while also preserving their own ethnic, cultural, and religious values. They have a positive tendency towards socialization and communication with the wider population, as long as their cultural and particularly religious beliefs are respected and protected. In terms of methodology, I mainly used a combination of different research approaches such as direct observation, and data collection by applying qualitative questionnaires and conducting semi-structured interviews (mixed method) within the framework of ethnography.

Introduction

Iran, as one of the oldest civilizations in the world and a significant country in the Middle East, has had commercial, political, cultural, and scientific links with the United Kingdom throughout history (Gholami, R. & Seberny, A, 2015). Although full political and commercial ties do not currently exist between the two governments due to political disputes and differences (BBC, 2011), British-Iranians who have migrated to the UK at different points in time are still very active and engaged in various aspects of social and cultural life in Britain. Members of this community, like other ethnic communities living within the UK's multicultural setting, are somewhat diverse in terms of culture, politics, and ideology despite many commonalities.

My work-based research on the "British Iranian youth" is a continuation of my earlier study on the British Athna-asheri Shia Muslims (BASMs) which I will discuss in more detail in chapter 2, section 5 of this document. The title of the current research study is *the experiences of the young practicing British-Iranian Athna-asheri Shia Muslims (YPBIs) in London*. As this study is a work-based research, there is a link between my research and my professional career. Throughout this study, I have tried to bridge the gap between my research and my daily work and observation to propose relevant suggestions and recommendations for involved organizations and end-users, and to offer potential strategic and organizational change to provide better service for the Young Practicing British Iranians (YPBIs) and British-Iranian Community (BIC).

In this chapter, I have introduced and explained the research subject and other informative matters related to it. I have tried to elaborate and explain the meaning and the attributes of each component of the title or the subject matter. I have then highlighted and expanded in more detail the research question, the purpose and aim(s) of the research, followed by reasoning and justification. I have also discussed the objectives and the ways that I planned to achieve my goal(s). It should be remembered that although detailed and in-depth explanations and discussions have been given in each successive chapter, I found it helpful and explanatory to give a brief elaboration about the significant subjects here in the introduction.

In chapter 2, terms of reference aims, and objectives have been explained and elaborated. In the literature review section, I focus on key issues such as migration, ethnic minorities, diaspora, transnationalism, traveling religion, intercultural communication,

multicultural setting, and other related subjects. In addition, in chapter 2, I have expanded on a few points about British Shia Muslims in the UK, the British-Iranian Community, as well as the situation of the YPBIs in London.

Chapter 3 is dedicated to the research methodology and related subjects such as the research question, research paradigm, methodologies used in work-based research, research design, my role as an inside researcher, research sampling, data collection techniques, quality questionnaires, and finally semi-structured interviews. All background information and different subjects and literature have been critically discussed and elaborated on in this chapter.

In chapter 4, I explain and discuss the practical aspects of the research tools and ethical issues related to my research study which I decided and finalised to apply during the different phases of my intended work-based research such as designing the qualitative questionnaire, laying out the semi interview questions, distinguishing my target group and those who I want to interview with, finalising the qualitative questionnaire concerning the various aspects of the research question and all other required steps and measures to be done to achieve the goals and objectives of the research.

In chapter 5, I present the results and findings of the study with issues related to data gathering and analysis and explain how I used the Thematic Analysis technique to analyse the data gathered information from the sample group. In this part of my document which is the bulkiest chapter compared to the other chapters of the study, I have explained and discussed in full the gathered data and information mainly through the completed qualitative questionnaires (Google Forms) and semi-structured interviews.

Finally, in chapter 6, I discuss and highlight the conclusion, recommendations, and suggestions points based on the results and findings discussed and analysed in chapter five for the attention of different stakeholders such as the Iranian and non-Iranian authorities who are involved in social and cultural affairs of the British Iranian community and particularly the Young Practicing British Iranian (YPBIs).

In terms of my background, as one of the members of the British-Iranian community, I migrated to the UK nearly twenty years ago for personal reasons. To adapt to the new living situation, I had to adapt socially and culturally. For me, this was a form of experiencing *intercultural communication in action*, which I discuss in more detail in the literature review in chapter 2 as one of the key concepts of this research. I have tried to keep my connections and relations with my fellow Iranians here in the UK and Iran, and as a result, there is a strong diasporic element involved in my current situation. I have engaged with the existing literature on the subject of diaspora and Iranian diaspora in different parts of the current

document. In the meantime, I have tried to adapt to the host nation's cultural and social characteristics by interacting with my British neighbours, local authorities, and British institutions as well as civil society as a whole.

I started working at the Islamic Centre of England (ICEL) around the year 2000, which had been established a few years earlier. As an Iranian and Shia Muslim living in London for a long time, with an educational background in anthropology, and having direct contact with the British Shia Community, including British-Iranians at ICEL, I was always eager to continue my studies in related subjects such as investigating issues of cultural integration of British Iranians with the rest of British society.

During the early years of my cooperation with the Islamic Centre, I was encouraged and supported by one of the center's directors to continue my studies in the field of Islamic Studies at the Islamic College of Advanced Studies (ICAS). The main reason for restarting and continuing my unfinished studies was that my academic career in Iran, where I intended to complete a doctorate in anthropology, was interrupted due to the Islamisation and reorganisation of the entire educational and academic system in Iran (termed as cultural revolution), after the Islamic Revolution of Iran in 1979. In 2002/2003, I started my educational program at ICAS within a joint doctoral research academic program agreed upon between the University of Shahid Beheshti in Tehran and ICAS. Unfortunately, after two years, this joint educational program was terminated for unexpected reasons. Later, I was able to continue my studies as independent research under the auspices of ICAS and the supervision of S.R.Ameli (Ameli, 2004). Finally, the study was completed and finalized in 2012, but due to some organizational and legal problems, it was not honoured with a doctoral degree. The subject of my research was the *"Intercultural relation of British Shia Muslims with British society,"* which has been briefly discussed and explained in other parts of this report.

My involvement with the British-Iranian community was formed in two main ways.

Firstly, through my job as a receptionist and public relations officer at ICEL, and secondly, through my involvement with my research and educational program at the Islamic College and later at Middlesex University. As a public relations officer, I was in nearly constant contact with a segment of religious British Iranians who were attending different religious and cultural events held at the Islamic Centre. I became aware of some identity and cultural issues that some of the young boys and girls were facing. Later, I noticed that my other colleagues at the Centre had also noticed this issue and that there was a need for more research and investigation into the range of issues that YPBIs potentially faced.

This matter was raised in one of the staff meetings with the presence of the director of the Centre, and it was agreed that such a problem existed and that it would be helpful for the Centre and the teachers, religious leaders (Imams), social workers, and other staff involved to help and guide those in the British-Iranian Community who might have this problem. I suggested that I could conduct research and investigation into this matter, given my previous experience researching British Athna-ashari Shia Muslims (BASMs) and within the framework of my Doctoral program which I started in 2014 as part of the joint academic program between ICAS and Middlesex University. Following this decision, and with the acceptance of the Centre and my colleagues' cooperation in such a project, I began my research task.

In summary, this research aimed to study the characteristics, social and cultural needs, and expectations of young, pious and practicing British-Iranian Shia Muslims living in London, to provide recommendations and suggestions to relevant organizations for potential strategic and organizational change. Through the implementation of various research methods and tools within the ethnography framework such as implementing qualitative questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews, the study aimed to understand the experiences of this group in the process of intercultural communication with British society and find out how their needs and expectations can be addressed.

The research found that YPBIs are a group of devoted and educated individuals who are well-adapted to the multicultural British society, while still preserving their own ethnic, cultural, and religious values. Overall, this research concludes that YPBIs have a positive tendency towards socialization and communication with the wider population, as long as their cultural and religious beliefs are respected and upheld.

The main objective of this work-based research project is to examine the characteristics and social and cultural needs and expectations of Young Practicing British-Iranian (YPBI) individuals concerning Iranian Islamic organisations based in London and relevant British authorities. This research, which is being conducted within the framework of a DProf project at Middlesex University, aims to provide recommendations and suggestions for stakeholders and responsible organizations for potential strategic and organizational change. To achieve this objective, key issues such as YPBIs' experiences with intercultural communication and integration within British society, as well as their preferred identities, will be explored and analysed.

The research question guiding this study is: How can the potential social and cultural needs and expectations of YPBIs be addressed through an examination of their experiences in the process of intercultural communication with British society, and how can

these needs and expectations be communicated to relevant Iranian and British authorities for further policy actions?

This Research Project Report reflects the author's personal experience and involvement with the Iranian community and YPBIs in London, as well as the results and findings of the work-based research conducted. It should be noted that the scope of this research is limited to young (18-40 years old), pious (believing and practicing) British-Iranian Shia Muslims living in London.

In summary, YPBIs are a group of devout Shia Muslim men and women between the ages of 18 and 40, who have a strong belief in Shia Islam and regularly practice their religious duties and rituals. They are typically well-educated and employed, and belong to the second or third generation of British-Iranians who migrated to the UK in the past 50 years or so, mainly after the establishment of the Islamic Republic in 1979. They are actively engaged in various aspects of social and economic life in the UK, and generally have a positive inclination towards socialisation and communication with the wider population, as long as their cultural and religious beliefs are respected.

Chapter review

In this chapter, I have provided an overview of the key issues and concepts relevant to this research study. In this chapter, I explained and highlighted what is the research question, what is the target group and what are the different phases of the intended work-based research. I also explained the different components and sub-sect of different chapters. I mentioned in chapter 2, I have discussed terms of reference, aim (s), and objectives as well as the literature review. I have also delved into the historical background of the British-Iranian community and the situation of YPBIs in London. In chapter 3, I have discussed the research methodology, including the research question, research paradigm, methodologies used in work-based research, research design, my role as an inside researcher, research sampling, data collection techniques, quality questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews. In chapter 4, I have discussed the practical research tools and ethical issues related to my research study. In chapter 5, I have presented the results and findings of the study, including data gathering and analysis, and have explained how I applied Thematic Analysis (TA) in analysing the gathered data from the sample group. Finally, in chapter 6, I have presented the conclusion, recommendations, and suggestions based on the findings of the study.

2 Terms of reference, aim(s), objectives, and literature review

In this chapter, I have addressed several key topics, including terms of reference, research question, aims, objectives, and literature review. I have made a concerted effort to thoroughly explicate these subjects to provide a comprehensive understanding of my research intentions and goals. Additionally, I have presented relevant literature and conducted a critical analysis of the key concepts related to the research, such as diaspora, transnationalism, migration, multiculturalism in the UK, and intercultural communication. Furthermore, I have also discussed other informative materials related to my previous work-based research projects, including the integration of British Athna-asheri Shia Muslims within British society and the experiences of young practicing British-Iranian Athna-asheri Shia Muslims in London. In the chapter review, I have reviewed the subjects covered in this chapter and highlighted the topics that will be addressed in the next chapter.

2.1 Terms of reference

The British-Iranian community, also known as BICs, is an ethnic minority group that has been present in the United Kingdom for multiple generations. This study focuses on the historical period post-the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1979. Like the Iranian nation, BICs are primarily Shia Muslims (largely Twelver) and ethnically affiliated with Iranian Azeris, Kurds, Arabs, Baluchis, Lors, and other ethnic groups. Despite their significant presence in British society, the hyphenated identity of British-Iranians has not been officially recognized by the British governmental authorities such as the Home Office, NHS, or the UK National Census, in comparison to other recognized ethnic minorities such as British-Asian, British-Arabs, and British-African. However, this community is actively engaged in various aspects of British society such as trade, business, education, and cultural affairs, and this identity is widely used and acknowledged in the public domain and relevant literature. Based on the responses gathered from the sample group, a majority of YPBIs expressed interest in their British-Iranian identity being officially recognized by relevant authorities.

The BIC and YPBIs, like any other dynamic community, are composed of individuals with diverse social and cultural values and beliefs. This diversity of ideas and lack of homogeneity among members of the BIC have become more pronounced following the

implementation of Shia Islamic laws and regulations governing the country, which have become the main legal and social force and ruling power of the country with an impact on every aspect of Iranians' daily lives. This drastic change in ruling and governing has not only affected Iranians within the country's geographical borders but has also had an impact on Iranians living outside the country, including BICs.

The British-Iranian Community, and particularly the YPBIs, have been chosen as the target group for this work-based research, which focuses on the experiences of young practicing British-Iranians living in the UK/London. The research aims to investigate and understand the common potential social and cultural needs and expectations of YPBIs, and provide recommendations and suggestions for relevant Iranian and British authorities for further policy actions. In conducting this research, various phases were carried out, including defining the research question, setting goals and objectives, conducting a literature review, designing the research methodology, gathering data and information, analysing the research findings, and presenting conclusions and recommendations.

In this survey, I will implement the different phases of work-based research, such as expanding and defining the research question, setting goals and objectives, conducting a literature review, designing the research, preparing questionnaires and interviews, gathering required data and information, analysing the research, and finally, concluding the results and findings. Based on these findings, I will propose my suggestions, recommendations, and advice points to the involved organizations, authorities, and potentially interested readers.

2.2 Research question, Aim(s), Objectives

In this section, I will highlight and develop the research question and define the aim(s) and objectives of the current work-based study. This will enable me to expand the discussion and move forward to other phases of the research process.

2.2.1 Research question

Normally, in any research process, the research question or the central core question is an important part of that research. During the different phases of the research, the research question should be observed and regarded as a checkpoint or measuring meter for comparison and evaluation. As the research process progresses and moves towards its

goals, the researcher should always keep asking themselves whether there is any deviation from the research target in the course of the research process. The research question can be qualitative, quantitative, or mixed. On the importance of the research question, (Bryman et al, 2007) have said; *"in the process of any research, and especially in social research, the 'research question' has been considered an essential early phase that sets a target for an investigation. It assists researchers in connecting their literature review to the sources of required information and materials that will be gathered and used later. The research question has a very vital role in any research because based on that, research design and methods of research, and other required steps would be decided upon."*

The aim of the research is constructed or set according to the main concerns and focal points of the research question. Therefore, it is appropriate to recall the research question of the current study which was mentioned in the introduction chapter, and then by referring to the main issues in the research question, arrange and set the aim of the study. To recall the current research question, I will repeat it here one more time:

"How can the common potential social/cultural needs and expectations of YPBIs be addressed by studying their experiences in the process of intercultural communication with the British society, within a work-based research, and how these needs/expectations can be reflected in the relevant Iranian and British authorities in the form of recommendations and suggestions, for further actions?"

By focusing on the detailed components of the research question, I will conduct and implement the different phases of a research process, ranging from familiarizing myself with the current relevant literature, choosing the right research methodology, selecting my designated target group, gathering the appropriate data, analysing them, and finally reaching the phase of recommending and suggesting the related Islamic and non-Islamic organizations dealing with members of the British-Iranian community, including the YPBIs.

To develop and analyse the research question and investigate its various components in a meaningful and sequential way, I have discussed and developed the following points:

1. In the process of intercultural communication and the framework of the British multicultural setting, the YPBIs are in contact with different layers and groups of other British citizens for various reasons and intentions and in different physical, social/cultural, and virtual environments.
2. Considering the relatively common religious beliefs and traditional heritage, the YPBIs have a range of religious, and social-cultural needs and expectations from the Iranian and non-Iranian organizations and authorities dealing with them. These physical, social/cultural, and emotional needs, support, and expectations are initially

from the parents and family members, friends, fellow Iranians, and Shia Muslim organizations, and generally from the in-group members of the community.

3. The next group is the out-group members of the community, such as neighbours, fellow citizens, other Muslims, and the relevant British authorities.
4. As an inside researcher and someone who has been in constant contact with YPBIs and by carrying out formal academic research and focusing on their experiences, I have been able to gather the required data and information and finalize the results and findings and propose my recommendations and suggestions to the appropriate Iranian and non-Iranian authorities who are dealing with them.

2.2.2 Aim(s)

The main aim or intention of this study is: *'To explore and comprehend the characteristics of the young Practicing British-Iranian Athna-asheri Shia Muslims in London through their experiences in the context of their intercultural communication with the members of the British society and present and report it as a work-based Research Project Report (RPR) within the framework of Middlesex University DProf program.*

I have selected my target group from the young practicing British Iranians living in London because first, I wanted to limit the scope of the study, and secondly, I was more familiar and in more contact with them due to my profession and my role as an insider researcher at the Islamic Centre of England and Islamic College. To achieve this goal, I have incorporated my lifetime experience of being a member of the BI community and working as a PR officer at the Islamic Centre of England for over 15 years. Based on the results and findings of this document, I have proposed a few organizational and policy changes in chapter six of the current RPR to the involved and responsible organizations who are dealing with BICs, YPBIs, BASMs, or other relevant social entities of the same nature, such as the Islamic Centre of England and Islamic College of Advanced Studies, or relevant the UK local authorities.

2.2.3 Objectives

In line with the aim of the research, I would like to refer to the main objectives of the research, which I have classified and itemised as different stages of the methodology in chapter 3. I have articulated the objectives derived from and concerning the research question in the following passage:

- Exploring the general and cultural and social characteristics of young religious and practicing Iranians living in London in terms of population, and other statistical features such as academic qualifications, employment, and economic situation
- Gaining more knowledge and information about their cultural values and beliefs, their social interaction with the rest of the society in the process of intercultural communication
- Finding out about their needs and expectations from the Iranian and non-Iranian organizations as well as concerned British authorities based in London
- Reflecting and conveying the results and findings of the study (recommendations and suggestions) to the relevant responsible organizations. I will explain in more detail how these objectives are implemented in the chapter to come.

2.3 Literature review

The phase of literature review in every research process, whether theoretical, work-based or otherwise, is one of the key stages that is usually carried out before the practical phases in the sequence of events. Among scholars, it is generally agreed that as the reservoir of human knowledge and its components is constantly accumulating and changing, reviewing the updated relevant literature requires a dynamic process that should be done by any researcher. Fortunately, the literature review has been simplified and data and information have been made more accessible by applying advanced IT and digital computer technology and by incorporating super-fast research engines on the global Internet. "The SAGE, Encyclopaedia of communication" cites that; 'the Internet is one of the most convenient and fast ways for exploring and locating reliable and accurate information for research subjects. Although it may look easy and practical, in the first place, a literature search is a very complicated task due to huge reservoirs of information and materials which need expert view and experience in choosing and locating the required source of reliable information.'

In this chapter, I will refer to and highlight all subjects and key concepts relevant to the research subject such as migration, multiculturalism, ethnic minorities, transnationalism, traveling culture and religions, diaspora, intercultural communication, integration and assimilation, and identity issues. Hopefully, the elaboration of these terms will help prospective readers gain more insight, understanding, and background information about the research subject. Hence, I will begin by referring to the above key concepts and related discussions after briefly pointing out the historical background of the research subject.

2.3.1: Acknowledging major historical development and debates

When attempting to understand the current globalized relations, communications, and interactions between countries in various physical and non-physical aspects of the economy, trade, culture, society, and politics, it can be imagined as a large puzzle with many scrambled pieces that may seem difficult, if not impossible, to fit into place. To focus on more relevant domains related to the current research subject, key concepts such as Diaspora, Transnationalism, and Migration, as well as other issues such as multicultural settings, intercultural communications, adaptation and accommodation, integration and assimilation, and identity-related issues will be discussed briefly to gain a clearer picture of the current state.

All of these topics are broad and controversial subjects that cover a significant portion of the subjects, debates, and dialogues currently taking place in various national and international gatherings and conferences in the UN, universities, parliaments, and similar venues in developed countries.

When an individual decides to migrate from their country of origin to another country for any reason, the first stage they face is migration. These days, the majority of immigrants typically target Western industrial countries, such as the United States of America, Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom, and other European countries, as these countries are considered to be in better economic and financial situations, with more employment opportunities, political stability, and better educational and scientific capabilities and adherence to human rights principles. These countries, with a high number of immigrants and asylum seekers, have adopted multicultural arrangements to address potential disputes and cultural differences between the majority of the older and permanent residents and the minority of newcomers from ethnic groups. The newcomers, who have been granted the right to stay, usually live in close neighbourhoods and tend to stick to their own cultural and traditional values and customs.

They follow and observe their religious instructions and rituals, which brings up issues related to transnationalism, traveling culture, and religion. These groups of people, particularly among the first generation, who are physically living far from their motherland, emotionally and culturally still have connections and strong links with memories and members of the motherland. This kind of feeling and emotion, which is generally called

"diaspora" and diasporic feelings, brings with it its advantages and disadvantages for that community. However, the new-settled communities, in the process of their adaptations and accommodations in the new home, have to be in contact with the members of the host country and other communities who have already gone through this process. The majority of older citizens, most likely have different cultural norms and values, and hence the members of minority groups have to be involved in the process of intercultural communication. Going through this sequence of events, and based on the rules and regulations of the host country (laws of the land), they are facing the process of integration and assimilation, which brings about issues related to citizenship and certain rights and duties, identity issues, and its problems and side-effects.

Now I will continue to give a brief definition and explanation of the above-mentioned key concepts. Before I start explaining each key concept, I want to refer to recent research done by (Scharbordt, 2020) Oliver, and Yafa Shanneik, in this context

• Diaspora

The term "diaspora" originally referred to the dispersion of a group of people from their homeland but has been expanded to include any group of people who have left their homeland and maintain connections to it. (McLoughlin, 2005) explains that the term diaspora was originally used only about the Jewish, Greek, and Armenian diasporas, but has been expanded to include other groups of people who have left their homeland and maintain connections to it, such as immigrants, ethnic minorities, exiles, expatriates, refugees, and guest workers.

He further maintained that; 'It was from the African Studies which diaspora, was used in the social sciences in the 1980s. By the 1990s, sociologists, anthropologists, political scientists, and cultural studies scholars, all were using the term to refer to the various *transnational communities*. A key feature of this and related literature has been the 'theorisation of such concepts as culture, identity, hybridity, race, ethnicity, community, and multiculturalism. (Ibid).

In a diasporic situation, people usually preserve and keep their nostalgic memories and social/cultural ties with their homelands through various means and channels, such as local and cultural establishments or representatives, and even virtually and remotely by applying new technologies in telecommunications, internet, and social media to practice, perform, and continue their religious ceremonies as if they were in their homelands.

I want to seize the opportunity and develop the discussion on the case of the Iranian diaspora in nearly fifty years and mainly after the victory of the Islamic revolution in 1979. I have discussed this issue in another part of this paper

2.4.1 A glance at my previous study on British-Shia Muslims) but I wanted to refer to this matter as I am expanding the discussion of diaspora by giving a practical example of diasporic community and relevant to the context of this study.

The Iranian diaspora in the UK consists of British Iranians who have been living in this country before the establishment of the Islamic revolution and those who migrated to this country after the revolution. I could not find out the exact figure and reliable statistics on the number and the typology of Iranians living in this country before 1979 but it is obvious that number-wise and statistically these two categories are quite different from each other by comparison. Available data and information on diasporic communities reported by a few relevant authorities such as the Home Office or Office of National Statistics are chiefly based on official data for those who have been born in the UK and for those immigrants who came to this country from the formal and recognised borders while there many of them who are not registered properly and therefore they are not calculated in demographic statistics. Therefore most of the data and information are based on guesses and estimations. The percentage of the population of Shia Muslims to the total population of a few certain countries is shown in the following phrase:

- 1) Iran %90 Shia Muslim, 2) Azerbaijan % 80, 3) Bahrain % 70 ,**
- 4) Iraq %64, 5) Lebanon % 60, 6) Yemen 42 %, 7) Pakistan % 20,**
- 8)Turkey % 20, 9) Afghanistan %18, 10) Khoja ASM %100 ¹**

BASM community and British-Iranians could be considered as a reflection or mirror of Shia Muslims community worldwide. If we assume that the same proportion is also valid for the BASMs in the UK, then the rough number of the population of British Shia Muslims could be guessed by incorporating the same percentage to the total population of the above countries if known. For instance, if the total number of British Iranians is 100,000, the number of British Iranian Athna-ashari Shia Muslims will be around 90,000.

Due to the lack of reliable data and information there array of difficulties and uncertainties to reach the relatively exact number of British Iranians in the UK, but a rough guess is between 200,000 to 250,000. The number of British Shia Athna –ashari community

¹ Khoja Athna Ashari Shia Muslims are a group of Shia Muslims scattered mainly in UK, USA, Australia and Canada whose parents and grand parents initially migrated from India or some African countries to these new homes. The world Federation which is the coordinating body of the Community established in 1976 in London as a charity organization with aim of 'promoting the Shia thoughts worldwide, and serve Shia community in educational, social and cultural and welfare affairs, through their representatives in UK, USA, Canada, UAR, Far East and elsewhere."

in the UK and the population of the British Iranian community also is discussed in another part of this report.

2.4.1 A glance at my previous study on British-Shia Muslims

Speaking about the issue of ethnicity in the British Shia Muslim community requires viewing this issue at least from two angles. One consideration is time-based and considers this community over time focusing at least on three separate generations from the time that the number of immigrants and asylum seekers to the UK rapidly increased for different reasons and excuses and mainly due to social, cultural, economic, political and legal aspects of the regime change. Therefore at the first glance, the characteristics and situation of the first generation of Iranians should be reviewed and compared with the second and third generations concerning social, cultural, legal, and political situations of that certain space and time.

I should remind one point here that was mentioned in different parts of the current paper, which is about the hierarchical relationship between British Iranian and British Athna-ashari Shia Muslims in the UK. It could be said that British Iranians are a sub-system of BASM in the UK and therefore there are many similarities between these two communities. Incidentally, there is another example of diasporic communities more or less like the Iranian diaspora, and that is the Iraqi diaspora in the UK, which has lots of commonalities with the Iranian diaspora. Therefore when I am referring to some characteristics of British Iranians or British Iraqis, they both belong to the higher system of British Shia Muslims in the UK.

The first generation of British Iranians who initially migrated to this country due to various reasons and causes and mainly because of the political and economic situation after the victory of the Islamic Revolution in 1979, were facing a different situation and problems compared to the second or third generation who were faced later. I have highlighted a few major differences in the following lines.

- **Possibility of losing the cultural links:**

One of the immediate effects of migration is losing the cultural ties with the motherland and its different elements such as native language and religious rituals and the like. Although with the advance in technology and industry in different fields in recent years, the rate of losing these links have reduced and the level of cultural links between the diaspora and the motherland has been improved and maintained. A very distinguishable factor to

measure this weakness of cultural bounds could be a trace in the usage of the mother language amongst the second and third generations. Amongst the member of the first generation of immigrants, the mother language is more spoken and common while in the second or third generation and due to the attendance of young children in schools and colleges and spending most of their time with their English friends and peers, the use of the mother language is limited only to speak with the family members and parents. Even in this regard, most of them tend to speak with parents and fellow-country members of the same generation with the English language.

- **Religious and ritual links:**

Another important link among cultural ties is the religious and ritual link that will be downgraded when someone migrates from the homeland to another country. Again the rate of losing this relationship and bond depends on many factors, including personal and family characteristics, the degree of religious education, and many more emotional and psychological factors. The role of advanced IT, social media, and communication technology in maintaining and upgrading this tie between the members of the diaspora and the motherland should not be ignored. It should also be added at this point that with the advance of technology and particularly the effects of the internet, globalisation of economy and culture, boosted communication and social networking, has evil and good effects on our social and cultural life including our faith and belief system.

Another important element in this area is the issue of religiosity of the BASMs or the degree of practicing/not practicing religious duties and rituals over time (involving first, second and third generations). Of course, this is a very complicated matter and requires consideration of multi-dimensional elements to gauge various aspects of personal and individualistic of this attribute in different members of BASM community. But there should be some indirect social or cultural factors that may lead to this judgment.

The next relevant matter in this discussion is the influence of different religious authorities (or their representatives) on the BASM community due to the importance of obedience from a living religious scholar (Ayatollah) or as it is termed (Marja Taghleed) at least for those who are practicing religious members of the BSM community. At present, there are nearly ten official representatives of Grand Ayatollahs who are serving as links between religious leaders and followers in the UK for religious services. With the spread of Shia Islam in the Western world, the necessity of correct practicing of Shia Islam teachings through religious authorities, and different means of communication equipped with the latest technology are employed to serve the community.

It should be added that traditionally and according to Shia ideology every Shia Muslim religiously should follow the contemporary Imam of the time. Based on the firm believing principles of Shia jurisprudence, a present time, the Imam of the time (Imam Mahdi Aj, Twelfth Imam) is in hiding and direct contact with him is impossible but since the time of his absence, his instructions and views have been conveyed through his authorised representatives up to now. Today's Shia religious authorities or Marajes (known as Grand Ayatollahs, or Ayatollahs) who have a very deep knowledge of the Shia teachings of Islam, are interpreters and are responsible for implementing the teachings of Islam for the followers of Shia Islam throughout the world.

In a book called 'A code of Practice for Muslims in the West', translated into English, and based on the rulings(fatwa) of grand Ayatollah, S.A Sistani, there has been an attempt to cover major religious issues that Muslims are facing in Western countries which they are living in. On the back cover of the book, some points are re-written here as follows:

"Practicing Muslims who have lived in non-Muslim countries have to respect and abide by different laws and systems with dissimilar values and rules and unfamiliar cultures. They are encountered some religious obstacles and problems in their daily life, due to differences in their value system and the Western diverse way of life. As a result, new problems have emerged and have been added to previous problems already existed in those countries. Hence there are a lot of religious questions for Muslims living in the West which should be addressed and to answer these questions this book has been compiled." (Rizvi, 2009)

In the introduction of the book, it has been also expressed that ' a Muslim who is born and lived all his/her life in a non-Muslim country is under the influence of a non-Islamic environment which affects his/her thoughts, ideas and way of thinking and behaviour. This un-Islamic cultural influence is more evident in the second or third generations which are more in contact with non-Muslims through intercultural communication process in the host society.' (Rizvi, 2009)

Due to the presence of the element of dynamism in Shia Islam, and the complexity of the broad issues in the contemporary world, different views, ideas, and interpretations are made by living Mar'ja on diverse daily religious, social, and political subjects. One point worth mentioning here is that having a difference of opinion on Shia Islamic practices and mainly on changing and contemporary issues or as it has been termed in its specialised Islamic literature; Ijtihad is an accepted and normal procedure in Shia Islam. This is the doctrine that makes Shia Islam more dynamic and capable of adapting itself to current and everyday matters of life.

Mujtahid (Jurist, Ayatollah) is a fully learned scholar, who does not need to do Taqlid (imitate), he can interpret and judge Islamic matters according to Shia Fiqh, (Jurisprudence). These scholars are based in different religious cities in Iran and Iraq, mainly in Qum and Najaf consecutively. They have representatives in various parts of the globe.

At present nearly fifty major Shia Islamic Centres and mosques are active throughout the UK which religiously is linked and affiliated to certain 'religious authorities (religious leaders). Likewise in London, there are few representatives of the major Grand Ayatollahs such as Ayatollah Khamnei of I.R. Iran, Ayatollah Sistani of Iraq, Ayatollah Makarem Shirazi of Iran (Qum), and other representatives from Lebanon, Pakistan, Afghanistan and other countries. These representatives are authorised to administrate legal, religious, and cultural affairs under the supervision of their religious authorities. In addition, they are authorised to have religious, and cultural activities as a charitable organisation under the supervision of the Charity Commission.

In the context of studying Iranian diaspora another Iranian researcher, Reza Gholami, has been studying the British Iranian community for several years. In one of his studies on the religious practices of British Iranians, he states that in the West, Muslim migrants are predominantly perceived through a religious lens, as either practicing or culturally Muslims based on their ethnic heritage. He highlights that these practices play a crucial role in forming a diasporic community and identity (Gholami, R. & Seberny, A, 2015).

Gholami further states that secularism is not rare among Muslims from any ethnic background, including secular Iranians in London, but there is a lack of research on secular Muslim practices and their impact on the diaspora. He emphasizes that instead of looking at Islam in isolation and drawing conclusions that Muslims are inherently different and incompatible with secular modernity, his research focuses on how diasporic secular Muslim models interact with religious practices and how migration has shaped this relationship.

Gholami also notes that while religion is certainly a central force in the Iranian diaspora, it is important to consider the creation and impact of secular discourses and practices as social and political projects in the diaspora or historically. This can give new meaning to being Muslim (Gholami, R. & Seberny, A, 2015). Gholami's research on Iranian seculars sheds light on the previously hidden segment of the Iranian diaspora in Britain, known as British Shia Muslims, who not only don't practice religious rituals but also hold negative views towards it. In comparison between my research on YPBIs and Gholami's research on Iranian seculars, there is one similarity and one difference. The similarity is that

both sample groups are from British Iranian and Shia Islam backgrounds and the difference is in the degree of belief and practice in a shared sect of religion.

- **Political affiliations**

In any diasporic community with its diverse political affiliations and interests, there are continuous debates and challenges amongst different factions and interest groups. Eventually, these kinds of activities and positioning will be more visible in more liberal countries with more freedom of expressing political orientations compare to homeland countries. That is why there are more cases of debates, demonstrations, and even clashes amongst various interest groups in the diaspora. With the advanced technology in social networking, these kinds of activities are very common which absorb lots of social media users to be informed about the latest social, cultural, and political news in the homeland. In addition, there are other ways of expression the groups' ideas and viewpoints in the form of seminars, conferences, and webinars in the students' associations in universities and colleges or cultural centers.

- **Trade and economic ties**

Another strong link between members of the diaspora and the motherland is in the field of trade and economy. The link facilitates the export and import of the special food items produced and made in the home country for the consumption and use of the diaspora members. Of course with the globalisation of international trade and expansion of export and import nearly all the national commodities are available everywhere in supermarkets and online shopping. Along the same line, some local national businesses and services are serving the diasporic communities, such as restaurants, supermarkets, travel agencies, special shops, and the like.

Another aspect of this kind of activity is banking and money transferring which has been going on officially and unofficially and is being carried out via international banking systems or exchange bureaus.

- **Diplomatic and consulate services**

Another category of services that is usually done by the official representatives of the home-country (Embassies and consulate offices) based in the guest country is the activities which are related to the personal and legal affairs of the diasporic community, such as

issuing and extending national passports, registration of the marriage and divorce documents which facilitates the affairs of the members diasporic community such as traveling and other mutual affairs.

The above points were just a few considerations, examples and remarks in the context of this study and not the whole extensive relevant problems and issues concerning the diasporic communities.

• Transnationalism

'Trans-national term was initially used in the 20th century by Randolph Bourne (1916) to define movements between cultures. (Boume, 1917). Earlier, this term was used (Hinnells, 1997) in trade, commerce, and economy, and the subjects such as international division of labour, optimisation of labour force, use of huge containers in worldwide shipping, and so on. But with the spread of globalisation, and issues related to the migration of people and cultures, the term was used extensively in social and cultural studies and interchangeably with the diaspora. In his article, (McLoughlin, 2005) refers to the term diaspora religion which has been used by (Hinnells, 1997) before. He as a Catholic of Irish heritage, explains his practical involvement in "multi-racial, multi-cultural, multi-faith Manchester" while he was a student of the 'Comparative Religions' there and he considers this opportunity as a golden opportunity. He acknowledges the diaspora religion as a global phenomenon that currently is found everywhere, whether in England or on the Main Street of New York City in the United States or any other multicultural country.

He also points out the Pluralism Project at Harvard University which has been able to document traditions and interfaith groups, Irish-American Catholicism one of the most important faiths among them. Then he gives more explanations and features of the 'diaspora religion' in England by referring to his academic career in the field of Comparative Religions in Manchester, and later with Sikhs in Southall (South-west London) or little (Chota) Punjab. By developing his discussion, he refers to the usual and popular questions of 'who am I?' and 'where I'm coming from?' which are normally in minds of every migrant. In this respect, he is confident that the study of religions and cultures should always encourage us to think about the prose and cones of knowing about our 'selves' as we observe the 'difference' of 'others'.

He further notes that diaspora religion is by no means limited to the experiences of '*people of colour*' or the 'visible minorities' who have migrated from Asia, Africa, and the Middle East in the post-war period. "*However, history teaches us that migrants and diasporas do*

share many continuities of experience for all their differences. Indeed, what remains perhaps most interesting, are the products of our interactions, whoever we are anymore.” (ibid)

In my research on transitional religion and culture, I came across a book that aligns perfectly with my study's research question and related issues. The book, entitled *Shi'a Minorities in the Contemporary World: Migration, Transnationalism and Multilocality*," edited by (Scharbordt, Oliver , and Yafa shanneik, 2020) Scharbordt (2020), delves into various research subjects on Shia minorities, both within and outside of the Muslim world. The editors discuss the current situation of existing Shia minorities and the issues of migration, diaspora, transnationalism, and multi-locality that are related to Shiism. They also reference and explain the concept of "minorities within minorities" (Sachedina, 1994), which pertains to Shia minorities living outside the Muslim world, a by-product of migration and conversion.

Hinnells, (Hinnells, 1997) the editor of the *"Diaspora Religion" collection*, posits that research on religious diaspora has played an important role in elevating the field of Religious Studies, but it has not yet been given the same level of attention as fieldwork-based studies in the theorization process. Mcloughlin echoes this sentiment, stating that it is an opportune time for a more comprehensive theoretical reflection on the valuable data collected in recent years. He continues to argue that Religious Studies should involve more open engagement with disciplinary requirements and that the study of diaspora religion should be considered a priority in the theorization process alongside other sophisticated issues such as culture, hybridity, and ethnicity. (ibid)

- **Migration, People on the move**

The theme of migration is a prevalent one in contemporary society, with many individuals and families having their histories shaped by the forces of the international movement. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights upholds the inherent dignity and equal rights of all members of the human family, a principle that is central to understanding and respecting the rights of migrants.

Migration can be defined as the movement of people from one country or locality to another and has been a common practice throughout history. It is a significant turning point in the lives of many individuals and is often connected to broader global economic, social, political, and technological transformations. Globalization has led to an increase in the number of immigrants worldwide, with many individuals motivated to move due to deteriorating

economic conditions in their home countries and the promise of better opportunities in host countries.

- **Major theories of migration and historical background**

'Throughout history, great civilizations and communities have always reached others through roots and networks like the Silk Road, civilization such as China, India, Egypt, Persia, and Arabia flourished with the fellows of ideas and commerce. Today the metaphorical Silk Road has been replaced by countless silk threads interwoven into a global whole. It is not just products and ideas that are crossing the globe but people including economic migrants in search of jobs and a better life. Multicultural societies consequently are increasingly becoming the norm over the world. This diversity in beliefs confronts societies with new challenges.' (Tong, 2010)

The above citation gives one example of one of the immediate outcomes of migration. The practice of Multiculturalism and Intercultural communication these days is happening nearly in every corner of the world, especially in those places which attract more people for different reasons from all over the globe.

There is no need to explain that "migration" is not exclusively related to human beings. Migration and nature have gone hand in hand in the course of history from the beginning of life on earth for different reasons. There have been (and still are) migrations for birds, fish, and other animals in different times and spaces. But what we are looking at here in more depth is the "*social, political, and economic migration*" for humankind in the contemporary situation.

"Ernest Ravenstein is widely regarded as the earliest migration theorist. Ravenstein, an English geographer, used census data from England and Wales to develop his "Laws of Migration" (Ravenstien, 1989). He concluded that migration was governed by a "push-pull" process; that is, unfavourable conditions in one place (oppressive laws, heavy taxation, etc.) "push" people out, and favourable conditions in an external location "pull" them in. Ravenstein's laws stated that the primary cause for migration was better external economic opportunities; the volume of migration decreases as distance increases; migration occurs in stages instead of one long move; population movements are bilateral; and migration differentials (e.g., gender, social class, age) influence a person's mobility." (Ravenstien, 1989)

In the following passage which is mainly taken from the articles in the literature of Immigration studies the attempt has been done to elaborate on one of the main theories in "Social/economical migration" which is known as "push/poll factors". Thinking about the

reasons why people move from one place to another place brings us to the conclusion that people move for different reasons, and these differences affect the overall migration process. In present days the conditions under which a migrant enters a receiver population can have broad implications for all parties involved.

The expression of 'migration experience' refers to the fact that different causes for migration will produce different outcomes observable from a sociological perspective. For instance, a person who moves from his/her homeland town to another city or town within the country will not have the same migration experience as a political refugee who moves to another country with a completely different culture and traditions. In most cases, refugees need special services from the receiver population such as emergency shelter, food, and legal aid. The psychological trauma of fleeing their homeland and leaving family members behind can also complicate refugees' adjustment to their new environment. The situation is generally termed, *cultural shock*.

The outcomes and situation after the moving and settlement are also important, because the migrant can be a slave, refugee, or job-seeker, or have some other reason for moving, and hence no single theory can provide a comprehensive explanation for the migration process. Hence, a comprehensive theory is unattainable, and researchers should find some grounds that could explain why people migrate from their homelands to other places. Theories of migration are helpful as they can assist us to understand population movements within their broader political and economic contexts.

The expression "outmigration is when migration takes place from a Third World nation to a developed country due to economic problems caused by the global economy. Such migration could be managed with better international economic agreements instead of restrictive immigration acts.

It is believed that many theorists have followed in Ravenstein's footsteps, and the dominant theories in contemporary scholarship are more or fewer variations of his conclusions. For instance, Lee (1966) reformulated Ravenstein's theory to give more emphasis to internal (or push) factors by outlining the impact that intervening obstacles have on the migration process. Lee has argued that variables such as distance, physical and political barriers, and having dependents can impede or even prevent migration by pointing out that the "*migration process is selective because differentials such as age, gender, and social class affect how persons respond to push-pull factors, and these conditions also shape their ability to overcome intervening obstacles. Furthermore, it has been argued that personal factors such as a person's education, knowledge of a potential receiver population, family ties, and the like can facilitate or retard migration.*" (Lee, 1966)

Finally, more recent theories to explain the process of economic/social migration which have been developed to treat international patterns of migration on their terms are being discussed but still, it is concluded that these are also variants of push-pull theory. Then based on the neoclassical economic theory, which suggests that *“international migration is related to the global supply and demand for labour”* is another example of migration theory. (hass, 2011) It is suggested that nations with scarce and limited labour supply and high demand for work force will have high wages that pull immigrants in from nations with a surplus and excess of labour. ‘Segmented labour-market theory’ is presented by Piore in 1979, which concludes that *“First World economies are structured to require a certain level of immigration.* This theory suggests that ‘developed economies are dualistic; they have a primary market of secure, well-remunerated work and a secondary market of low-wage work. Segmented labour-market theory argues that immigrants are recruited to fill these jobs that are necessary for the overall economy to function but are avoided by the native-born population because of the poor working conditions associated with the secondary labour market’. (Massey, 2015) Finally it is suggested that “world-systems theory (Sassen, 2005) which based on this theory it is argued that “international migration is a by-product of global capitalism and contemporary patterns of international migration tend to be from the periphery (poor nations) to the core (rich nations) because factors associated with industrial development in the First World countries generated structural economic problems, and thus push factors, in the Third World.

The theories which just were referred to are more economically oriented. These theories are more concerned with economic and commercial reasons and justifications for the migration of people. But it should not be forgotten that throughout history people have migrated to other places for other reasons as well. Amongst these reasons, the more important ones, i.e. those with the involvement of more groups of people and more frequent ones, are migration due to political, religious, social, and cultural reasons.

Migration could be in the form of both voluntary and involuntary. The latter includes slavery, human trafficking, and ethnic cleansing. Migration in the course of history has affected the major epochs in history such as “the decline of the Roman Empire, or Jewish Diaspora, and under the process of “colonization” has transformed the world geographically as in the cases of Australia and America. By population transfer, it is meant *“social control under authoritarian regimes”*.

By increasing the problems arising from global migration, “The global Commission on International Migration (GCIM) was launched with the support of Kofi Annan the late Secretary General of the UN in 2003 with a threefold mandate

(coherent, comprehensive, global) and a finite life span. By ending the life of this commission in 2005, an overall report was prepared by the leading specialized migration experts. (GCIM. Global Commission on Migration New York: UN, 2005)

This report consists of an extensive report on the issue of international migration on a national, regional, and international level and gives advisory recommendations to different UN agencies, NGO's and national governments on this important matter. (Ibid). Various forms of migration include; daily human commuting, seasonal human migration,(more related to agriculture) permanent migration, local, regional, rural to urban or urbanization more common in developing countries, urban to rural migration usually in developing countries, and finally international migration.

Whatever the number of migration theories discussed, and debated at the academic or policy level might be, the issue of migration with its aftermath sequences in practice and the real world is very important, and serious for national governments and international policymakers throughout this globalize world. Interestingly immigration policies are changing over time in different countries depending on the economic, political, social/cultural situation nationally or internationally.

For instance, if one considers the changes in British laws and regulations related to immigration strategies, one would know that in one situation the 'encouraging and welcoming' rules and policies were implemented and in another occasion preventive and closed-door policies were dominant to control the immigrants from entering into the country. One point to remember here is that dominant and popular immigrant policies for a contemporary situation for most of the Western and European countries including the UK are very tight policies, especially for immigrants from Non-European countries. (House of Commons, Home affairs commitee, 2011)

- **Current world migration status**

In recent years, migration has become a top-tier political issue, with implications for human rights, development, and geopolitics on national, regional, and international levels. The World Migration Report 2020 by the International Organization for Migration and the United Nations highlights the interconnectedness of migration to these various policy issues and the need for deeper theoretical reflection on the valuable data collected in recent years. As (Giddens, 2004) notes, the processes of globalization have a profound impact on our daily lives and shape how we access information, goods, and services from around the

world. It is important to understand the complex motivations and experiences of migrants as we navigate this increasingly interconnected world.

In summary, migration is a movement of people from one country or locality to another. It has been a common and natural act throughout history and is often driven by push and pull factors such as economic, political, and social conditions in both the sending and receiving countries. The effects of globalization have led to an increase in global immigration in recent years. The subject of multiculturalism, which is a political and social policy aimed at managing and governing modern societies with diverse populations, is also relevant to understanding the experiences of immigrants and their impact on the host country. The discussion of diaspora, transnationalism, and diaspora religion also adds complexity to the study of migration and its effects on individuals and communities.

There is no doubt that one of the immediate effects of globalization is an increase in the number of immigrants throughout the world. The reasons for this increase in global immigration are manifold, but one of the main causes is the deterioration of the economic situation in the sender country and the promising conditions in the host country, even superficially. These are referred to as push and pull factors. This early theory justifies migratory movements influenced by domestic pushing factors such as war, famine, political, and social conditions on one side, and promising and attractive pulling factors for overall better living conditions in host countries on the other side.

Now, some clarifications will be given about the relationship between the migration of people and the integration of immigrants who have settled in the host country with the mainstream culture. This is one of the cultural policies implemented by national strategists of the host country to tackle some of the side effects of migration. Therefore, the process of integration can be viewed as one of the results and by-products of the immigration issue. When people come to a country and settle there as asylum seekers or residents, the host country, depending on the social or economic situation of that time, reacts to this social phenomenon. Contrary to the current situation, in which most Western countries have set up immigration policies to prevent asylum seekers and refugees from entering their countries, there were several countries, a few years ago, including the United Kingdom and the United States, that even encouraged immigrants to come to their countries to help them construct their new countries or fill vacant jobs in different sectors of their economy.

In this regard, the following quote from Dillon's encyclopaedia is relevant: 'At the end of the Second World War, there was the huge task of rebuilding Britain after six years of war. With not enough people available for work, the British government encouraged workers from other parts of Europe to help with the process of reconstruction. In 1948, the invitation

was extended to people in Ireland and the West Indies. A shortage of labour in Britain continued through the 1950s, and some of the UK industries launched advertising campaigns to attract workers from overseas. Centers were set up in the West Indies to recruit bus crews, and textile and engineering firms in the north of England and the Midlands sent agents to India and Pakistan. For 25 years, people from the West Indies, India, Pakistan, and later Bangladesh travelled to work and settle in Britain'. (Dictionary, 2010)

Some of these countries still have policies that aim to attract people from other countries, particularly educated and skilled experts and sometimes unskilled workers, under different employment policies based on their assessment of needs in human resource management. Meanwhile, mostly in Western countries such as the UK, in coping with the issue of immigrants, they have adopted some policies to gradually "integrate" various ethnic community members with mainstream cultures. In the EU, in recent years, there have been many controlling policies that have been approved and implemented at different times.

There is a report called; *"Muslims in Europe: A report on 11 EU cities,"*. This report is a comprehensive study of the situation of Muslims living in eleven European cities as part of the *"At Home in Europe project"* supervised and funded by the *"Open Society Institute."* The report highlights the following key points:

- The estimated Muslim population in the EU is 15-20 million and is expected to double by 2025.
- Muslims in Europe are a diverse population, including newly arrived immigrants, mostly living in capital cities and urban areas.
- Muslims are an integral part of the fabric of their cities, but many experience discrimination and social and economic disadvantages.
- Muslims in Europe today are also facing heightened suspicion and security measures.
- There is a lack of data available about the needs and experiences of Muslims and minority groups.
- The diversity in the social and cultural life of different people living in European cities, including the Muslim population, has sparked a debate on social cohesion and integration.
- The report focuses on public policies at the city level that affect the daily lives of Muslim and non-Muslim communities in the context of national and European frameworks.

- Muslims are growing communities in different parts of Europe, and the EU is facing a major challenge in how to ensure equal rights in an environment of rapidly expanding diversity.
- The report discusses municipal policies that have actively sought to understand Muslim communities and their specific needs.
- The report highlights the best practices in selected Western European cities in terms of the engagement of policymakers with Muslim and minority constituents.
- The report also looks at how Muslim communities have actively participated in tackling discrimination and whether the needs of specific groups warrant individual policy approaches to overcome barriers to equal opportunities.
- The report recommends and suggests ways to improve opportunities for the full participation and inclusion of Muslims in society while preserving their linguistic, cultural, religious, and ethnic identities.

In his extensive report on Muslims living in Europe, (Savage, 2004) a career officer in the US foreign service and the office of European Analysis at the Department of State in Washington DC, wrote an article titled *"Europe and Islam: Waxing Crescent*. The article, like many other similar studies and predictions, focuses on statistical data about the demographic situation of Muslim communities in European countries and the fact that population growth patterns amongst Muslim and non-Muslim communities in EU countries are moving in opposite directions. Savage concludes that there will be a drastic change in the Muslim population in EU countries in the not-too-distant future. He notes that more than 23 million Muslims currently live in EU countries, making up 5% of the total population of European countries. (Leach, 2009).

The ex-principal lecturer in politics at Leeds Metropolitan University, regarding the issue of 'racism, asylum seekers and Europe,' emphasizes that before the 1990s, most immigrants to Britain were economic migrants from the Commonwealth and the former (Leach, 2009) British Empire. Few of them were expelled from their countries, except for some East African Asians (Khoja Shia Muslims among them) who were forced to leave due to domestic political unrest. The term "asylum seeker" was used to address those migrants who came from Hong Kong or other British colonies, and British governments acknowledged a particular status for them. Britain, like some other countries, has a history of this. (ibid)

In the past, Western countries accepted political refugees from non-Commonwealth countries in compliance with international laws. However, there were also instances of

illegal immigrants seeking refuge from persecution or seeking a better life. As the number of asylum seekers increased, they became a source of news and condemnation for some tabloid papers, extremist groups, and mainstream politicians, who often labeled them as bogus or illegal. These negative perceptions were often exaggerated, claiming that they were out of control and dangerous for host societies. Despite these negative perceptions, there was also strong support for individual asylum seekers facing deportation back to their countries. Some asylum seekers also had claims of British hospitality, as their right to asylum may have been a direct or indirect consequence of British policy (such as Iraqi refugees).

In addition to the asylum seekers and refugees mentioned earlier, there were also legal immigrants from the European Union (which had expanded in size and number of members) who could immigrate to Britain to seek work temporarily and sometimes permanently. Like other members of the EU, Britain received several workers from Eastern Europe. These migrants could fill skill shortages in some industrial and production zones, such as 'Polish plumbers' or fruit pickers, or NHS staff who were paid, in some cases, even lower than the minimum wage rate. Although these workers were ideal for some British employers, it was claimed that they were undercutting the average British labour force.

Most of this new wave of immigrants were staying in Britain temporarily, but some of them were permanently establishing ethnic communities like 'Italians, Greeks, and Irish. In recent years, economic opportunities have declined due to a general financial slowdown. (Leach, 2009). Among the latest policies that were incorporated with existing rules and regulations was a government policy called "Cohesion policy" which aimed to absorb members of ethnic groups, especially the youth, by trying to distract their attention and interest from their paternal roots and channel their interests to more Western-oriented culture. This policy gained popularity in political and social circles after the events of 9/11 and 7/7 in combating the so-called "War on Terrorism". On January 2007, an advisory document was released by the Cabinet Office with the title of Policy Review: Crime and Cohesion, the UK government believed that in achieving social justice, the Group Cohesion policy could play a better role in society compared to the policy of combating crime, in areas such as justice and life satisfaction due to the side effects of economic and religious differences experienced by members of non-local communities. Then, by referring to other countries such as France and the US, the document continued by explaining the integration of migrant communities and improving social status. (Cohesion, 2007).

In this context, there are some concerns expressed by scholars and social experts who support the idea of dual citizenship for members of ethnic groups such as British Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities. I will return to this issue and elaborate on different

aspects of it later. Changing the overall strategy of immigration in different countries, including the United Kingdom, depends on national, regional, and international situations and factors. Decisions on planning and implementing immigration policies are made by observing and reviewing legal and constitutional, social and cultural, and economic and political elements. It is important to note that most of the statistics and justifications discussed previously were related to a time when my independent study on BAME communities was ongoing. Now, with many dynamic developments, the current global and national situation in the UK has changed. One important issue in this context is Brexit and its consequences, as well as the significant changes that have taken place so far and are still ongoing.

The practical adaptation materialises in the form of integration, assimilation, melting pot, and cultural pluralism. In this context (Giddens, 2004) explains;

- Assimilation is a social process, in which by that the cultural values of the immigrants are gradually moulded to the dominant norms and values of the host culture. The social policy based on this approach encourages immigrants to learn and adapt, the language, dress, lifestyle, and other cultural elements of the host country and substitute them with their own.
- Melting pot is a combination of different cultures under one umbrella.

This model of the melting pot is often viewed as the most ideal form of ethnic diversity by some sociologists, as it allows for the blending of different cultures and the creation of a new, diverse culture that emerges as ethnic groups adjust to the new social environment. This approach emphasizes the idea of unity and commonality among different ethnic groups, as they come together and contribute their unique cultural elements to create a new and diverse cultural identity. However, it is important to note that this approach can also have negative implications, as it can lead to the erasure of individual cultural identities and the pressure for immigrants to assimilate into the dominant culture.

Cultural pluralism is another perspective on managing cultural diversity within a society, which holds that all subcultures within the society are of equal value and should be recognized and respected. This approach emphasizes the importance of preserving the cultural heritage and identity of minority groups, while also recognizing their rights as equal to those of the majority sector of society. Cultural pluralism also promotes mutual respect and tolerance for cultural differences and encourages the coexistence of different cultures within the society. This model of cultural pluralism is favored by leaders of minority groups in Britain and other European countries as it allows them to retain their cultural heritage and identity while also participating in society. It also allows for a society to be a true mosaic, where each group contributes its unique cultural element to the society. (Ibid)

In multicultural societies or regions, there are often long-lasting hostilities and conflicts that arise due to cultural differences. Social scholars have attempted to explain these conflicts through the framework of "conflict theories," which often cite racism, prejudice, inequality, and power imbalances as root causes. In the historical context of migration, adaptation, integration, and assimilation of different ethnic minorities in the UK, there are many practical examples of how these conflicts have played out. For instance, the British Athna-ashari Shia Muslims (BASM) and British Iranians have had to navigate the challenges of adapting and integrating into the dominant culture while also preserving their cultural heritage and identity. Given the country's history and role in the colonial age, there are many historical examples of how these groups have been impacted by discrimination and prejudice, and the way these experiences have shaped their adaptation and integration process.

The issue of migration and its consequences has recently become a significant domestic and international problem. This change is mainly due to the effects and spread of globalization, which was triggered by technological advancements in fields such as telecommunication, transportation, IT, the internet, and social media expansion starting in the 1980s. This drastic change had significant effects on international trade and economy, the global transformation of the labour force, and social, cultural, and political changes in industrial and developed countries, including the United Kingdom. The rapid movement of immigrants, resulting in the formation of ghettos within the ports, industrial zones, and cities of the UK, has led to increased social and cultural interactions between newcomers and the indigenous population, resulting in occasional disputes. In some cases, cultural clashes and protests from domestic interest groups have also increased, prompting government authorities and policymakers to implement more restrictive immigration laws and regulations. In the last fifty years, various international incidents, such as political unrest in the Middle East, the demise of the USSR, the war between Muslims and Serbs in Eastern Europe, the Islamic revolution in Iran, the influx of immigrants from ex-Commonwealth countries, the September 11th incident, the war on terrorism, the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan, and the global financial crisis, have greatly impacted the stable situation of most countries, including the United Kingdom.

Hence, the push and pull factors once again came into play, leading to an increase in immigration to countries such as the UK and other Western nations. As a result, border controls were tightened, making it proportionately more difficult to accept new immigrants and asylum seekers. With this understanding of the background of migration and settlement of ethnic minorities in this country, including British Shia Muslims, it is clear why the issues of ethnicity, minority rights, discrimination, and the best social setting for migrants,

multiculturalism, integration, and assimilation have resulted in passionate and sensationalized discussions in Parliament, political parties, universities, and UN agencies.

As previously mentioned, there are currently three main approaches to dealing with the issue of immigrants and culturally minority groups. Pro-assimilation scholars and their followers believe that there should be a conditional and timely arrangement for minority groups, so they gradually lose their ties to their initial or parental culture and adopt certain essential elements of the host culture, such as language, history, and an oath of allegiance to the Monarch, among others. The ultimate goal is that with time, future generations of minority groups will gradually lose their cultural values and become completely assimilated into the indigenous majority.

Another group of scholars and policymakers argue that the previous approach is not humane or democratic enough and that immigrants and minority groups should be able to integrate socially and politically while still being able to practice their cultural traditions and religious rituals, as long as it does not conflict with the indigenous host culture's norms.

Finally, there is another group of thinkers and scholars who believe in liberal pluralism, which respects the equal rights of every member of society, regardless of whether they are indigenous or immigrant, and does not make any distinction in terms of citizenship or national identity, or other legal rights.

Britain, with its colonial history, claims to be the source and origin of democratic and liberal values and has been hosting immigrants and minority groups within a multicultural setting for many years. These relationships and interactions have been mutually beneficial, both culturally, politically, and financially.

In a ground-breaking series of reports entitled "*British Muslims' Expectations of the Government*," Ameli and Merali, in the volume on Dual Citizenship, concluded in 2004 that despite relentless vilification by the media, hostile and legal policies, marginalization by mainstream institutions, and economic deprivation, Muslims in Britain have maintained a willingness to participate in British civil life. However, they warn that this goodwill cannot continue indefinitely and must be nurtured through a change in attitude and a deeper commitment to engaging with and involving Muslims in Britain. To build a cohesive society, their fears must be dispelled, their trust regained, and their goodwill harnessed. (Ameli, 2004)

2.3.2 Multicultural framework and related issues in the UK

Before discussing the issue of multiculturalism in the UK, I would like to expand the discussion to include the topic of multiculturalism worldwide, including its historical background and its relationship to globalisation, migration, and other international movements caused by political, economic, and other global developments.

As more and more people move across borders in search of a better life, it is estimated that most countries, particularly developed nations, will have a multicultural and multi-ethnic composition. The number of cultures that will have to coexist in the same social environment will greatly increase, making it difficult, if not impossible, to give each culture full access and opportunity to be visible and have a certain influence on general social life. These countries will face unexpected challenges and problems that could affect their very existence. To maintain social cohesion and political unity, they will have to work out practical solutions with few alternatives and through many compromises and sacrifices.

Some questions that might be reflected upon include:

1. How can social life be reinforced in such a dynamic and changing multicultural environment?
2. What type of citizenship is needed to achieve equilibrium?
3. Can more global citizenship provide a better chance for social stability and social harmony, and how can individuals and communities express and reflect their proper identity or be absorbed by global societies?
4. How can individuals be prepared to live and work in this fast-changing global society, and what kind of education and training is needed for that purpose?
5. How can these societies maintain their historical identity and individual heritage in the past, present, and future, and what will happen to religions, family life, traditions, values, and all other individual and community belongings?

The attempt to provide answers to these and other related questions will necessarily engage the discussion in a predictive framework and put it, at times, within a more imaginative perspective. This, of course, will not eliminate the possibility of evaluating human and social experiences and, particularly, how cultural compromise is worked out. This type of multicultural society is challenged by the recent forms of migration coming from all over the globe. In light of the principles of the rationality of the newly created multicultural nations, countries are faced with challenging issues of social and cultural coherence. When considering the space and time dimensions, the secularization and liberalization of civil societies, the dominant advancements in different aspects of science and technology, and

the nonlinear and homogeneous conception of development, they seem incompatible with the conception of life and society of the newly arrived immigrant communities. However, the original population has lost the link with the traditional neighbourhood to which they used to belong.

These feelings of alienation on the part of the indigenous people create adverse reactions against new immigrants of any background. In addition, populist politicians take advantage of this situation and try to impose pressure on traditional political life. In contrast to this idea, there is another suggested approach, which is to adopt a new conception of space, time, civil society, care, and progress. Inspired and supported by many scholars and social scientists, an ecological philosophical basis for contemporary mixed societies is on the horizon. The issues such as the environmental situation (such as global warming) with its catastrophic effects on the planet earth have given a new dimension to international issues affecting all of us, which requires special attention from all civil societies through an international organization such as the UN, with new and comprehensive and integrated strategies and programming with the support of all countries of the world, particularly the industrial world.

The United Kingdom has long been considered a multicultural and multi-ethnic country. According to the latest demographic data, the population of the country is comprised of various races and ethnic groups, as follows:

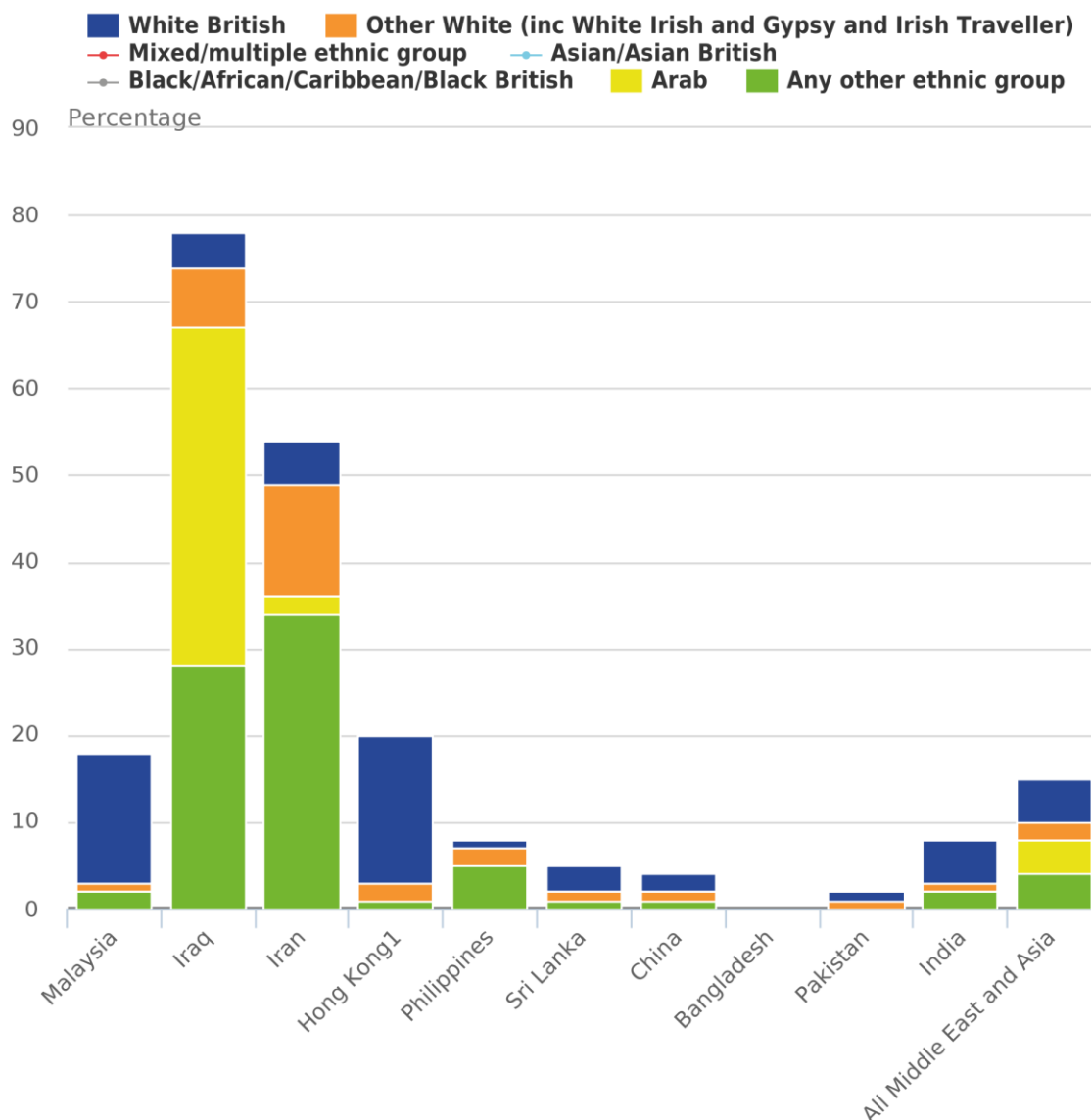
Table 1: The UK and Non-UK-born population by ethnicity in England and Wales, 2011

Ethnic Group	The UK born	%	Non- UK born	%
White	44774	92.2	3435	45.8
British	44188	91.0	949	12.8
Irish	178	0.4	354	4.7
Gypsy or Irish traveler	51	0.1	7	0.1
Other white	360	0.7	2126	28.3
Mixed/Multiple Ethnic Group	985	2.0	239	3.2
White and Black Caribbean	401	0.8	28	0.3
White and Black African	113	0.2	53	0.7
White and Asian	271	0.6	71	0.9
Other Mixed	200	0.4	90	1.2
Asian/Asian British	1770	3.6	2443	32.6
Indian	606	1.2	807	10.7
Pakistani	631	1.3	493	6.6
Bangladeshi	232	0.5	215	2.9
Chinese	83	0.2	300	4.0
Other Asians	207	0.4	628	8.4
Black/African/Caribbean British	873	1.8	992	13.2
African	323	0.7	666	8.9
Caribbean	358	0.7	237	3.2
Other Black	192	0.4	89	1.2
Other ethnic Group	168	0.3	395	5.3
Arab	64	0.1	167	2.2
Any other ethnic group	105	0.2	228	3.0
% Total	-----	100	-----	100
All	48571	86.6	7505	13.4

Source: 2011 the UK National Census

In official statistics declared and reported in the results of 2011, UK National Census, there is no reliable information about the British-Iranian community or British Shia Muslims, and the available statistics on the population of the said community are based on guess and estimation. But as the focus of this report is on British Iranian and in particular, YPBIs, it should be noted that there is a systematic relationship between British Iranians, including YPBIs), and the UK-born Athna-asheri Shia Muslims (BASMs). Within the British faith system, the BASMs are considered to be at a higher level in the religious hierarchy compared to the lower level of British-Iranian Shia Muslims. In another chart, the percentage of the non-UK-born ethnic population of certain countries has been demonstrated.

Figure 1: The ethnicity of the UK-born population by country of birth in England and Wales

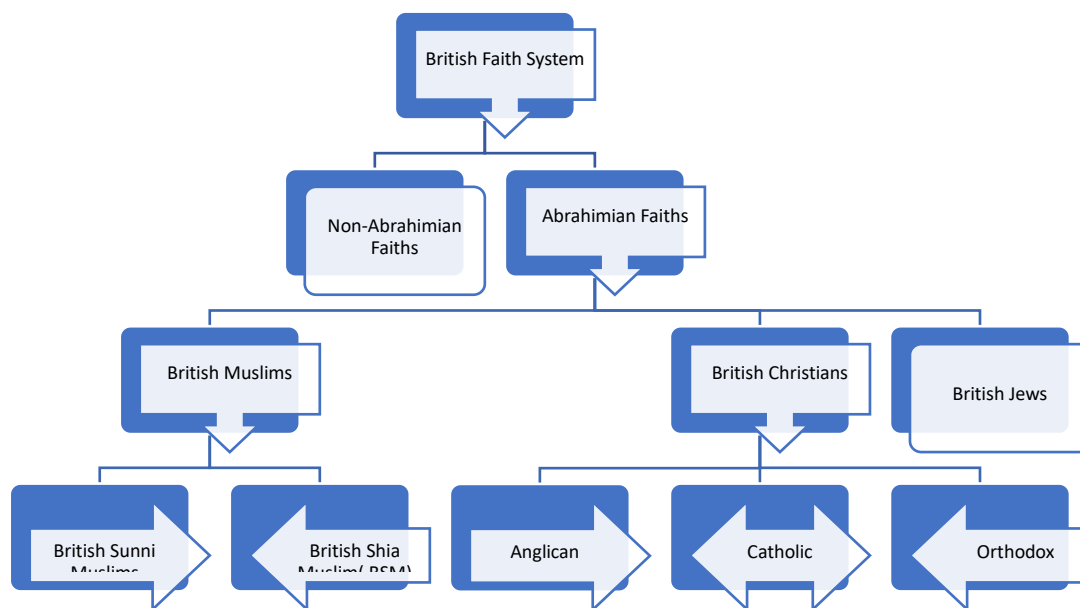


According to this demographic data, the population of the country based on race and ethnic groups reveals that the population of Iranian heritage constitutes the second highest number of the non-UK-born population after Iraqis, due to its exceptional political and

regional situation and the increase in the number of migrants and asylum seekers. The total population of England and Wales in 2011 was 56.1 million, with an increase of 7.8 percent compared to the 2001 National UK Census. The population of those who were born outside the UK was 7.5 million, with an increase of 62 percent, which accounts for 71 percent of the overall population growth. This growth was mainly related to the non-UK-born segment of the population.

The increase in the percentage of the total population in 2011 compared to 2001, i.e. 7.1 percent, and the major share of the 'non-UK born nationals' associated with this increase (71 percent), reveals two main factors and reasons for this increase. One is the growth in the number of migrants, particularly from Iraq and Iran, and the second is due to the high rate of fertility among Muslim communities. It should also be noted that there is a systematic relationship between British Iranians, including YPBIs, and the UK's British Athna-asheri Shia Muslims. In the British faith system, the BASMs are considered a higher level of the religious sub-system compared to the lower level of the British-Iranian Shia Muslims (sub-system) in the hierarchical order.

Figure 2: British Faith system



In the following table, the major faiths and religions are practiced by different people, in England and Wales with their numbers and percentages depicted.

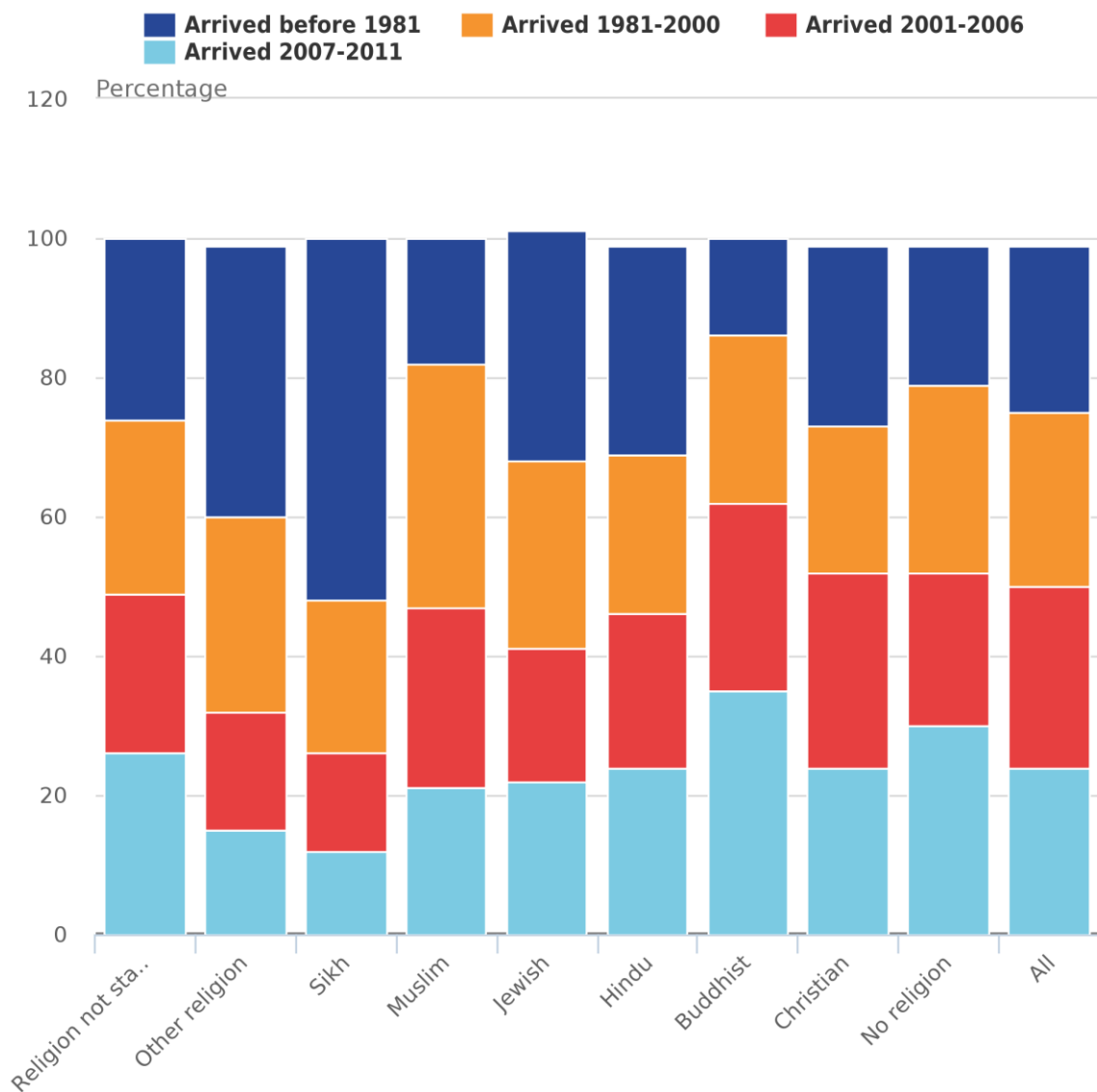
Table 2: The UK and Non-UK born Population by religion in England and Wales, 2011

Religion	The UK born	%	Non-UK born	%
No religion	13064	26.9	1033	13.8
Christian	29676	61.1	3567	47.5
Buddhist	98	0.2	149	2
Hindu	272	0.6	545	7.3
Jewish	214	0.4	50	0.7
Muslims	1278	2.6	1428	19
Sikh	239	0.5	184	2.4
Other religion	193	0.4	47	0,6
Religion not stated	3536	7.3	502	6.7

Source: 2011 UK National Census

The following chart has been designed to show the religion of the Non-UK born population during five different periods of their arrival to England and Wales.

Figure 3: Religion of the Non-UK born population by five different periods of arrival



Source: 2011 UK National Census

2.3.3 Intercultural communication

In the context of this study, intercultural communication refers to all social aspects, effects, and activities that arise from the interactions and communications between groups or communities with different ethnic and national backgrounds, such as in a multicultural society like British society. An example of this would be the cultural and social interactions and communications between British-Iranian and particularly YPBIs (Young Practicing British Iranians) and other members of British society, including both Muslims and non-Muslims, Iranians and non-Iranians.

Intercultural communication is also referred to as "cross-cultural communication" and is defined as the range of communication problems that naturally occur within organizations

made up of individuals from different social, ethnic, and educational backgrounds. This process involves understanding the communication styles and perspectives of people from different countries and cultures, as well as how they interact and communicate within a specific country or social setting.

Intercultural communication theory has been widely applied in fields such as anthropology, cultural studies, psychology, communications, and linguistics. Theoretically, as (Bennett, 1998) explains, in mono-cultural communication, the element that defines the nature of relationships between group members is based on similarities, whereas in multicultural communication, where different languages, traditions, and social values are present, the decisive element is based on differences.

The Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) is a method based on Bennett's work that conceptualizes intercultural sensitivity (ICS). According to Bennett, ICS can be expressed on a continuum consisting of two main categories of behaviour, each consisting of three ethnocentric stages (Denial, Defence, and Minimization of differences) and three ethnorelative stages (Acceptance, Adaptation, and Integration). These stages are described in more detail in Bennett's work.

In Bennett's model to measure Intercultural Sensitivity, he posits that there are six different stages, which are divided into two main categories: ethnocentric and ethnorelative.

The ethnocentric stages are:

1. Denial of Differences: Individuals in this stage are usually brought up in a homogeneous environment with little contact with people from other cultures. They tend to isolate themselves from other cultural groups and maintain their condition of isolation.
2. Defence against Differences: Recognition of differences and negative perceptions about them. The "We-they" way of thinking is common, and there are three dimensions to it: superiority in comparison to other groups, denigration of other group's values, and reversal, in which persons assume that other cultures are superior to their own culture and hence become alienated from their cultural group.
3. Minimization of Differences: Emphasis on similarities rather than differences. Two sub-stages are physical universalism for all human beings and transcendental universalism or belief in the similarity of the people from the angle of spiritual, political, or other overarching commonalities.
4. Acceptance of Differences: Recognition and appreciation of cultural differences, believing that one culture is not necessarily better or worse than the others. Two sub-stages are: Behavioural Relativism, referring to the idea that behaviours are different

across the world, and Value Relativism, which pertains to the good/bad attributes given to cultures as a value orientation.

5. Adaptation of Differences: Effective communication and interaction with people from other cultures. Two dimensions of this stage are empathy, or the ability to shift perspectives to alternative cultures, and pluralism, or internalization of more than one complete worldview.
6. Integration of Differences: Internalization of more than one culture worldwide. Two sub-stages here are contextual evaluation, or the ability to employ different cultural frames of reference, and constructive marginality, or acceptance of an identity that is not based on one culture. (ibid)

In this study, which examines the process of acceptance, adaptation, and integration of British Iranians and YPBIs, particular attention is given to Bennett's work. He argues that the concept of intercultural adaptation is often misunderstood, and that a distinction should be made between adaptation and assimilation. According to Bennett, assimilation involves replacing one's original worldview with that of the host culture, while adaptation involves expanding one's worldview to include behaviours and values appropriate to the host culture.

In the same article, Bennett also discusses integration, stating that people in this stage of development are trying to reconcile the sometimes conflicting cultural frames they have internalized. He explains that as they move into integration, people achieve an identity that allows them to see themselves as interculturalists or multiculturalists in addition to their national and ethnic backgrounds.

Intercultural communication in today's globalized world is an inevitable process that many people experience in their social lives. The degree to which one practice and experiences intercultural communication depends on a variety of factors, including geographical location, social and cultural characteristics of communities, and more. One recent event that received significant attention from people around the world was the terrorist attack of September 11, 2001. Sadraei and Felammia have noted the link between this event and intercultural communication. (Sadraei, H. & Felammia, M., 2011)

The historical and catastrophic incident of September 11, 2001, greatly impacted not only American citizens but people all over the world. It brought attention to the fact that intercultural conflicts were not just happening to foreigners, and changed the way we view international communication and intercultural relations. As a result, experts in the field of intercultural communication began to organize theories and methods to better understand the causes and effects of this tragedy. Studies were also conducted on issues such as cultural imperialism, ethnic profiling, hate crimes, globalisation, human rights violations, political exploitation, religious intolerance, and social marginalisation.

Intercultural communication, also known as cross-cultural communication, is a discipline within the field of communication that focuses on how individuals and organizations interact with people from different ethnic, racial, religious, and social backgrounds. It aims to understand how members of ethnic minorities behave, communicate, and perceive their environment, and how to interact with each other. In addition to language barriers, intercultural communication also deals with understanding different cultures and behaviours. This field draws on the expertise of multiple disciplines, such as anthropology, cultural studies, international business, political science, psychology, and sociology. (Sadraei, H. & Felammia, M., 2011)

2.4 British Shia Muslims in the UK

The religion of Islam is divided into two main sects: the majority Sunni sect and the minority Shia sect, with various sub-sects and affiliations within them. Worldwide, the ratio of Sunnis to Shias is roughly 80:20. Among Shia believers, the Athna-ashari or Twelver sect is the largest denomination within this minority sect, who currently reside in the United Kingdom. However, it should be noted that there is a significant amount of diversity among Shia Muslim believers, such as Athna-ashari, Ismaili, Zaidi, Sufi, and other Shia believers.

To understand the division of Islam into these two sects, it is important to note that, similar to other religions such as Christianity, which has the sects of Catholics and Protestants, there is a historical distinction between Sunni Muslims and Shia Muslims. While there are many commonalities and similarities between the two sects, there are also some differences that have led to discord and disunity among followers. At extreme levels, this sectarianism can lead to hostility and animosity between the two sects, which harms the unity of the Muslim Ummah (the community of believers).

For this reason, religious authorities, Imams, and leaders from both sects have been advocating for unity and oneness among the Ummah, and have warned against being deceived by negative propaganda from opponents of Islam. There is a significant amount of literature, research, and articles available on this topic. I refer readers to explore these sources for further information. One of the main historical differences between Sunnis and Shias is rooted in the question of leadership and governance of the newly established Islamic government after the death of Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam, in the year 63 Hijri calendar. According to (Scharbordt, Oliver, and Yafa shanneik, 2020), the main issue for Muslims after the death of Muhammad was the "question of succession" and attempts to maintain existing power relations. Sunnis believed that the successors of the Prophet

should be from the "rightly-guided" caliphs, who were companions of Muhammad, while Shias believed that succession should be within the household of the Prophet, specifically in the form of rightful progenies or "ahl-ul-beyt." They believed that Muhammad did not publicly mention anything about his succession, while Shia believers maintained that the Prophet had chosen Ali, his nephew, and son-in-law, as his successor or the first Imam for the Muslim Ummah.

Although the practical ruling of the Islamic governments after the death of the Prophet was controlled by the Sunni majority, such as the Umayyad and Abbasid caliphs, from the Shia perspective, the "Imamate" or succession of Shia Islamic ruling was continued within the Prophet's household, from fathers to sons, except for Imam Hassan and Imam Hussain, who were brothers. The Imamate or hereditary ruling continued until the twelfth Imam, Muhammad ibn Hassan Askari, who went into occultation at the age of 9 to escape assassination. According to Shia belief, he will re-appear as the Islamic saviour at the end of time.

There are various sub-denominations of Shia Islam, such as Ismail, Zidies, and Alawites, but the main division is Twelver Shia Islam, which is currently based in Iran, Iraq, Azerbaijan, India, Afghanistan, and scattered around the world. The current Maraji, or grand Ayatollahs, based mainly in the holy cities of Qom, Iran, and Najaf, Iraq, see themselves as the representatives of the hidden Imam Mahdi and spread and interpret Shia Islamic teachings and fatwas or decrees on relevant issues through networks of scholars and clergymen and control and observe religious issues including the collection of money from Islamic tax revenue (khums) and other financial incomes and donations. (ibid)

Another Shia scholar, (Nasr, 2007), believes that the conflict between Shias and Sunnis is both a struggle for the soul of Islam and a manifestation of tribal and ethnic conflicts. He explains that the struggle is not just a religious dispute from the early years of Islam, but a contemporary clash of identities that is fuelled by theological and historical disagreements as well as current concerns with power, subjugation, freedom, and equality.

The British-Shia-Muslim community (BASMs) has three main characteristics: being British by national identity, being Shia by sect, and being Muslim by religious identity. A member of this community is a minority living in the United Kingdom, and their relationships and interactions with others vary depending on their social status. These three elements are important for understanding the identity of a typical BASM and can be analysed in more depth. A BASM, as a citizen of the United Kingdom, has certain rights and responsibilities towards British society, and their level of involvement in social affairs affects their relationships and interactions with other members of mainstream society.

Regarding the other two elements attached to the identity of a British-Shia-Muslim (BASM), namely, Shia and Muslim, it is clear that they are closely related and linked to each other historically and religiously. Someone who identifies as a Shia Muslim must first identify as a Muslim and then as a believer in the Shia tradition. In short, a typical BASM, born into a Shia Muslim family (or converted to Shia Islam) with all religious and cultural links, currently living in a multicultural country with a dominant secular or non-Islamic background, has a combination of intercultural communication with their fellow Shia Muslims (in terms of religious and ethnic links) and with the larger Muslim community (both Sunnis and Shias) and finally with the indigenous members of the main society in terms of social and economic relations.

By focusing on the BASM community living within the multicultural and multi-ethnic political and social framework of Britain, it can be understood that as a result of these inter-group relations between these two groups, certain mutual obligations, expectations, responsibilities, and in short, a culture or norm of conduct come into play. In this specific case, these relations are manifested in the form of "intercultural communication" between BASMs and the main society. These interrelations undoubtedly affect both parts of society, and as this is the core subject of the study at hand, it will be further discussed in the following pages.

(Ameli, 2004), has classified the British Muslim identity into eight different categories according to Castello's theory of "social identity." The typology of British Muslims based on their identity, according to him, is as follows:

Nationalist identity, 2) Traditionalist identity, 3) Islamist identity, 4) Modernized Identity, 5) Secular identity, 6) Anglicized (Western) identity, 7) Hybrid identity, and 8) Undetermined identity (Ameli, 2004, pp. 133-139). In regards to the British Shia Muslim identity, I had the opportunity to interview Sheikh Moezi, the head of the Islamic Centre of England from 2010 to 2015, on the issues related to the above question, he commented.

“European governments have traditionally sought to integrate and assimilate minority groups, including Muslims, into their cultural and social systems. However, this effort has not been completely successful due to several reasons, such as the strong belief in ethnic traditions and the deep cultural roots of non-Europeans. The history of the presence of Muslim communities in Europe, both Shia, and Sunni, demonstrates that they have defended their religious identities and should continue to do so in order to secure their legitimate rights. However, the dominant establishment in these countries, which are still largely Eurocentric, does not allow non-European minority groups, including Muslims, to occupy top political, social, and financial positions in British or other European societies.” (Moezi, 2011)

Regarding the number of British Shia Muslims (BASMs), it should be reminded that the countries with a relatively high number of Shia Muslims include Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, India, Pakistan, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, UAE, and other Persian Gulf states, as well as African nations, the West Indies, and European and American converts. In line with the general ratio of the total number of Shia Muslims to Sunnis (80% Sunnis to 20% Shias) and based on the current estimated number of British Muslims, which is roughly around 3.5 million (ONS: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/aboutus/transparencyandgovernance/freedomofinformationfoi/muslimpopulationintheUK/>), the number of BASMs could be guessed to be around 600,000 (15% of 3.5 million). However, the actual number could be higher, as there are many unreported and uncounted cases of asylum-seekers and immigrants who are not included in official statistics. It should be noted that this figure is not definite or accurate and is based on estimation.

The diasporic characteristics of British Muslims, including both Sunnis and Shias, are extensive. In particular, British Shia Athna-asheri Muslims (BASMs) have strong connections and relationships with their country of origin. These connections manifest in various forms, such as physical establishments such as restaurants, shops, and religious places, as well as virtual connections through local TV, satellite broadcasting, social media, and social networks.

As I explained in the introduction chapter, I conducted an independent study on British Athna Asheri Muslim. I will point out a few key pieces of information and findings of the study in lines to come. In this research, the entire community of British Athna-asheri Shia Muslims, including British Iranians (BICs). The aim, justification, and objectives of the research project have been outlined, and the results and findings will be discussed in further detail throughout the pages to come.

2.4.1 A glance at my previous study on British-Shia Muslims

One of the significant events that occurred during my professional and academic activities in the UK was conducting independent research on British Athna-asheri Shia Muslims (BASM) as part of a routine part-time study program under the supervision of the Islamic College. The research program took place between 2004 and 2013. I had some concerns about studying BASM within the multicultural setting of the UK, which is a destination for many immigrants and asylum seekers from various countries, including Muslim-majority nations.

With the intention and incentive to conduct this independent research, I focused on related issues, including:

1. What percentage of BASMs (British Shia Muslims) could be considered "integrated" with the host society?
2. What is the general perception and reaction of the host society towards the British Athna-ashari Shia Muslim identity? Is this identity publicly known and does it have a place and rank in British society?
3. What is the perception and reaction of British Sunni Muslims towards the above identity? Is supporting and propagating this identity beneficial for the unity of the Muslim Ummah as a whole?
4. What is the best estimate of the number of BASMs in the UK?
5. How can Shia Islamic centers work together to improve their social, political, and religious status and strengthen their position as a recognized and successful belief system?
6. How is the future of Islam, in general, and Shia Islam, in particular, seen and what should be the role of the BASM community in this regard?
7. What are the expectations of BASMs from British Sunni Muslims (intra-faith) and British society (inter-faith)?
8. How can Shia Marajes (Religious Shia authorities) contribute to supporting Shia communities living abroad with religious, social, and cultural issues?
9. Any other relevant issues and considerations.

In this study, my target group was British Athna-ashari Shia Muslims (BASM) and I investigated their identity, social and cultural affairs, and their integration with the wider multicultural society of Britain. The title of my independent study, which unfortunately has not been officially published due to a few problems, was "The Intercultural Relations of British Shia Muslims with British Society: Acceptance, Adaptation, and Integration." The above-mentioned questions mostly cover the important aspects of the current BASM situation. In addition, other detailed data about the BASM community that was collected and analysed during that study will be discussed in the chapters to come.

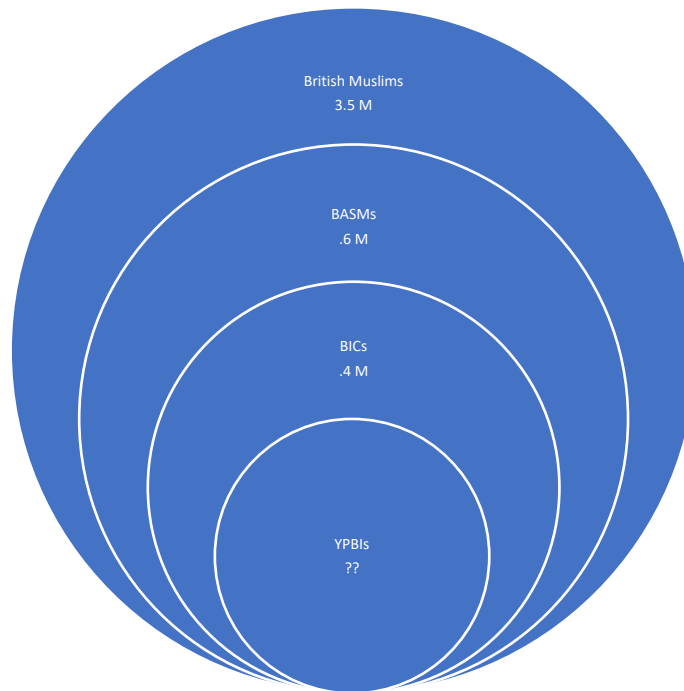
Turning attention to the suitable grounds and framework for "intercultural communication" of BASMs and the main British society to materialize, it appears that this phenomenon could develop in a society with the presence of different ethnic groups with diverse cultures or simply in a multicultural social setting. However, the present discussion does not seem complete unless the main reason behind 'multiculturalism' and the appropriate bedding for this social and political setting, namely the 'process of globalization,' is addressed, which will be discussed in the following lines.

Before continuing, I would like to provide more information and justifications for the rationale behind conducting this research. The religion of Islam, as the final divine religion of the world, has had a tumultuous history spanning nearly 1500 years. In recent times, particularly after the events of 9/11 in the United States and 7/7 in the United Kingdom, the Islamic world has been engaged in a series of multi-dimensional challenges and dialogues with other civilizations, particularly the Western civilization, which is dominated by the Neo-Liberal doctrine. (Esposito & Mogahed, D, 2007)

The scope and domain of these debates and problems are so comprehensive and vast that they have occupied a significant portion of political, social, and economic literature worldwide. Despite political disputes and hostility, significant changes in social, technological, economic, and international situations have led to traditional social settings being altered, particularly in leading industrial nations, to address new problems and conditions. (Schwarzmantel, 2007) One of the most significant new worldwide situations is the issue of mass immigration, which will be discussed in more detail later. The United Kingdom, with its historical role in colonization and exploitation of other overseas countries, has been dealing with the issue of immigration for many years. As a result, this country has a relatively long history of having different minority ethnic groups on its soil. (Ansari, 2004)

By experience, the United Kingdom has established legal and official criteria for dealing with issues related to different ethnic groups with diverse racial backgrounds. To this day, classifying citizens according to their racial and ethnic roots is a common practice, implemented even in elementary schools and local GP surgeries. Exploring and learning about the social and cultural characteristics of the British Athna Ashari Shia Muslim (BASM) community, which lives in a multicultural environment in the United Kingdom, is very useful for a variety of reasons. For example, understanding their willingness to learn about their legal rights and participation in social, political, and cultural affairs in their neighbourhood and country, as well as their degree of adherence to mainstream British society, can lead to better planning and budget allocation for social activities. Additionally, by understanding the characteristics and needs of the BASM community, local and national policymakers can develop initiatives to fulfil their legal and social requirements. I have previously explained that there is a systematic relationship (systems hierarchy) between YPBIs, BICs, BASMs, British Muslims, and even the outer system of the British faith system, as depicted in the following diagram.

Figure 4: Hierarchical order of British Muslims in the UK



As previously mentioned, the estimated population of Muslims living in the United Kingdom is around 3.5 million, according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS) in 2021. The accepted ratio of Shia Muslims to the total Muslim population is estimated to be between 10-20%, resulting in an estimated population of Twelver (Shia) Muslims in the UK at around 600,000. This estimate aligns with the estimation made by the Economist in 2015, which estimated the population of Shia Muslims in the UK at 400,000.

Additionally, the population of Iranians born in the UK was estimated at around 200,000 in 2015, according to (Gholami, R. & Seberny, A, 2015) (Spellman, 2004). However, given the increase in the number of legal and illegal immigrants of Iranian nationals into the UK, it is believed that the current population of British Iranians could be between 250,000.

It is important to note that the numbers of British Muslims, BASMs, BICs, and YPBs in the UK are based on estimates and guesses, as depicted in the chart mentioned earlier. The accuracy of these numbers is not considered to be significant in the findings and conclusions of the present study. The community of BASMs is made up of people of different nationalities and ethnic backgrounds, ranging from Indian/Pakistani origin to Persian, Middle-Eastern, or Arab backgrounds.

2.4.2 Results and findings of the research on BASM

By implementing the above-mentioned research, the results and findings were drawn by analysing and interpreting the gathered data, which was fully explained in the prepared independent, and here I only refer to some of the key findings that are somehow relevant to the current work-based RPR about YPBIs.

- **The British-Shai Muslims, who we are?**

The presence of Shia Muslims in the United Kingdom is as old as the presence of Sunni Muslims if the focus is on the Shia community. This is particularly true during the Safavid era when the Persian dynasty promoted the Shia sect of Islam as the national and official religion of the nation. ²

Being in minority, Shia Muslims have often hidden their identity due to the course of history. As a result, the presence and number of Shia Muslims in the UK are mostly based on estimates. Currently, the best estimate of the number of British Shia Muslims (BSMs) is between 250,000 and 300,000. According to the 2001 UK national census, the number of British Muslims (Sunni and Shia) was 1.7 million, or approximately 3% of the total population. Another national census was conducted in March 2011, but the results have not yet been published. It typically takes 2-3 years for all results and related statistics to be announced. However, in 2009, the Office for National Statistics estimated the number of British Muslims to be 2.4 million.

(The Times, January 30, 2009).

According to a study, it is estimated that the number of British Shia Muslims in 2009 was nearly 240,000 and is likely over 250,000 as of November 2011. The figure is based

² Historically, it could be said the presence of the first Shia Muslims in this country is as old as the presence of Sunni Muslims and surely during the Safavids, (the Persian dynasty which ruled Iran for nearly 250 years from 1501 A.D.) (Nahavandi, H & Bomet, Y., 1998), promoting the Shia sect of Islam as the national and official religion of the nation at the time whilst the Ottoman Empire (present Turkey), was dominating most of the Eastern territories under the Sunni Muslim flag, covering countries like Egypt, Palestine, Syria, etc. During the rule of First Shah Abbas, the Persian powerful Safavid king known as Shah Abbas The Great (born in 1570), tried to establish and expand relations with European powers to obtain their support in long battles that he had with his eastern Othman empire. Shirley brothers who arrived in 1598, helped the Shah to expand and organise his army. Later Robert Shirley, who made a deep friendship with Shah Abbas, and won his trust was sent by the Shah, as his envoy to Russia, Spain, Germany, and United Kingdom, to seek their friendship. 'Gradual political contact between English Empire and Persia was expanding by some official and unofficial visits to Persia by British envoys and merchants. * At the same time, The English East India Company established in 1603 began to pay more attention to Iran and in 1622 the Royal British Navy helped Shah Abbas to retake Hormuz from the Portuguese. This event was the beginning of the long interest and influence of the East India Company in Iran. (Nahavandi, H & Bomet, Y., 1998). Also at that time due to the existence of colonial ties between Britain and India and the practicing of Shia Islam by some Indian Muslims who had some connections and relations with the UK, quite a few Shia Muslim Indians had emigrated to this country as their permanent home and hence Shia Islam was practiced (not very publicly though) in different parts of the country. (ibid).

on a comparison to the universal ratio of 10% as the minimum ratio of Shia Muslims to the total Muslim population. It's important to note that the practice of hiding religious identity, known as Taqieh in Shia tradition, may contribute to a lack of accurate data. No systematic data-gathering body, either public or private, has taken interest in collecting statistics on religious beliefs. The study focuses on the main issues and subjects concerning British Athna-ashari Shia Muslims (BASMs), who are legally resident in the UK and believe in Shia Islam, having elements of Muslimness, Shianess, and Britishness. Although there have been studies on British Muslims, research on British Shia Muslims, particularly Athna-asharis, is limited.

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Due to the lack of systematic and scientific research on Shia Muslims in Britain, I conducted a study to gain a clearer understanding of British Shia Muslims (BSMs) and their integration with the larger British society. The study was conducted using a combination of quantitative and qualitative questionnaires and resulted in 441 gathered responses. The findings of the study provide insight into the characteristics and typology of the British Shia community, as well as their relationship with the host British society. The conclusion of the study includes recommendations and considerations for the future of the British Athna-ashari Shia Muslim community. The following points are drawn from the results and findings of the research, which I believe to be informative and explanatory.

- **Integration of BASM with the wider society**

One of the objectives of this study was to determine if the British Athna-ashari Shia Muslim (BASM) community can be considered integrated into the main British society. The concept of "integration" is a broad topic in political and sociocultural policies that has been a subject of much debate and concern in governmental policies, especially following the 9/11 and 7/7 incidents in the US and the UK. The UK government's "Group Cohesion" program is aimed at involving younger generations of minority communities in more British cultural activities, rather than "ethnic" or traditional cultural activities. It is believed that linking young people from non-English backgrounds to British cultural activities, such as language, sports, art, and education, will reduce the likelihood of terrorism.

To find out about the BASM community's level of integration, the survey respondents were asked to evaluate their integration with the main British society. The majority (43%) believed they were integrated. The conclusion was based on not only this question but also on 14 other quantitative questions, 15 qualitative questions, and supported interviews. In general, it can be concluded that while the majority of BASMs are socially, legally, and politically integrated into British society in various sectors such as trade, economy, education, sport, and politics, they are not yet culturally integrated and continue to observe their own cultural, ethnic, and traditional norms.

- **British Shia Muslim Identity**

In the following section, I will briefly discuss some aspects of the British Shia Muslim community and its relationship with the larger British community. This topic will be explored in greater detail in subsequent chapters.

Regarding the identity of a typical British Athna-ashari Shia Muslim (BASM), it is important to define who they are and where they come from. The BASM community is made up of individuals from various national and ethnic backgrounds, including Iranians, Iraqis, Lebanese, Pakistanis, Azeris, Afghans, Bahrainis, Indians, Saudis, Kuwaitis, Yemenis, and others. This diversity makes it difficult to assign a single identity to the group. However, one commonality among these individuals is their shared religion of Shia Islam.

In my study, I asked the respondents what their preferred identity was. 24% said they preferred to be called by their parental nationality, indicating a strong connection to their

cultural heritage. The next largest group preferred to be identified by their religion, with 15% identifying as British Shia Muslims and 6% as simply British. These results show the varying affiliations and tendencies of the respondents, with some leaning towards their religion, others towards their new nationality, and others having no interest in their religion as part of their identity.

These were just a few key points from my previous study on BASMs and related to my current research on Young Practicing British Iranians. There are many other results and findings from the said study, which I will address these wherever appropriate. Before delving further into the target group and their characteristics, I would like to briefly touch on the historical, political, social, and cultural situation in Iran, specifically looking at two major periods: 1) the period after World War II (the 1940s) until the establishment of the Islamic Republic in 1979/1980, and 2) the period from the start of the rule of the Islamic Republic of Iran until the present day.

2.5 British – Iranian community

This section will examine the immigration of Iranians to foreign countries with a focus on British Iranians in the contemporary United Kingdom. By referencing significant historical events over the last hundred years, I try to shed more light on the political, social, and cultural conditions in Iran and examine the reasons for the large number of Iranians emigrating abroad, including to the UK. This discussion will encompass a portion of Reza Shah's reign from 1935 to 1941 and the entire duration of Muhammad Reza Shah's reign from 1941 to 1979. First, I start to give some information about the major historical events in this period.

2.5.1 Historical, political, social, and cultural background

Considering Iran's strategic geographical location and rich historical heritage as one of the world's oldest and most influential civilizations, the Iranian people have always sought better living conditions under different rulers and governments. As a result of this long and troubled history, with its many social, cultural, political, and economic challenges, many Iranians from different generations, driven by various reasons and influenced by "push and pull" factors, have migrated mainly to Western countries, including the UK, which will be further discussed in the following lines.

The information used in this passage is a combination of my education and personal experiences, and I have tried to verify it with reliable sources. I was born in 1944, just before the end of the rule of Muhammad Reza Shah, and lived through the transition to the Islamic Republic in 1979-1980. Thus, I have spent half of my life under the previous regime and half under the current one. My focus is on the period starting in 1945, after the end of World War II when Reza Shah was forced to abdicate and his son, Muhammad Reza Shah, became the new ruler at the age of twenty. Reza Shah passed away in exile in 1944. (Balaghi, 2022)

2.5.1A Pahlavi's reign in Iran: 1910 – 1980

The rise and fall of the Pahlavi dynasty is an important and controversial historical event in the modern history of Iran. This dynasty with nationalistic links and interest in ancient Persian kings and kingdoms, such as Cyrus and Darius tried to create and revive a national and independent Aryan identity for Iranians in the region which was surrounded mostly by Eastern nations such as India/Pakistan and Afghanistan from the east. Arabs from the south, Turks from the west, and Russians from the northern borders of Iran. Even the chosen name of Pahlavi comes from the Zoroastrian culture and civilisation. It was during the reign of Reza Shah, which official name of the country changed from Persia to Iran, in 1935. (Ruller, 2021). This dynasty which consisted of only two kings; namely Reza Shah and his eldest son, Muhammad Reza Shah, is identified with a kind of secular and modernised characteristic and agenda. Both father and son tried to distance and depart themselves, from the influence of the Shia religious leaders which were always supported and respected strongly by Safavid and Qajar kings, for nearly 600 years. Although the official religion of the country during the reigns of the Pahlavi dynasty was also Shia Athna-ashari (Twelver), but due to the influence of internal and external influence, the general trend and direction of the government and society, was pro-Western ideas in social, cultural and even political affairs, particularly during the Mohammad Reza Shah's time. I have divided the reign of the Pahlavi into two periods which I discuss further in the lines to come.

- **Reza Shah (1878-1944)**

The Qajar dynasty, established in 1785, was overthrown in 1925. When the last Qajar prince, Ahmad Shah, went to Europe for medical treatment, he appointed Reza Khan,

a powerful military officer, as the Prime Minister in 1923. After Ahmad Shah left Iran, Reza Khan established the Pahlavi dynasty and proclaimed himself Reza Shah Pahlavi. His main priorities were to strengthen and equip the army, attain autonomy, and unify the nation. He sent troops to quell ethnic tribes seeking autonomy, and worked to modernize Iran by prioritizing infrastructure projects such as building railroads, roads, ports, airports, and hospitals, and sending students abroad. The budget for the Trans-Iranian Railroad, connecting the Persian Gulf to the Caspian Sea, was funded mainly by taxing sugar and tea prices and was completed in 1938. In addition to infrastructure projects, Reza Shah also reformed on education and judiciary systems. Compulsory education for all Iranians was announced, and many schools and the first modern university of Iran (the University of Tehran) were built. He aimed to develop Iran in various domains, influenced by the modernization efforts of Turkey's President Kamal Ataturk. However, Reza Shah's ambition was hindered by historical and political events such as the intervention of Britain and Russia, the outbreak of World War II, and his ties with Nazi Germany. In 1941, with Iran's oil resources critical for the success of the British Navy, Reza Shah was forced to resign and his son, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, was crowned as the new king. Reza Shah died in exile in South Africa in 1944. (Balaghi, 2022), (Baktash, 2021).

- **Muhammad Reza Shah (1919-1980)**

Mohammad Reza (born in 1919 in Tehran and died in 1980 in Cairo, Egypt) was the eldest son of Reza Shah Pahlavi and the head of the constitutional monarchy in Iran from 1941 to 1979. Despite being educated in Switzerland, he was inexperienced as a leader and was heavily influenced by Britain, USSR, and the USA in his foreign policy and domestic development plans, which relied heavily on oil revenue. In the early 1950s, a confrontation arose between Shah Mohammad Reza and Mohammad Mosaddegh, an Iranian nationalist seeking to nationalize the Iranian oil industry. Despite opposition from the pro-Soviet Union and Tudeh Party, Mosaddegh succeeded in nationalising the oil industry and was appointed as Prime Minister by Shah Mohammad Reza. However, after two years of conflict, Mosaddegh's opponents, including the US and the UK, toppled his cabinet and sent him to prison and Mohammad Reza Shah regained power.

Despite Iran's nominal independence from the oil industry in 1954, the country agreed to divide the oil revenue with an international consortium for production and management. Yann Richard, in his book, explores Iran's history from the Qajar era to the

presidency of Hassan Rouhani. Richard argues that Mohammad Reza Shah's reign was marked by political, social, and cultural challenges. He believes;

'In 1963, Muhammad Reza Shah introduced the White Revolution, a political and social/cultural reform initiative aimed at modernizing Iran. The initiative included eight fundamental national programs such as land reform, the nationalization of forests, the sale of state-owned enterprises to the private sector, and the formation of a Literacy and Health Corps to improve healthcare and education in rural areas. The White Revolution also granted Iranian women the right to vote and improved their legal rights in matters of divorce and child custody. The number of reforms expanded from six to nineteen in various domains of society, culture, and economy. However, the reforms faced opposition from Iran's clergy, including Ayatollah Khomeini, who led a demonstration on June 5, 1963, in opposition to the Shah and the White Revolution. The demonstration led to a confrontation between the religious students and authorities in the city of Qum, resulting in the death of several Qum seminary students. Ayatollah Khomeini's activities led to his exile to Iraq in 1964.'(ibid)

In the 1970s, Iran's oil boom brought huge petro-dollars, leading to ambitious development programs and the immigration of rural workers into cities, resulting in a shortage of agricultural goods and unequal distribution of wealth. The social unrest and political pressures from the brutal secret police force named Savak to control Shah's opponents, led to a series of demonstrations and rallies, ultimately resulting in the Islamic Revolution in 1979.

2.5.1B Establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran

After the Islamic Revolution in 1979, which led to the overthrow of the pro-Western regime of Muhammad Reza Shah, the country's constitution and its related goals, strategies, plans, and programs underwent significant changes both domestically and internationally. The principles of the Islamic Republic were endorsed by 98% of the eligible population in a referendum on April 1, 1980, known as Republic Day, which has been celebrated annually since. To implement these changes, the first constitutional law based on Shia Islamic jurisprudence was finalized in 1982, and the second amendment, which included the controversial principle of Guardianship of the Cleric Jurist, was approved by the Islamic Parliament in 1984.

These constitutional changes affected nearly every aspect of Iranian life, from personal moral, ideological, and religious conduct to political, social, and cultural orientations. Internationally, Iran's new foreign policy, based on principles such as

supporting oppressed people around the world and spreading the Islamic Revolution to neighbouring countries, resulted in the termination of all bilateral and international agreements Iran had established during the Pahlavi regime. According to Gary Sick, the Iranian Revolution "devastated all the Shah's constructed foreign policies with neighbours and the West, and particularly with the USA." (Sick, 2002).

The West's confrontation with Iran, especially the USA, with the excuse of Iran's pursuit of nuclear capabilities have resulted in prolonged political and economic pressure and trade sanctions by the USA, Europe, and the UN. These sanctions have negatively impacted Iran's internal plans and programs for fields such as employment, education, and social welfare. Despite these challenges, the Islamic Republic has managed to continue to implement its national and international policies.

One reason for the increase in Iranian emigration, particularly to Western countries like the UK, is the impact of the long-standing sanctions imposed by the West. In the following section, I have focused on the issue of the British-Iranian diaspora, their migration, and settlement patterns in the UK. I have also highlighted the historical, political, economic, social, and cultural factors in Iran over the last hundred years that have created a "push" factor for Iranians to migrate for mainly economic reasons.

2.5.2 Immigration of Iranians to modern Britain

The history of bilateral relations between Iran and the UK dates back to the Safavid era in the 17th century, if not earlier. The issue of Iranian immigration and the movement of people in large numbers, however, is a relatively recent phenomenon that increased significantly after the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The impact of globalization and its effects on international affairs, trade, and social and cultural matters have also contributed to the rise in global immigration, including that of Iranians to the UK.

In the last hundred years, specifically from the 1920s to the present time, the number of Iranian nationals who have relocated to Britain has followed a natural trend. The settlement of Iranian Shia in modern Britain has happened in two distinct phases: from the 1960s to 1980 during the last 20 years of Muhammad Reza Shah's reign, and from the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1979/1980 to the present day.

Iran, like other ancient civilizations, has always been influenced by religion, whether Islam or pre-Islamic religions. Professor Keddie (1980) argues that the origins of religious radicalism in Iran can be traced back to early Shi'i theory and how religious classes in Iran

became increasingly powerful and oppositional, even drawing support from secular revolutionary groups. He states that religious change and variations in religious ideas were always present in Iran, and were even more frequent and consequential in the past than in the contemporary era. (Keddie, 1980)

This discussion aims to delve into the reasons and causes of Iranian emigration to Western countries, particularly to modern Britain. The period I am covering for this purpose relates to the Pahlavi dynasty, consist of the reigns of Reza Shah and Muhammad Reza Shah, and after the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The two governing systems, the Pahlavi dynasty and the Islamic Republic of Iran, have fundamental and ideological differences leading to contrasting political orientations and constitutions. This institutional confrontation and contradiction between the two ideologies can be likened to the Hegelian philosophy of "thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. (Schnitker, S.A., Emmons, R.A. , 2013)

2.5.2A Iranian Migration during the reign of the Pahlavi dynasty

During the reign of Reza Shah, only a few diplomatic missions, merchants, and traders, as well as a limited number of tourists for medical purposes, were allowed to travel to Britain. At that time, Iran's educational and cultural ties were more focused on France and Germany, rather than Britain. During the rule of Pahlavi II, there was a relatively normal flow of travel abroad for educational, commercial, cultural, and tourist purposes, including to the UK. This was mainly by individuals or within the framework of bilateral cultural and educational agreements and was largely limited to the elite or wealthy class of society.

Although there were cases of political immigration by Iranians due to political and ideological conflicts with Shah's secular ideology, mostly by leftist intellectuals or extreme religious groups, and as a result of the threat posed by Savak, Shah's secret police, to European countries such as Germany, France, Austria, Italy, the UK, the ex-Soviet Union, and its allies, these were individual cases and limited in number. One such forced case of immigration, or more accurately "exile," was the deportation of the late Ayatollah Rouhollah Khomeini to Najaf, Iraq, for opposing the Shah's reforms in the 1960s. Shah and his ruling circle did not know that after twenty years of exile, Khomeini would return home with a huge and prestigious victory against Shah's regime, leading to the overthrow of the regime and the extinction of 2500 years of Persian monarchy in Iran forever. (Richard, 2019).

2.5.2B Iranian migration to the modern UK after the Islamic Revolution

The following section focuses on the important political, social, and cultural events that took place during the reign of the Islamic Republic from 1980 to the present. Before the Islamic Revolution in 1979, the Iranian community in the UK, especially in London, was not large in number. However, the situation changed after the Islamic revolution. A wave of immigration started even before the victory of the revolution, as people who were against the new Islamic regime or were somehow related to the previous monarchy of the Shah, or government officials feared persecution and sought asylum in foreign countries, including the UK.

The Iranian diaspora in the UK is diverse and heterogeneous, with various ethnicities, religions, social statuses, languages, genders, political affiliations, educations, and motivations for migration, ranging from political to sociocultural and economic reasons. This diversity is reflected in the Iranian diaspora in the UK, which is composed of different ethnic backgrounds with various cultural, social, and political affiliations, ranging from secular to religious Shia and Sunni Muslims, Christians, Jews, and those who are either pro-monarchy or pro/against the current Islamic Republic regime.

Among Iranians currently living in the UK, there are many asylum seekers and refugees who migrated to the UK mainly for economic reasons, and some claim to have fled due to human rights violations in Iran. According to Hakimzadeh, the number of admitted immigrants to the UK was 12,665 and 8,640 in the periods of 1991-2000 and 2001-2005, respectively. In this context, the author has tried to provide a few available statistics. (Hakimzadeh, 2006)

She has suggested that the Iranian immigration pattern can be divided into three waves. The first wave started in 1950 and ended in 1979 and was driven by Iran's economic growth and revenue from oil production after World War II. This led to a shift in Iranian society from traditionalism to modernization and encouraged middle- and upper-class families to send their children abroad for higher education. At the time, around 100,000 Iranians were studying abroad, with the majority in the United States, the United Kingdom, West Germany, France, Austria, and Italy. After the revolution, many of these students and their families chose to remain in the West. Other groups of immigrants included members of the monarchy and religious minorities who fled Iran due to the unstable Pahlavi regime and potential persecution.

The second wave of emigration took place after the establishment of the Islamic Republic. This wave included leftists, socialists, and liberals, as well as young men who escaped compulsory military service and women and families who fled gender discrimination and restrictions. This wave resulted in a "brain drain," as a large number of professionals, entrepreneurs, and academics left the country. The number of professors teaching in Iran's higher education institutions dropped from 16,222 before the revolution to 9,042 after the universities reopened in 1982. One out of every three physicians and dentists also left the country. This wave of emigration also had a significant impact on the industrial and technological sectors and resulted in a flight of capital from Iran estimated to be between \$30 billion and \$40 billion. Iranians in both the first and second waves did not consider their departure as permanent and believed they would return home when the revolutionary government was overthrown. (ibid)

The author reports on the third wave of emigration from Iran in the last decade, roughly between 1995 and 2005-2006. This wave consisted of two distinct groups: highly skilled individuals leaving universities and research institutions, and working-class labour migrants and economic refugees with lower education levels and less acceptable skills by international standards. In 2000, Iran had the highest number of asylum applications, 34,343, since 1986. The wave was caused by Iran's economic crisis, deteriorating human rights record, diminishing opportunities, and ongoing tension between reformists and conservatives, unlike the previous two waves which were primarily political and social/cultural.

The author elaborates on the reasons for refugees leaving Iran, including illegal methods such as being smuggled across the Turkish border and converting to Christianity to claim asylum on the grounds of apostasy in the Islamic Republic. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), at the end of 2005, there were 111,684 refugees, asylum seekers, and persons of concern from Iran. The largest populations of Iranian refugees were in Germany, the United States, Iraq, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and Canada.

Countries hosting the largest populations of Iranian refugees were Germany (39,904), the United States (20,541), Iraq (9,500), the United Kingdom (8,044), the Netherlands (6,597), and Canada (6,508). (Hakimzadeh, 2006). According to UK officials and international organizations such as the Office of National Statistics (ONS) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the following are brief statistics on Iranian refugees and asylum seekers in Western countries and specifically the UK. It is important to note that these figures are not entirely accurate as they only reflect the number of Iranians born in the UK or those who entered the country legally. A significant number of

Iranian refugees and asylum seekers in the UK are not reflected in official statistics due to various reasons.

UNHCR data shows that 20,575 people from Iran applied for asylum in other countries in 2021, which is approximately 0.024% of the total population. The most common destination countries were the United Kingdom, Germany, and Canada, with refugees in Iraq and Azerbaijan being the most successful. Turkey is the largest host of refugees from neighbouring countries, with 3.7 million people, due to the bilateral visa waiver agreement between Turkey and Western countries, making it the main launching pad for Iranian migrants to the West, particularly after the Islamic Revolution. (UNHCHR, 2021).

The majority of Iranians living in the UK arrived after the Islamic Revolution of 1979. According to the 2011 census, there were 79,985 Iranian-born individuals in England, 1,695 in Wales, 2,773 in Scotland, and 282 in Northern Ireland. The Office of National Statistics estimates that 70,000 Iranian-born individuals lived in the UK in 2017, and the Iranian embassy in London estimated the number to be as high as 75,000 in 2004. The first generation of Iranian migrants in the UK were mostly students, researchers, or individuals from wealthy families, such as former diplomats and business owners. Some political opponents to Shah's regime also fled to the UK to escape persecution. Most of the Iranians in the UK are settled in major cities, such as London and Manchester. According to (Spellman, 2004); 'Most of the Iranians settled in the UK and mainly in London and other major cities such as Manchester, Birmingham, Glasgow, before the Islamic revolution, were either formerly students, researchers, etc. who once came to the UK and stayed here and married with English spouses. Other classes of rich Iranians belonged to wealthy families, such as members of the royal families, previous diplomats, business and factory owners that could afford to buy property in the UK and settle here, or in rare cases those political opponents to Shah's regime who fled from Iran due to fear of persecution and other reasons.' The second and third generations of Iranians, born in the UK, have been granted British birth certificates. (Spellman, 2004). In explaining about her intention of doing research on British Iranians she writes;

"Through specific case studies, this study hopes to highlight the intersecting processes which foreground the conditions that shape cultural production and the inevitability of hybridised Iranian, popular forms of religiosity and textual; Muslim and British, assimilation and resistance." She continues; the main purpose of her study includes; 'discussing the settlement process of politically, religiously, socio-economically, and ethnically diverse into how religious traditions and practices have been sustained, adapted, or discarded by Iranians of Muslim backgrounds in response to the political, economic, and social conditions in Iran and Britain and how they have shaped their identities during migration. The author notes

that the number of Iranians living in the UK is uncertain, with estimates ranging from 100,000 to 500,000. Iranians in London are dispersed across different neighbourhoods, often residing close to other Iranian families or in areas designated for Iranians.' (Spellman, 2004)

Interestingly, as Iran has seen a wave of emigrants leaving its borders, the country has also historically hosted a large number of immigrants from other countries, primarily Afghanistan and Iraq. Approximately three million Afghan refugees have come to Iran due to economic reasons and the political and social situation in Afghanistan. According to the latest report from the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, 800,000 refugees are living in Iran, with 780,000 being Afghans and 20,000 being Iraqis. In addition, it is estimated that there are 2.1 million undocumented Afghan refugees and nearly 600,000 Afghan passport holders residing in Iran. This number has increased significantly since the turmoil in Afghanistan in August 2021, with some estimates suggesting that 500,000 to 1 million Afghans have recently fled to Iran seeking protection.

The phenomenon of immigration is a choice made by individuals or groups to change their living environment if their current conditions are unsatisfactory. This phenomenon has been influenced by various historical, political, social, and cultural factors, as well as economic sanctions imposed by the West on Iran in recent years, which have severely impacted the country's economy, industry, international trade, health, education, and cultural domains. I tried to refer to and highlight some historical, political, social/cultural factors in the issue of Iranian immigration to the modern UK, concerning the overall context of this RPR. In this continuous process, the dynamic element of the intention to change the existing situation was potentially the main pushing force triggered overall by the political, economic, social, and cultural situation of the country in different ruling systems in the Pahlavi dynasty era and the ruling of the Islamic Republic.

It should be added that the element of exclusively imposed economic sanctions by the West forced on Iran in recent years which has damaged badly Iran's different economy, industry, international trade, health, education, social and cultural domains have been considered as one of the significant factors which added to previous reasons for migration. (Homayoun shirazi, Karim Azarbijani, Morteza Sameti, 2016) (Balaghi, 2022) The political, social, cultural, and economic situation in Iran since the establishment of the Islamic Republic, and its unique religious ideology and strategic policies, have created a complex and unpredictable situation that will likely affect the nature, composition, and characteristics

of Iranian emigrants, particularly the British-Iranian diaspora, which requires further research and investigation.

Earlier it was noted that the presence and influence of Shia Islamic laws on daily life in Persia became mandatory at the start of the Safavid dynasty in Iran in 1501. The official and formal religion of the country was declared as Shia Athna-asheri. The effects of majority of Iranians adopting Shia Islam have had multi-faceted impacts on their cultural and social life (Karamustafa, Savory &, 1998).

Since the inception of Islamic Sharia law in Iran, it has been the primary source of law and regulations affecting various aspects of individuals' lives to this day. The role of the religious clergy class, in influencing the country's kings and rulers has varied over nearly five hundred years. During the rule of Reza Shah and Muhammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, who had pro-Western affiliations, the clergy class's power and influence diminished significantly compared to previous eras. However, the Islamic republic's victory in 1979 brought a drastic change to the political, social, economic, and cultural life of the nation through the Islamization of all laws and administration. (Omid, 1992). I seize this opportunity to impart a few key legal and political facts regarding the current ruling powers in the Islamic Republic of Iran, as referenced in a report prepared by the House of Commons in 2005. ³

Observing Shia Islamic laws and regulations are mandatory not only for Iranians living within Iran but also for those Iranians who are residing outside the country and seek some services for their personal, social, cultural and economic affairs in relation to the home-country. In these cases they have to contact the official representatives of the country such as the Iranian Embassy or the Consulate office or other relevant Iranian government representatives based in the UK.

Before I conclude this section, I would like to mention a study by an Iranian researcher who completed his Ph.D. thesis at the University of Hertfordshire in 2017. His thesis, titled "*Social Axioms as Predictors of Psychological and Subjective Well-being in Iran and England*," explains that he conducted a study on over 350 Iranian students in both

³ Iran is the Islamic Republic and the teachings of Islam are to be the basis of all political, social, and economic relations. Overall authority is vested in the Supreme Leader (currently Ayatollah Ali Khamenei) who is chosen by the Assembly of Experts, an elected body of 96 religious scholars. The Supreme Leader is the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces. The President is elected by universal adult suffrage for a term of 4 years and is restricted by the Constitution to no more than 2 terms in office. Legislative powers are held by the Majles, or Islamic Consultative Assembly, consisting of 290 elected members representing regional areas or religious communities for a 4-year term. The Majles also approves the members of the Council of Ministers, the Iranian equivalent of the British Cabinet.

The Council of Guardians reviews legislation passed by the Majles for constitutionality and adherence to Islamic law. It is composed of 6 theologians appointed by the Supreme Leader and 6 jurists nominated by the judiciary and approved by the Majles. The council also has the power to veto candidates in elections to parliament, local councils, the presidency, and the Assembly of Experts. The Council for the Discernment of Expediency was created in 1988 to resolve disputes over legislation between the Majles and the Council of Guardians. In August 1989, it became an advisory body on national policy and constitutional issues for the Supreme Leader. It includes the heads of all three branches of government and the clerical members of the Council of Guardians. The Supreme Leader appoints other members for a three-year term. (the House of Common:2005)

the UK and Iran over four stages. He defines the concept of social axioms as *"generalized beliefs regarding individuals, agencies, and other social institutions and the spiritual world"* (Rastegar, 2017). There are some similarities between his study and the current study as both focus on the British Iranian population and also take into account the impact of religiosity. The aim of Rastegar's study, as he explains, was to investigate the role of culture in four areas related to well-being, i.e.; the role of social axioms on mental well-being, (subjective and psychological) :

1) the relationship between social axioms and controlling the big five personality factors, 2) the mediation role of mindfulness and perspective-taking, 3) The scope of influence of one's attachments to national or ethnic identity. 4) The understanding of the participants of various social beliefs, especially of the concept of divine providence and its impact on one's well-being.

He concludes that: 1) 'in both samples of students who live in the UK and Iran, social cynicism and fate control are related to well-being. Additionally, the reward for effort, social complexity, and religiosity have a significant relationship with well-being in the case of Iranian students. In the case of UK-based Iranian students, this relationship is not found. His results showed that social axioms can predict well-being beyond the influence of country and personality traits. 2) Mindful acceptance did not play a moderating role in the relationship between social cynicism and subjective well-being. There was no significant correlation between social axioms and mindful acceptance and subjective well-being. However, perspective-taking did play a mediating role in the relationship between social complexity and psychological well-being. 3) Attachment to national identity played a moderating role in the relationship between social axioms and subjective well-being. 4) The qualitative study showed that Iranian immigrants have an indigenous strategy for attaining mental well-being, relying on their national identity and religious background. This strategy is based on the concepts of free will and predestination of life events.' (Rastegar, 2017)

'Paying attention to negative events while ignoring positive ones, along with inefficient problem-solving strategies, can explain the connection between social cynicism and low well-being as well as the disregard for cultural elements. The Iranian collective culture, a favorable coping style, and a strong emphasis on religious elements as a cultural characteristic can explain the relationship between religiosity, the reward for efforts, and well-being in the Iranian sample. On the other hand, the relationship between social axiom and well-being in the Iranian sample can be explained by the belief in surrendering to divine will, belief in divine predestination of life events, and belief in human free will, which is all associated with attachment to national identity. Overall, it appears that while social axioms do have an impact on well-being, the nature of this relationship

varies based on different aspects of social axioms and is influenced by cultural factors.
(ibid)

2.5.3 The Young Practicing British-Iranian (YPBIs)

The target group of my study is composed of Young Practicing British-Iranian individuals (YPBIs) selected through convenience sampling. This group of young BICs has a strong interest in religious and cultural matters and has an affiliation with Shia rituals and festivals. They regularly interact with several Athna-asheri Shia Islamic centers in London to satisfy their religious needs and attend religious classes, conferences, and seminars hosted by various Islamic organizations, especially during significant events in the Shia Islamic calendar such as Ramadhan and Muharram.

To narrow down the focus of my study, I have emphasized two key characteristics of this sub-group of British-Iranian youth, namely "Young" and "Practicing", which are reflected in the title of this study. I aim to justify why I have included these two characteristics in the title.

The Cambridge Dictionary defines "young" as having lived or existed for a short time and not being old. However, in psychology, the definition of "young" can vary based on societal factors. According to a scholar, international definitions of "young" often consider chronicle age, setting the boundary between childhood and adulthood at 18 years old. However, in some societies, factors such as labour migration, marriage, and physical markers like height, facial hair, or the onset of menstruation may be more important in determining adult status. (Evans, 2016). This raises the question of what exactly is considered childhood and who is considered a "young person."

In the context of my study and target group, I have defined "young" as men and women between the ages of 18-40. Although they may not appear young at first glance, I chose this age range because I wanted to focus on practicing British Iranians who are at the peak of their maturity, activity, and cultural involvement in the process of intercultural communication with other members of the UK's multicultural society. Their feedback, views, and comments are therefore more representative of the ideas, problems, needs, and expectations of the rest of the group.

Consider a young person (YPBI) who was raised in a religious family adhering to the Shia Islamic belief system and its customs, rituals, and teachings. This individual provides a representation of the focus of the study. A YPBI living in a secular society such as

London with its liberal cultural and social norms may experience various pressures from various societal layers. A typical young British-Iranian in British society may struggle with social, cultural, and emotional pressures while navigating intercultural communication with those who have differing, and sometimes hostile, cultural and social values. This can result in an identity crisis and potentially worsen psychological disorders.

I read a medical article exploring the connection between migration and psychological disorders which concluded, there is strong evidence that schizophrenia rates are higher among certain migrant groups. This increase may be attributed to a variety of factors, including race, ethnicity, cultural differences, ongoing socioeconomic disadvantage, discrimination, and feelings of alienation. These chronic difficulties can lead to poor self-esteem and contribute to distorted self-images. The broader social context and its impact on schizophrenia development as a result of migration should also be studied.

According to (Merry, 2010), citing (Erikson, 1990), a lack of self-belief and trust in young people during late adolescence can lead to an identity crisis. This crisis is triggered by doubt and uncertainty about one's ethnic background, gender, religion, sexual orientation, or racial identity and the internal struggle faced. An identity crisis arises when an individual's identity is in question or rejected by themselves or others they interact with. In this scenario of denial and uncertainty, the young person becomes vulnerable to peer pressure, concerned about being accepted by a group, and sensitive to being perceived as an outsider. (ibid)

To further explore the topic, I attempted to establish a connection between the concept of "identity crisis" and YPBIs, considering the following potential factors:

1. Psychological pressure from society, family, and peers to conform to the dominant social, cultural, and religious norms.
2. Global, national, ethnic, and legal challenges faced by YPBIs.
3. The impact of diaspora and nostalgia on YPBIs and their families, including cultural, political, and legal pressures.
4. Racial, ethnic, employment, and educational discrimination.
5. Pressures and difficulties arise from the historical conflict between Sunni and Shia Muslims, and the experience of being a minority. (%10/15, to %90/85)

I surveyed to examine the assumed pressures and conditions faced by a typical Young British-Iranian in Britain (YPBI) by designing a quantitative and qualitative questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed to address the situational and cultural issues faced by YPBIs living in London. The details of the questionnaire are described in Chapters Three

and Four. The aim was to gather answers to the research question and to gain further insight into the experiences of YPBIs and British-Iranian communities in London.

- **British Iranian Identity**

In the previous section, I discussed the identity issues faced by British Athna-ashari Shia Muslims. Although the British Iranians and YPBIs are also considered as Briths-Shia Muslims, despite having many similarities and shared beliefs, such as their shared religious affiliation, and common religious rituals, there are some racial and ethnic differences between the two communities. I aim to delve deeper into these differences.

One obvious and significant difference is that Iranians are of Persian descent, while most other Twelvers are of Arab descent with varying cultural differences. I took note of these differences and included these sensitive topics in the questionnaire I administered to my sample group, which I delve into further in the data analysis section.

- **British-Iranian Integration**

The issue of integration of British-Iranians, including the Young People Born in Iran (YPBIs), is critically discussed in various parts of the research paper. As previously mentioned, this topic is a controversial subject when it comes to identity formation for minority groups in European and other industrialized countries, as well as in the UK, a multicultural and multi-ethnic country. The focus of this matter has been addressed in different phases of the research and the results and findings have been reported in Chapters 5 and 6.

Chapter review

In Chapter 2 of the RPR, I covered topics related to the terms of reference, research questions, aims, and objectives, as well as a significant part of the literature review. In each sub-chapter, I delved into related matters and provided sufficient background information to clarify the related topic and key concepts, such as diaspora, transnationalism, migration, multiculturalism, intercultural communication, and other relevant subjects.

In this Chapter of the RPR, I covered subjects related to the terms of reference, research questions, aims, and objectives, as well as the important aspect of the literature review. I

discussed the background information and historical development of relevant theories and major debates related to the research subject, keeping in mind the limited scope and relevance of the materials to the current study. The chapter also focused on the integration of minority ethnic groups in the UK, with a specific focus on British Muslims, including British-Shia Muslims, by examining the British-Iranian community and YPBIs as the target group. In the next chapter, I plan to present and explain the methodology and relevant materials.

3 Methodology

In this chapter, I will discuss and explain key concepts related to methodology, including research paradigms, research methodology in work-based research, my role as an insider researcher, research sampling, data collection techniques, a qualitative questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, and data analysis methods (Thematic data analysis). I will begin by reviewing the research question, then discuss the concept of the research paradigm, presenting the ontological and epistemological aspects that inform my research work. After that, I will talk about methodology in work-based research, which I have chosen to define my research. I will then discuss my research design, leading to the selection of secondary questions to be included in the qualitative questionnaire.

In this chapter, I will continue to discuss key concepts related to methodology. I will start by explaining my role as an insider researcher, followed by a discussion of research sampling. I will then discuss the data collection techniques, including the use of a qualitative questionnaire and semi-structured interviews to gather information from the sample group. I will also explain how I used Google Forms to support the data collection process. Finally, I will conclude by discussing the data analysis methods, specifically focusing on thematic data analysis.

The goal of this research is to gain insight into the experiences and perspectives of young, pious, practicing Shia Muslims of British-Iranian descent. I worked with this population as part of my professional duties at the Islamic Centre of England (ICEL) and have sought to use my personal experiences and relationships to inform the study. The methodology chosen for this work-based research is mainly ethnography, which will be further discussed in the same chapter.

As a member of the British-Iranian Community (BIC) and working at the Islamic Centre of England (ICEL), I had frequent interactions with British Athna-ashari Shia Muslims and British-Iranian Shia Muslims visiting the Centre for various reasons, primarily religious Islamic matters. I approached this research as an insider researcher and utilized my personal experience and other available opportunities to gather information and data for my survey. Additionally, I was able to benefit from the expertise and knowledge of my knowledgeable colleagues through friendly discussions and informal interviews.

In the previous chapter, I discussed the related questions and issues surrounding the cultural integration of a group into society. This includes the process of adaptation,

integration, and assimilation in intercultural communication. Cultural integration refers to the blending of the group's inherited cultural values, such as religious beliefs and cultural habits, with the host culture. I have already examined the extent of cultural mixing and integration, as well as the possibility of cultural disintegration and its causes in Chapter Two of this research paper.

Investigating the cultural and socio-economic integration patterns of immigrants is of utmost importance as these patterns shape how cultural differences are perceived and influence public policy. The recent immigration trends in Europe have brought to light several important issues that must be addressed. What is dynamic cultural integration? How does it vary between immigrant ethnic groups and religious faiths? How are they different within host societies? How do they impact the economy, domestic trade, and public policy? What institutional settings can support the cultural integration of immigrants? These are crucial areas for policymakers to consider. (It should be noted that while some aspects of the above quote from (Algan, Y. & Bisin, A., 2012) may have applied to the British multicultural system prior to Brexit, they may not be fully applicable to current British multicultural strategies and policies.

Another concern relevant to young people of British-Iranian heritage (YPBIs), who is considered the second or third generation of Iranian migrants, is outlined as follows. Research from 2012 shows that the analysis of integration in the United Kingdom primarily relies on data from the Labour Force Survey (LFS), which focuses on the country of birth in the UK, but does not provide information on the country of parental birth. This makes it challenging to identify second or third-generation immigrants concerning their parents who previously migrated to Britain. (Algan et al, 2012)

Statistically, the population of second, third, and fourth generations of Iranians who are not born in the UK cannot be traced with the available data and information. However, the population of UK-born Iranians is known.

The issue of cultural integration among migrants was highlighted in the above reference and is a crucial aspect of my current research.

I want to propose a hypothesis, based mainly on my personal experience and evaluation, as well as on the findings of my previous study on BASM. The study concluded that 45% of BASM respondents, with BICs being an important segment, reported being socially integrated with British society, but not culturally integrated. (Tajbakhsh, 2013)

I have investigated if YPBIs, a group of practicing and devout Athna-ashari Shia Muslims who are socially and legally integrated with British society, can be seen as culturally integrated with mainstream culture. While investigating the aforementioned goals,

I also attempted to examine other characteristics and features of the YPBI community through my sample group, as reflected in my secondary research questions.

3.1 Research questions reviewed

To clarify the central elements of my research question, I refer to the title of my study. The central terms in the title of my research are "experiences," "young," "practicing," "British-Iranian," "Athna-ashari Shia Muslim," and "London."

Focusing on each term, I have attempted to define them in greater depth from various social, cultural, religious, and statistical/analytical perspectives. To achieve this, I created a simple and arranged them sequentially with their characteristics for easier visualization and comparison. (Page 79)

In the defining row, I have included various terms from the title of my study. In the first vertical column, I have specified different frameworks for each term and expression in the title. At the intersection of each row and column, there is a descriptive form of the words and expressions based on a certain framework. For instance, the term "British-Iranians" in the cultural/social framework has been defined as a "distinct migrant ethnic minority." Similarly, the term "young (18-40)" has been defined as a "physically/socially active community" in the same framework. Through this table, I was able to identify the key components of the title, which helped me in designing the secondary research questions.

Table 3: Research title composing words and terms

Words & expressions → → → Frame ↓↓↓	Experiences Of	Young	Practicing	British Iranians	in London
Cultural /Social factors	Accumulated Knowledge over life- time	Physically/ Socially active Community	Distinct religious obligatory characteristic	Distinct migrated ethnic minority	Geographical boundary and limiting factor
Religious	Lifetime Faith-based learnings	Matured responsible person	Bound to daily rituals and pre- set instructions	Group of migrated Shia Muslims	Multi-faith and multi-cultural capital of Britain
Demographic/ Statistical	Events/data Points	Age group	A qualitative attribute	An ethnic minority Group	Geographical zone

Before proceeding with my discussion, I would like to place emphasis and elaborate on two crucial terms in the title of the current study: "young" and "practicing." To limit the scope of my research, I have emphasized two defining traits of this subgroup of British-Iranian youth, which are "young" and "practicing," as they appear in the title. I will explain and justify why I chose to include these two characteristics in the title of my study. According to the Cambridge dictionary, "young" is defined as having lived or existed for a short time and not being old. A scholar defines the term from a psychological perspective, "International recognized definitions refer to chronicle age as marking the boundary between childhood and adulthood, often set at 18 years. However, in some societies, social experiences such as labour migration or marriage and physical markers like height, facial hair, or onset of menstruation may be more significant in signifying adult status than age." (Evans, 2016).

In this study, the term "young" refers to individuals in the age group of 18-40. This age range was selected as it encompasses individuals who are considered to be at the peak of their maturity, activity and social and cultural involvement in intercultural communication with members of the UK's multicultural society. This choice of age range allows the focus to be on the most active and engaged members of the practicing British-Iranian community. I wanted to focus on a specific group of practicing British-Iranian individuals who have reached a high level of maturity, activity, and social and cultural engagement in their intercultural communication with other members of the UK's multicultural society. These individuals fall within the age range of 18-40.

Therefore, the feedback, views, and comments from this age group of practicing British-Iranian individuals are more representative of the ideas, problems, needs, and expectations of the rest of the group members. In Iran, the age range of young individuals is typically considered to be from 18 to 30, middle-aged from 30 to 50, and elderly from 50 and above, though these definitions are relative and not fixed or universally agreed upon.

The definition of a "pious" or "practicing individual" in religious terminology refers to someone who is devoted to performing their religious duties. In the context of the current study, the "practicing" attribute of young British-Iranians (YPBIs) is discussed. Piety is a personal and qualitative characteristic that can be attributed to devout individuals of any faith, but it is difficult to measure. According to Shia jurisprudence, a pious believer is

someone who firmly and wholeheartedly performs their daily Islamic functions and rituals, privately or publicly. 4

The practices and daily rituals of Athna-ashari Shia Islam are based on belief (ایمان) and are considered to be ten: Salat (daily prayers), Sawm (fasting during Ramadan), Hajj (lifetime pilgrimage to Mecca), Zakat (aiding the needy), Khums (Islamic tax), Amr-bil-Maruf (promoting good deeds), Nahy-Men-Al-Monkar (discouraging wrongdoings), Tawalla (affiliation with good people), and Tabarra (disassociation from bad people). (Azam, 2017)

Therefore, I have crafted my research questions and secondary questions based on the potential data and information that may reflect the needs and expectations of the sample group, as determined through their responses to my questions. At this stage, since I am not fully aware of their social/cultural needs and expectations, I have attempted to put myself in their shoes, using my prior knowledge and work experience to make informed assumptions in constructing the practical and secondary questions. Upon sending out the qualitative questionnaire, conducting interviews, and receiving feedback from the respondents, I can refine the gathered information and commence analysis.

My chosen methodology consists of the following phases which have been depicted in the following table (Page 79)

⁴ *Pious* has a bit of an image problem. From the beginning of its use in the 15th century this Latin descendant has been used to describe those who are simply very religious—that is, who are deeply devoted to their religion—but it has for centuries also described those who make a show of their religiousness and use it to assert their superiority. Merriam Webster dictionary (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/piety>)

Table 4: Aims, objectives, and other important phases of the chosen methodology

Description	Explanations
Research question	How the common potential social/cultural needs and expectations of YPBIs could be addressed by studying their experiences in the process of intercultural communication with the British society, within work-based research, and how these needs/expectations can be reflected by the relevant Iranian and British authorities in the form of 'recommendations and suggestions for further actions?
Aims	To explore and highlight the needs, and expectations of the group under the study, by investigating their experiences in the process of intercultural communications based on the results and findings of work-based research and reflecting them in the form of recommendations and suggestions to the relevant authorities.
Objectives	To materialise and fulfill the different aspects of the aim, and conduct the preplanned work-based study, various phases of the research which have been explained in RPR, have been implemented such as literature review, research design & related activities, data gathering & analysing data, results & findings and finally reflecting the suggestions and recommendations to the related authorities.
Finalised Methodology	Direct observation in the framework of the ethnographic methodology, gathering the required data via qualitative questionnaire and conducting semi-structured interviews
Data Collection Methods	Mixed method (qualitative, in-depth investigating) applying questionnaires, interviews, referring to other sources of information
Data analysis	Content analysis, and other appropriate methods mainly through 'Google Forms and related spread-sheet application
Expected Findings and results	More insight into 'intercultural communication' of YPBIs and British society, finding the optimum pattern of 'cultural integration' models, giving advice and recommendation to policymakers and social strategists in relevant organizations [organization?]and communities
Reflecting and publicizing Methods	Publishing reports, holding seminars, and workshops, recommending related authorities

With the roadmap now clearly defined and various phases of the methodology spelled out, I plan to focus more on secondary questions. To address these practical questions, I will first classify and categorize the entire potential scope of the investigation as follows:

1) Religious matters, concerning Shia Islam beliefs, practices, and teachings based on Shia Islamic jurisprudence. This includes religious services and programs offered by Shia Islamic organizations located in London for the British-Iranian community. The religious needs and expectations of the Young British-Iranian community (YPBI) are also considered, such as educational religious programs, family services for children, and family member involvement in religious and volunteer activities offered by the Islamic centres. Other related activities are also included.

2) Social and cultural issues, including economic, legal, and daily civic matters, identity-related issues, academic and educational pursuits, YPBI involvement in social media and the virtual realm, sports and physical activities, issues related to the Iranian diaspora, and other relevant topics. Other relevant concerns include a sense of belonging in the UK, potential double standards, participation in local and domestic events, and involvement in social, cultural, and political activities.

Based on the above categorizations, I have crafted my secondary questions, selected from the most relevant topics (taking into account the limited scope of the current research), including religious, social, cultural, and intercultural communication (identity-related issues), which will be discussed in the following chapter.

3. 2 Research Paradigm

The term paradigm refers to a sample or specimen, but in the context of social sciences and this research, its connotation is more subjective and pertains to a 'worldview' and 'way of thinking and perceiving the world.' The current position and perspective of a person in their objective and subjective, physical and metaphysical environments are complex, dynamic, and uncertain. This individualistic ontological and epistemological interpretation by individuals constitutes their cognitive 'paradigms' or 'mental maps

(Costley et al, 2011), citing (Sheppard, 2016), outlines five major paradigms in social sciences: Positivism, Interpretivism, Social Constructionism, Critical Paradigm, and Postmodernism. If I were to categorize my own paradigm and worldview based on my beliefs, values, and ideas shaped throughout my life, I would describe myself as mostly a 'pragmatist/idealist.' When considering the appropriate paradigm for this study, I believe a combination of 'Interpretivism and Critical Paradigm (critical thinking)' is best, as it aligns with the principles of these two paradigms. As (Sheppard, 2016) suggests, people interpret their social relationships and roles, affecting the meaning they assign to others in those

relationships. Moreover, the goal of social sciences should be to bring about social change and cannot be completely value-free. (Sheppard, 2016)

3.3 Methodologies in work-based research

Methodology in social science, as defined by (Grix, 2004), is concerned with the discussion of how a particular research project should be undertaken. Methodology guides the researcher in deciding the type of data needed and the most appropriate data collection technique. Ethnography has a unique aspect, the researcher's position in the study. (Hornberger, N. H., & Wang, S. C, 2008) (Erikson, 1990) argues that ethnography allows the researcher to interpret the world by interpreting the subjective meanings of participants, providing audiences with the opportunity to see the world through the researcher's lens. According to (Hornberger, N. H., & Wang, S. C, 2008), the value of ethnography lies in the first-hand information collected directly from participants and its holistic view, with the researcher presenting their interpretation of the participants' actions during the research site. (Hornberger, N. H., & Wang, S. C, 2008)

In reality, distinguishing the researcher's position in the research allows the reader to understand the perspective from which the study is being conducted. (Greenhouse, 2009) defines ethnography as "the science of contextualizing the daily affairs of a group of people under study" (Greenhouse, 2009). In traditional anthropological fieldwork, researchers lived with the group being studied, observing their ways of life and taking notes on their daily activities. The use of ethnography is not limited to anthropology and is also common in sociology, particularly urban sociology. This method has been widely used in anthropological field studies and later became popular in urban sociological studies of small communities in cities, towns, and villages. Both anthropologists and social scientists, as well as other researchers worldwide, have benefited from the advantages of this widely-used methodology (Atkinson et al, 2010).

The research methodology for this study is primarily ethnography. This involves collecting qualitative data and information through direct observation and other methods to achieve the research aims and objectives within the framework of my Doctor of Professional Studies program. According to (Jonker et al, 2010), the choice of methodology reflects the path a researcher takes to reach a desired outcome. The process is comprised of five stages: knowledge, insight, design, intervention, and solution. While my main methodology is ethnography, I have employed a mixed-method approach that combines different research techniques, including direct observation, qualitative questionnaires, and semi-

structured interviews. These methods are used within the context of ethnography to fulfill the research objectives.

In the context of work-based research, there seems to be little difference between using different methodological approaches and those used in other fields. As (Costley et al, 2011) highlight, the choice of method depends on the subject and paradigm of the research. (Costley, C. et al, 2010) This consideration has led me to adopt an ethnographic approach for my work-based research. Ethnography offers a suitable way to effectively express my intention and rationalize the motivations behind this study.

As a public relations officer and receptionist, I had the opportunity to observe young people in various settings, allowing me to act as an 'insider researcher' in this study. Along with administering qualitative questionnaires, I also conducted several semi-structured interviews with a purposive sample group and former colleagues from ICEL and Islamic College to gather additional in-depth data. To illustrate the use of direct observation, I refer to the following experience in this context.

While working with ICEL, the center offered programs for various audiences in four languages: Farsi, Arabic, English, and Urdu. To gather data for my research through direct observation, I attended Farsi and English programs and focused on finding topics and issues relevant to my research. I made an effort to attend more English programs that were primarily attended by young people and other Shia and Sunni Muslims from ethnic minorities and English converts. During these programs, I took notes on any interesting points that arose.

The topics selected by scholars and speakers at ICEL typically dealt with contemporary issues and religious, social, cultural, and family matters. Additionally, during the sacred months of Ramadan and Muharram, as well as special occasions, attendance at English programs significantly increased. The English programs at the center were very popular among non-Farsi-speaking Shia Muslims of Indian and Pakistani origin, ethnic minorities, and young people, who showed great interest in attending these events. I believe the reason for the high attendance of YPBIs at English programs was twofold. Firstly, a large group of them had received an English education, making it easier for them to understand the lectures. Secondly, they attended the programs with their English-speaking friends to introduce them to Shia Islam. I will address some of the concerns and topics expressed by a few YPBIs in a later chapter.

3.4 Research design

The research aims to provide suggestions and recommendations for internal and external stakeholders and other interested Iranians and non-Iranian individuals and authorities. To gather, analyse, and interpret the experiences, needs, and expectations of YPBIs, a sound research framework must be used. The research methodology, design, and activity must be structured to achieve this goal and provide proper and constructive recommendations and suggestions beneficial to the British-Iranian community, particularly YPBIs. I structured the questionnaire by including relevant secondary questions to the research question and concerned issues. The final questionnaire consists of ten general questions and ten specialized questions on various subjects. The semi-structured interviews also consist of ten questions, which are focused on the relevant topics of the subject matter and will be explained further in Chapters 4 and 5.

3.5 My role as an insider researcher

Before I discuss my role as an insider researcher at ICEL, I want to take this opportunity to delve into the topic of insider and outsider with the relevant literature. As previously mentioned, my work-based research was conducted at the Islamic Centre of England where I worked as a public relations officer. As my academic knowledge and understanding grew as a result of participating in the DProf program and the Middlesex program, I saw an opportunity to apply my newfound insights in my professional setting and workplace.

I believe that the purpose and function of work-based research in the DProf program is to connect academic knowledge with the professional environment and workplace, as described in (Costley, C. et al, 2010). As a public relation officer at the Islamic Centre of England, I was in constant contact with people from various backgrounds, which gave me insight into the problems and issues within the Center. I took note of these practical difficulties, whether through my own experience or feedback from clients and community members.

Although it wasn't my responsibility to report all the problems to the Center's managers, I could still take the necessary steps to address the potential issues with my job and find ways to improve them. For problems and complaints received from clients and community members regarding other services at the Center, there was an option to either

report directly to the responsible department or person or bring up the issue during routine staff meetings. During my job at the Center, I was also pursuing an academic DProf program. Earlier, in my proposal to Middlesex University for my work-based project on the experiences of young practicing British Iranians in London, I suggested that the Islamic Centre of England (my former workplace) could be an ideal setting for conducting my research and gathering data through direct observation and ethnographic studies. I considered the capabilities and functions of the Centre's different departments and the possibility of improving their services by proposing organizational and functional changes. However, addressing all the existing problems in the Centre's departments was beyond the scope of my project, so I limited my activities within the framework of my project.

I had a dual role in handling my project: as an insider researcher and as an outsider researcher working alone. Now I want to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of this dual role, drawing from relevant literature. One of the key steps in carrying out the project was collecting data through direct observation, a qualitative questionnaire, and semi-structured interviews as the insider researcher. While there are many benefits to being an insider, there are also some drawbacks to this role.

The advantages of being an insider researcher include: 1) easier access to data and information, as the researcher is seen as part of the community (Bjorkert, 2008). 2) The ability to ask more relevant or productive questions due to prior knowledge. 3) More secure and accurate responses due to greater trust from peers and community members, and 4) a better understanding of the culture, religion, and traditions and fluency in the language. Disadvantages of being an insider researcher include 1) potential inherent and unintentional biases or excessive sensitivity to the culture, 2) a lack of objectivity due to close familiarity with cultural elements and customs, leading to reluctance to ask sensitive or taboo questions, 3) the potential for others to view the researcher as unqualified to ask certain questions ((Naaek et al., 2010), 4) respondents may be more willing to disclose sensitive information to an outsider rather than to an insider with similar cultural values and norms. Additionally, being constantly present in the field can lead to a lack of objectivity, while an outsider researcher may need to obtain permission and access to the field from relevant authorities.

As an insider researcher, I benefited from the advantages mentioned above in accessing necessary data and discussing unclear subjects with colleagues. (Coghlan, 2003) , (Hermann, 1989) , (Rounney, 2005), and (Tedlock, 2000) supported this perspective. I have had a 15-year relationship with the Islamic Centre of England. As an insider researcher, I leveraged my prior knowledge and experience, as well as my close

relationships with colleagues and community leaders to gain valuable insights through informal discussions and conversations related to the subject of study and relevant organizations such as BICs, BASMs, ICEL, and ICAS.

Additionally, I have relevant experience in researching BASMs and have access to a wealth of data and references. My extensive professional and personal connections with these communities, combined with my university degree in Anthropology, have greatly benefited my research. As Costley suggests, the insider researcher must have respect for the values, goals, and objectives of the organization, and be mindful of ethical considerations arising from social, cultural, and organizational values observed by colleagues, the organization, and the community. (Cohen et al, 2011)

During my time working at the Islamic Centre of England as a public relations officer and receptionist, I often had the opportunity to take notes and observe interesting points relevant to my DProf program while working on special programs for youth.

3. 6 Research sampling

In simple terms, when attempting to study the components or characteristics of an entity (objective or subjective), we select a small number of representative samples from the entire population and conduct our investigation on these limited samples. The results are then generalized to the entire population. This is done because studying every component of an entity in detail is often difficult or even impossible to measure or examine. Sampling is the statistical technique of selecting a portion of a population (known as a sample) for observation and inference about the larger population. Social science research often aims to understand patterns of behaviour in a specific population. (Barbour, 2007).

My sample group for the research focuses on British-Iranian young adults living in London who have a strong affiliation with Shia Islam. The target group, referred to as YPBIs, consists of religious young Iranians of mainly second or third-generation migrant backgrounds, with strong cultural ties to family and traditional values. The study aims to gain insights into the experiences of YPBIs and their interactions with British society, including potential challenges in communication and cultural differences, as well as identity issues.

Earlier, I mentioned that my role as a Public Relations Officer and receptionist at the Islamic Centre of England gave me an advantage as an insider researcher in conducting this work-based study. Additionally, my enrolment in a Doctorate of Professional Studies

program provided further academic capabilities. Furthermore, my prolonged involvement with the Islamic Centre of England and other Iranian organizations gave me a personal and professional understanding of BICs/YPBIs, which allowed me to collect the necessary data for my research through direct observation, interviews, and qualitative questionnaires. This puts me in a favourable position for data collection.

For this study, I used convenience sampling to collect data from my purposive sample group by sending them a questionnaire. Convenience sampling is a type of non-probability sampling method where the sample is selected from a group that is easily accessible. (Ikker Etikan, 2016). I acknowledge the limitations of this method compared to others, but I chose it due to the relatively small size of the YPBI population and certain justifications.

I chose a purposive sample group for this study as I was familiar with the population's characteristics and knew what elements of the group I needed. Additionally, my previous study on BASMs used convenience sampling and I found it suitable for this study as well. Time constraints also influenced my decision to use convenience sampling and select participants from sources such as the Islamic Centre of England, Islamic College, the Iranian Students Muslim Association, and others. My sample consisted of 35 respondents, with 26 being male and 9 being female. The gender disparity can be attributed to various factors and I focus on a few of them. The questionnaire was distributed via a Google Form link, accessible to everyone regardless of gender. Additionally, I sent a few Google Forms directly to some male respondents I knew. This explains the disparity between male and female respondents.

The age range of the sample group is 18 to 40 and they reside in different boroughs of London. The majority of the sample group is university educated and employed in various organizations. I have discussed this matter in more detail in Chapter 5.

3.7 Data collection techniques

Several methods of data collection are commonly used in social science and work-based research, including Interviews, Questionnaires, Observations, Documents and records, Focus groups, and Oral histories (Smiths, 2020). One common approach is to administer open-ended or close-ended quantitative/qualitative questionnaires, either through mail or online. Another popular method is structured, semi-structured, or open interviews, which yield more in-depth data.

I collected my data through a mixed method approach, primarily from members of practicing British-Iranian youths (BICs/YPBIs) living in London who regularly attend the Islamic Centre of England (ICEL) for religious services. The final sample group and the process of distributing questionnaires and conducting interviews with selected members of the YPBIs, my former colleagues, and other knowledgeable members of the British-Iranian community in London are described in detail in Chapter 4, which focuses on my research methods.

3.8 The qualitative questionnaire

I have crafted the questions to allow respondents greater flexibility in answering open-ended questions. The desired responses are based on quality, and their evaluation requires more time and effort as they are not easily quantifiable or measurable. This type of questionnaire is utilized when more detailed answers and explanations are necessary. In the context of this current study, I have designed a qualitative questionnaire consisting of ten general and ten descriptive questions, which will be further explained in Chapter four. The qualitative questionnaire serves as the primary tool for collecting and analysing data from respondents. I have employed thematic analysis, which involves decoding and interpreting descriptive, contextual, and qualitative questions into a more understandable format. I have attempted to identify and categorize the various dimensions of the research question and related subjects in a manner that achieves the research study's objectives as planned.

3.9 Semi-structured interviews

Another common and frequently utilized method of data collection is interviewing. There are two main approaches: structured and unstructured. The structured method is easier to conduct and analyse, while the unstructured interview is more challenging to interpret. However, the unstructured approach provides respondents with greater freedom and openness in their responses.

For the current research, as the primary methods of data collection are ethnography (direct observation) and administering the qualitative questionnaire, plus conducting a semi-structured interview which serves as an act of triangulation. Regarding triangulation, I would like to emphasize the concept and its application in the social sciences. Triangulation in the

social sciences refers to using multiple methods and approaches in the examination of a particular subject.

Triangulation can be applied at any stage of research. In the process of interpreting the phenomenon and collecting data, multiple interpretations and techniques can be utilized, such as interviews, observations, and administering qualitative and quantitative questionnaires (Olson, 2004). To triangulate, to enhance the quality and depth of the collected materials, I conducted several semi-structured interviews with selected members of my sample group and some of my former colleagues, which will be referenced later in other sections of the RPR.

3.10 Data analysis methods – (Thematic data analysis)

The thematic analysis technic is a popular and flexible tool for analysing qualitative data that can be applied in various practices, al and epistemological research based on the experiences of the research subjects. This technique involves a six-step process of familiarisation with the data, generating initial codes, searching themes, and finally producing the report' (Michelle E. Kiger & Lara Varpio, 2020). In the data gathering process, I gathered a substantial amount of information from various sources. These raw data need to be cleaned and prepared for analysis and interpretation. There are various methods and tools for analysing and interpreting qualitative data, such as thematic analysis, narrative analysis, discourse analysis, and semiotic analysis (puttong, 2009). Data analysis involves organizing and making sense of the collected raw data by giving them meaning and dimension. (ibid)

I have selected thematic analysis (TA) as my primary analysis tool, but during my data analysis, I also used other techniques such as narrative analysis (mixed methods approach). According to (Bryman et al., n.d.) , TA is a standalone method. (Braun V, 2006) stated that it is not confined to any specific theoretical or epistemological perspective, which makes it a flexible and effective research tool. They assert that TA "can provide a comprehensive and detailed, yet complex, interpretation of data" (Braun V, 2006). With these characteristics, I am confident that TA is the most suitable analysis tool for my study. I have provided more details on the implementation of this method on the sample data in the Data Analysis section (5.3).

Chapter review

In this chapter, I aimed to clarify and elaborate on the components of the research question and related issues by reviewing the research question. Additionally, I justified my choice of methodology for this study by discussing 'methodology' and 'methodologies in work-based studies'. Furthermore, I outlined my work-based research approach by explaining the 'research paradigm', 'selected methodology', 'research design', and 'data collection methods'. I also described how I plan to implement the practical aspects of the survey.

The chosen methodology for this work-based study was ethnography and my role as an insider researcher was also discussed in other parts of the chapter as to how I was able to engage more deeply with the subject matter. In addition to addressing the main research question, I sought to understand the social and cultural expectations and needs of my sample group regarding related issues. I have presented this information clearly and concisely using tables, charts, and figures to illustrate the relationships between different subjects. In the next chapter, I present the empirical and practical findings of the current work-based research.

4 Research project activities

This chapter focuses on the practical aspects of work-based research. I explain the steps taken for field research including preparation of secondary questions, design of the qualitative questionnaire, selection of sample group, dispatch of a questionnaire, follow-up for responses, and gathering of data for analysis. I also used semi-structured interviews for triangulation to add depth and validity to the research process. After collecting the responses, I moved on to the data analysis and interpretation phase. The chapter elaborates on these major research activities.

4.1: Practical research tools

The two main research tools used in this study were a qualitative questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. I have explained each technique in detail, dividing the activities into those related to the qualitative questionnaire (QQ) and those related to the semi-structured interviews. (SSI)

4.1.1: Qualitative questionnaire

The steps taken to operationalize the practical research were:

1. Designing the qualitative questionnaire (QQ) and seeking feedback from community members.
2. Finalizing the proposed questions for QQ.
3. Preparing the Google Form for distributing the QQ.
4. Determining the final sample group based on pre-planned criteria.
5. Distributing the Google Form by launching the related link.

4.1.1A Designing the qualitative questionnaire

I carefully considered various factors before determining the number and relevance of secondary questions to the research question. This helped me in preparing a

comprehensive qualitative questionnaire and designing a Google Form. The form was then sent out to my designated sample group. To elaborate further, I would like to highlight some of the key factors that influenced the design of the questionnaire. I made every effort to choose the most relevant topics and issues that would stimulate interest and address the concerns of my designated group of YPBIs. By doing so, I aimed to encourage them to share their views and ideas by responding to my questionnaires, thereby improving the quality of the research. The results of this research have been reflected in Chapters 5 and 6 of the RPR.

As previously stated in the previous chapter, I used my experiences, knowledge, and information about the British-Iranian Community and YPBIs to come up with 10 general questions and 10 specialized questions for the questionnaire. After consulting with my colleagues and relevant authorities at the Islamic Center regarding the potential areas of investigation, considering the research question, and provisionally outlining the secondary questions, I sought feedback from a few relevant members of the community to ensure the relevance and adequacy of the proposed questions. I then designed and created a questionnaire in the form of a Google Form (a sample can be found in appendix 1), and sent it to some of my former colleagues and teachers for review. Only after receiving their feedback, I did send the qualitative questionnaire to my sample group.

As the result, the following ten questions were finalised as the qualitative questionnaire. (The sample of the form is in appendix 1). The questionnaire (QQ) consists of three parts with a “thank you message” at the end of the form which I try to explain:

1) Introductory explanations:

In the opening section of the Google Form, I justified sending the form and asked for the respondents' comments and feedback. I also emphasized that their information and comments would be kept confidential and anonymous.

2) General and personal questions, with the following details:

In this section of the form, respondents are asked to provide personal information by selecting from multiple-choice options, including:

1. Gender
2. Age group
3. Place of birth
4. Academic qualification
5. Marital status
6. Employment or occupation
7. Annual income

8. Length of time living in Britain
9. English language proficiency
10. Attendance at the heritage school (Iranian school)

3) Specialised descriptive questions:

- 1- Have your social, cultural, and religious expectations from the Islamic organisations based in London been fulfilled so far? Do you have any more suggestions? Please explain.
- 2- Have you been involved in Islamic activities in general and 'Shia Islam related' issues in particular in the framework of intercultural communication? Please give further elaboration.
- 3- Considering the increasing number of the Muslim population (Including Shia Muslims) in the UK, do you like to be involved more in social and political activities as YPBI? Please explain your concern positively or negatively.
- 4- Have you, as a YPBI, experienced any form of double standard or discrimination from non-Muslims or non-Iranians in the UK?
- 5- Consider yourself as a believer and practicing devoted Shia Muslim living in London. Do these attributes give you more emotional security and confidence in your daily life? Please expand this more if you want.
- 6- Have you experienced any kind of stereotypical feeling (negatively or positively), of being British-Iranian in the process of intercultural communication?
- 7- As YPBI, what are/were your main criteria for marriage, such as religiosity, nationality, ethnic background, or any other decisive factor? Please explain.
- 8- Have you experienced any difficulty in performing your religious and traditional practices and rituals such as praying, fasting, and attending the Muharram festival or participating in national ceremonies, like Naurooz; Chaharshambe soori, etc.? Please explain your experiences.
- 9 -What is your preferred identity? Do you like the hyphenated identity of British – Iranian would be officially recognised, like British – Indian or British-Bangladeshi?
- 10- By living in Britain, you are involved in your daily affairs with the rest of the society in social, political, legal, and economic domains. As a YPBI can you be culturally integrated with them as well? If so, what does that mean in practical terms? Please explain if you agree or do not agree. Additional messages or comments that you might have.

4.1.1B Justification for selecting the above questions

To design and finalize my secondary questions and interview questions, I referred to the research question, its related components, and the aims and objectives outlined in

Chapters 2 and 3 of my report. Although I had prior knowledge and information about the British-Iranian community and young British-Iranian Muslims based on my previous study on British Shia Muslims, I needed to better understand their position and potential needs and expectations. To do this, I put myself in their shoes and thought about what I would need and expect from Iranian and Shia Islamic organizations, British authorities, and members of the wider society based in London. The following lines briefly discuss the ten specialized questions included in the final questionnaire, with more elaboration and analysis provided in the next chapter.

In Question 1, I directly asked the participants about their religious, cultural, and social needs and expectations from Islamic centers and other resident Shia Muslim organizations. This question aimed to obtain straightforward answers about the needs and expectations of young British-Iranian Muslims from these organizations based in London.

In Question 2, I aimed to gather data and information about the participants' involvement in Islamic and religious activities. The question was divided into two domains: general Islamic activities, such as attending and participating in students' Islamic associations in colleges and universities, which are usually organized and run by Sunni Muslims, and activities directly related to Shia Muslim organizations such as the Islamic Center of England, Islamic College, Kanoon Tawheed, and any other Shia Muslim organizations like AIM (Ahl-ul-beyt Islamic Mission).

In Question 3, I aimed to obtain demographic information while also reminding the participants of their faster population growth compared to other non-Muslim segments of the population. The goal was to encourage them to participate in activities and to obtain their fair share of available facilities and opportunities equal to other members of British society.

In Question 4, I addressed a sensitive and debatable issue that is covered in much of the relevant literature. In multicultural settings where different ethnic minority groups live together, problems and disputes related to majority/minority issues and cultural differences are common. By asking this question of the young British-Iranian sample group, I wanted to gather more information on this topic from this particular group. I should note that this type of discrimination and double standard behaviour can occur at all levels of society and in every aspect of social, cultural, legal, and political venues, and can be exerted by every denomination towards each other. For example, it could occur from the majority of Sunni Muslims towards minority Shia Muslims in religious domains, or non-religious British-Iranian youth towards young British-Iranian Muslims in Iranian national community gatherings. The current research did not expand the questions to other sub-sections of the subject matter,

but this issue itself could be the subject of future research and investigation by interested researchers.

Regarding question five, in which I asked the sample group about their strong belief in Allah and the strength and confidence they derive from practicing the principles and teachings of Shia Islam, I wanted to gauge their level of religiosity. I anticipated a positive and one-sided response to this question since they are devout and practicing young people. I analysed and interpreted the responses of the sample group to this topic, as well as others, in greater detail in Chapter 5.

Regarding the discussion on the idea of "being or not being stereotyped as Iranian," which was the subject of question six, I should mention that this idea was initially suggested by one of my colleagues at the Islamic Center of England who was active in the British-Iranian community. By adding this question to the questionnaire, I wanted to gauge the general perception of the sample group on this issue.

Question 7 was designed to ask the Young British-Iranian Muslims (YPBIs) about their preferred choice for marriage. This question was different from the other multiple-choice questions in the format and aimed at gaining information about the respondents' preferred choices, which is a reflection of one of the group's characteristics and a significant religious, social, and cultural institution in Iranian and Shia Islamic societies.

Question 8, which has a connection to Question 4, was intended to gather information exclusively on the difficulties faced by the sample group in performing their religious rituals and practices. It is important to note that these difficulties can stem from various groups, including different sects of Shia Muslims, Sunni British Muslims, secular Iranians, and non-Muslim members of British society. The issue of difficulties faced by female YPBIs about wearing the Islamic hijab is a significant and debatable subject in this context.

In question 9, I asked about the preferred identity of the respondents. I wanted to know which of the suggested hyphenated identities they would choose. I had initially thought that most respondents would choose "British-Iranian" as their ideal identity, but the results showed otherwise, as discussed in chapter 5.

Regarding the final question (question 10), about the possibility of YPBIs integrating with British society, I sought the opinions of the respondents on this important subject related to the research question. The issue of adaptation in a multicultural setting has been a topic of much debate and discussion among scholars and researchers. I analysed the responses I received from the respondents and interviewees and discussed this matter in more detail in chapter 5.

4.1.1C Finalising the designated sample group

The population of young professional and business individuals (YPBIs) is relatively small, so as explained in Chapter Three, I chose to use the convenient sampling method for this work-based research. I made a list of approximately 30 to 40 YPBIs, including their names, email addresses, and telephone numbers, and sent my qualitative questionnaire to 30 of them. I could share the questionnaire link through popular social media platforms such as Telegram or WhatsApp, or on websites frequently visited by YPBIs like the Islamic Centre or Islamic College. I chose to send the Google Form through email because it was easier to send reminders and follow-up emails. It's worth noting that I have a prior relationship with most of the recipients, as I have known them since childhood when they used to attend the Islamic Centre as children with their parents.

4.1.1D Dispatching the qualitative questionnaire

After incorporating the feedback and suggestions from a group of experts in the community, I distributed the final version of the qualitative questionnaire to my designated group of YPBIs to gather their perspectives on the ten descriptive questions. The questionnaire was made in the format of a Google Form, as suggested by one of the YPBIs, as it was deemed practical, easy to use, and could be analysed using statistical tools. The questionnaire focused on ten descriptive questions about the research subject, related issues, and intercultural communication, which is a significant aspect of the daily lives of the members of the sample group as they constantly communicate with non-Iranian individuals with different cultural and religious backgrounds. The questionnaire link was sent to approximately forty participants and also to a few individuals in my WhatsApp contacts. I received thirty-five completed forms through Google Forms, which I used for data analysis, as described in detail in chapter 5. A sample of the qualitative questionnaire in its Google Form format can be found in appendix 1.

4.1.2 Semi-Structured Interview

In this section, I explain the process of conducting semi-structured interviews with seven members of the community under study who were directly from the sample group or

were somehow deeply involved with the BI community. To begin, I provide background information about this method of gathering information. The steps I took in conducting these interviews included: 1) familiarizing myself with relevant literature, 2) finalizing the semi-structured interview questions, 3) selecting the interviewees and inviting them for the interviews, 4) conducting the semi-structured interviews according to the schedule, and 5) considering ethical issues.

4.1.2A Background and a few concerns from the literature

In this section, the concept of "in-depth" information is discussed in the context of data gathering. When information obtained through qualitative questionnaires is not sufficient or clear enough, researchers often turn to semi-structured interviews with selected members of the sample group or those who have expert knowledge of the research topic. A semi-structured interview is a one-on-one interview about a specific topic or area and is considered a "conversation with a purpose" (Burgess, 1984) . There are three types of qualitative interviews according to (Turner, 2010): informal conversation, general interview, and standardized open-ended interview. These interviews can be classified from least to most structured, and usually, the middle ground is the option of choice. The researcher needs to align the interview questions with the research question and keep the proposed analytical approach in mind when designing the questions (Silverman, 2005).

Before conducting the interview, the researcher must be well-versed in the related literature and ensure that each question focuses on one subject or topic to avoid confusion. The questions should also be open-ended, which allows for more in-depth answers than a simple yes or no responses. As Turner suggests, semi-structured interviews are one-to-one conversations around a specific topic to get to the heart of the matter. (Turner, 2010). In my interviews, I followed this principle and focused on each topic according to the established norms. While designing the interview questions, I kept the main components of the research questions and related issues in mind to ensure that I could achieve my intended outcomes. To prepare for the interviews, I familiarized myself with relevant literature and made sure to ask clear and focused questions, avoiding confusion by addressing only one subject in each question. After conducting the interviews, I applied the Thematic Analysis technique to analyse and categorize the gathered data, making it interpretable and meaningful.

4.1.2B Finalising the Semi-Structured interview questions

In designing the questions for the semi-structured interview, I followed a similar process as I did for the qualitative questionnaire. I considered the research question, aim, and objectives and consulted with an expert colleague in the Islamic Center. The result of this collaboration was a set of ten final questions to be asked during the interview. The questions are as follows:

- 1 - General introductory information about your background and qualifications, etc.
- 2 - What is your definition of YPBI? Who is a 'pious' Shia Muslim?
- 3 - Based on your experience how do you classify the British Iranian community's status at present time regarding the different categories of 'integration' such as economic, social, legal, and political?
- 4-In terms of 'Cultural integration' and considering our cultural differences with the rest of the society, do you as YPBI, think 'cultural integration' is justifiable and possible with the rest of the society,?
- 5-Considering our Iranian cultural heritage, from one side and considering more liberal cultural ideas and conducts in the majority of British society from the other side, how we should live in an equilibrium situation in this multicultural and multi-ethnic setting?
- 6- Respecting and observing the domestic host country's laws and regulation is one of our legal duties. Have you experienced any cultural/religious contradictions between these two institutions?
- 7- As a British Shia Muslim what are your views on the issue of belonging to British society? Do you have a strong feeling toward your present home?
- 8- Considering the faster Muslim population growth in Western societies including British society, how do you evaluate the involvement of Muslims (including British – Iranian Shias) in the management of local and governmental organisations? Does it help the process of 'cohesion' of ethnic minorities with the majority of the population?
- 9-Would you please give a brief history of your involvement with the British-Iranian community? Please explain your problems, experiences, good and bad memories of this involvement, and lastly your needs and expectations from the Iranian organisations based in London, such as Islamic centres and other Iranian institutions based in London.

10- Finally, appreciate spending your valuable time, feel free to give any more comments, suggestions, and recommendations, to be reflected in this interview.

4.1.2C Selection of the interviewees

After I finalized the list of interviewees, I drafted a briefing letter to be sent to the potential candidates and asked if they were willing to participate in the planned interview. Upon receiving their general agreement, I proposed a specific date and time for the interview, as shown in the table below. I maintained their anonymity and assigned each of them a letter code.

Table 5: Semi-structured Interview schedule

Row	Abbreviated Name	Position	Date
1	A.M.	Advisor 1 Psychologist	11/2/2021
2	S.H.	Advisor 4 ICEL	7/2/2021
3	S.M.R.	Advisor 5 ICEL	15/2/2021
4	M.S.	Advisor 6 IHRC	-----
5	S.A.H.	Advisor 7 IR sch.	14/2/2021
6	S.S.	Advisor 9 & YPBI	9/2/2021
7	E.P.	Advisor 10 & YPBI	8/2/2021

In order to conduct the interview, I utilized the Zoom application on my laptop and sent invitations to ten individuals. The invitation letter can be found in Appendix 1.

4.1.2D Conducting the semi-structured interviews

I sent the invitation letter to ten people from the community whom I knew previously (refer to Table 7). Seven of them agreed to participate in the interview. I conducted one of the interviews using the Zoom application, while the rest were conducted through WhatsApp. There were some challenges during two of the interviews. Unfortunately, the recorded audio file of the answers from M.S. was deleted and as explained in Chapter 5, I had to substitute it with his comments on similar topics discussed in my BASM study. Another issue arose while I was trying to interview S.S. through Zoom as the connection was poor, and he responded to the questions through a recorded file sent via WhatsApp. Despite these challenges, I was able to successfully conduct the rest of the interviews and obtain valuable in-depth answers to the questions asked. I transcribed all six interviews into text, which is described in the next chapter. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I refrained from conducting face-to-face interviews and instead conducted all interviews digitally through Zoom, WhatsApp, and other available means.

4.2 Ethical Issues

In every community-based social arrangement, the ethical and moral codes of society are usually embodied within the framework of religion, philosophical ideology, tradition, custom, and other social and cultural institutions. I came across a passage that highlights five sources of ethical standards: the utilitarian approach, the rights approach, the fairness or justice approach, the common good approach, and the virtue approach. Although various ethical standards are defined and explained in these approaches and paradigms, the common denominator in all civilized societies is promoting good deeds and preventing bad ones. (Anon., n.d.)

By-products of social institutions are typically reflected in society in the form of laws, norms, customs, traditions, educational instructions, and legal advice and obligations, among other forms of social conduct and values. In modern societies, these norms and codes are regulated and arranged through sets of rules, regulations, and laws, which are learned, respected, practiced, and observed by the majority of society members and passed down to future generations. The absence of these civil rules and regulations would render the governance, conduct, and management of complex societies impossible, and vastly different from the current state. A famous Persian saying in English can be translated as "if you don't want to be ashamed and scandalous in society, follow the majority's rules."

Throughout history, not only have the rights and shares of all human beings been observed and protected by written or unwritten laws and regulations but the rights of animals, nature, and the surrounding environment have also been given high priority in society, with significant human and non-human resources allocated to these issues by national governments and international organizations.

Observing ethical considerations in any research activity involving people and society is of utmost importance in the present times. In all academic and scientific projects that deal with human affairs, researchers must pay close attention to predefined human and citizen rights, and not violate them during any phase of the study. As stated (Dudovsily, 2016), ethical considerations are considered one of the most crucial aspects of research, and not observing them properly can compromise the entire research process. (Dudovsily, 2016). There are numerous codes of conduct that researchers and authors must follow and respect while conducting research to address ethical issues and dilemmas.

4.2.1 Ethical code and ethical competence in research

The field of research in academic and scientific institutions is extensive and diverse, with a significant number of researchers worldwide participating in this process. Adherence to ethical codes of conduct is of paramount importance in all research work and is considered one of the essential requirements for every research project, which should be strictly followed throughout the implementation of the research (Taquette, 2022). According to him 'respect for ethical principles is necessary throughout the entire scientific research process, including the dissemination phase. Due to the dynamic nature of qualitative studies, adverse ethical situations may arise.' (Taquette, 2022)

In an article (Fleming, 2018), he explains that the field of work-integrated learning (WIL) has recently been developed and expanded globally. He highlights the need for ethical conduct during research within the WIL framework and the importance of obtaining ethical approval when conducting research with human participants. He cites issues such as informed consent, conflict of interest, risk of harm, and confidentiality as important factors to consider. (Fleming, 2018) He then quotes (Bryman et al, 2007) and lists ten key principles related to ethical considerations that should be followed in any research study.

In another article, (Fleming, 2018) explains the development and expansion of work-integrated learning (WIL) worldwide. He emphasizes the importance of ethical conduct during research within the WIL framework and warns about using data and information from

human participants. By quoting Bryman et al., he lists the ten most important principles of ethical consideration that should be observed in any research dissertation:

1. Protecting the research participants from harm.
2. Respecting the dignity of the research participants.
3. Obtaining informed consent from the research participants.
4. Protecting the privacy of the research participants.
5. Maintaining confidentiality of the research data.
6. Assuring the anonymity of individuals and organizations participating in the research.
7. Disclosing any affiliations and conflicts of interest.
8. Maintaining transparency and honesty about the research aims and objectives.
9. Avoiding the use of misleading information and representing biased primary data findings.

The author also reminds researchers that most universities have their own Code of Ethical Practice and stresses the importance of adhering to them. Middlesex University, for example, requires research to be conducted under its Code of Practice for Research: Principles and Procedures. The author states that the ethical approval for their research was granted by the DProf Programme Approval Panel in September 2014 under Middlesex University's Professional Doctorate rules.

4.2.2 Ethical considerations in implementing my research project

The most important ethical considerations for researchers working with people are treating them with dignity, respect, and honesty. Throughout the entire research process, from the design phase to the conclusions and recommendations, the researcher should prioritize the safety, confidentiality, and well-being of their participants. I took great care to follow the appropriate ethical protocols in order to ensure that my participants and colleagues were treated ethically during my research. I took steps to minimize potential harm and misconduct, particularly during the data collection and interview phases.

Additionally, I made sure to inform participants about the aim and purpose of the research through the introduction section of the questionnaire and the invitation letter for interviews. I also ensured the confidentiality of participants' details and responses and let them know that they were free to answer the questions partially or fully or to withdraw at any time. Participants were also given assurance that their personal information and their feedback would not be forwarded or revealed to any other parties and that their inputs to this research will be only used for this research solely and exclusively. Regarding the

interviews with experts, they were assured that the information they provided would only be viewed and analysed by me.

In the previous part, I referred to and discussed a few subjects and topics which were generally emphasised in any kind of social and cultural research. Now I want to point out a few issues which were directly relevant to the current research subject, and my explanation that how I could manage and sort out the situation.

Considering the relatively small size and limited domain of my work-based research with relatively a limited number of the target group (35 matured YPBIs for the qualitative questionnaire and seven interviewees for semi-structured interview), I was not facing significant ethical dilemmas (issues) during conducting my practical research. Acting as an insider researcher in different phases of the implementation of the project, all ethical points and considerations had been observed and adhered to during work meetings and sessions with previous colleagues and relevant community members. The following are the most significant ethical concerns encountered during the implementation of a work-based project, specifically during the preparation of research tools, questionnaire design, and semi-structured interviews. These issues are outlined with examples, situations, and potential ethical dilemmas encountered during the process.

4.2.3 Reassurance of obtaining required agreements and permissions

To ensure that all necessary agreements and permissions were obtained, I took several steps. For instance, before consulting with a colleague or relevant person about a specific topic, I would send them an email to explain the matter and obtain their agreement for a meeting or conversation if needed. If the issue could be easily addressed with a phone call, I would ask for their input then and there. In more serious cases, I would schedule a convenient time for a meeting and raise the issue during the face-to-face meeting.

4.2.4 Paying attention to issues relating to my dual roles in ICEL

According to (Rowe, 2014), positionality refers to an individual's perspective and the stance they take in a research process, considering its social and political context. (Row, 2014) This perspective, or worldview, encompasses ontological assumptions about the nature of social reality and the knowledge we have about the world, as well as epistemological assumptions about the nature of knowledge. (Marsh, H et al, 2018)

Additionally, individual values, beliefs, and identities shaped by factors such as political orientation, religion, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, race, social class, and status, must also be taken into account (Marsh, H et al, 2018).

According to (Savin-Baden & Majojor , 2013), positionality refers to the stance a researcher chooses to adopt in a given study. (Rowe, 2014), has said; 'positionality has a significant impact on both the conduct of the research and the definition of its outcomes and results'. (Grix, 2004) also notes that; 'positionality affects the choice of the research topic'. Two other scholars believe; 'An *insider researcher* recognizes that his/her positionality may impact the progress and results of the research', as noted by (Holmes, Andrew Gary Darwin, 2020).

In line with this, I have discovered that self-reflection and a reflexive approach are crucial for researchers and participants to understand and articulate their positionality in the research process. As (Cohen, 2007) explains, reflexivity involves acknowledging and disclosing one's role in the research process and seeking to understand one's influence on it. According to (Rowe, 2014); a reflexive approach reduces bias and promotes impartiality' (Row, 2014). To ensure that my research was unbiased, I followed the (Ormston et al, 2014)'s suggestions to strive for neutrality in the collection, interpretation, and presentation of data. (Ormston et al, 2014)

My positionality statement included a description of my worldview, including my philosophical, personal, and theoretical beliefs and the perspective I bring to the research process. It also highlighted potential factors that may influence my research, such as my age, religion and political beliefs, social class, race, ethnicity, gender, academic and professional qualifications, and previous professional career. Additionally, it included my perception and judgment about the participants in the project (e.g. as an insider or outsider) and the research context, as well as an explanation of how these factors might have impacted the research process (Savin-Baden & Majojor , 2013). From a personal perspective, my motivation for conducting this research was driven by my interest in advancing my knowledge and skills in the field of Islamic cultural studies and making a meaningful contribution to the ongoing research on British-Iranian youth.

As an insider researcher, I was aware of the potential power dynamic and ethical implications of my positionality. (Costley et al, 2011) emphasised the importance of not exploiting my authority and characteristics in the research process, so I made a conscious effort to foster a culture of trust and professionalism through openness and collaboration. Costley et al argue that as a researcher "you are trusted not to use this authority to manipulate and exploit the trustee" (Costley, C. et al, 2010). I have previous experience

conducting research, having conducted independent research and close to 30 interviews, and I always adhered to ethical considerations before, during, and after the interviews or questionnaire preparation. In the context of my current work-based study, I was mindful of the ethical implications of my research design and data-gathering tools and took extra care to observe the Islamic code of conduct, such as in discussions and exchanges of ideas with female colleagues.

4.2.5 The ethical consideration due to power relations

Cohen et al argue that researchers must balance the demands of professional scientific truth-seeking with the protection of their subjects' rights and values. To minimize any potential power relations that could limit the freedom of choice for participants to express their views freely, I was cautious during the data-gathering phase. I made sure not to use my position, age, or personal characteristics to exert any undue influence on the participants and the responses to my questions, either in the questionnaire or during the interviews.

Regarding potential power relations that might arise during interviews or conversations with colleagues or others, I did not encounter any cases of misconduct or mistreatment. I ensured this through the design of the secondary questions in the questionnaire, which were worded in a friendly and respectful manner so as not to cause ambiguity or discomfort for the respondents. Additionally, the link to the Google Form questionnaire was shared on various public and social media platforms, accessible to anyone. The virtual interviews conducted with seven key members of the British Shia Muslim community, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, also minimized potential ethical issues. However, it should be noted that the email sent to those respondents who already knew me may have influenced their replies with a pre-existing value judgment, which was unavoidable.

4.2.6 Observing the data protection requirements

To ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of the respondents and interviewees, I emphasized in the first part of the questionnaire (Google Form) that their details and responses would be kept secure and protected. When referring to and quoting them in various sections of the research project report (RPR), I did not include their full name or any

identifiable information and only used their abbreviated initials if necessary. I also reassured the participants that they would not be identifiable by their political or ideological views when answering the qualitative questionnaire and participating in the semi-structured interviews. Finally, I assured them that their details and responses would be kept in a confidential file that was inaccessible to others.

4.2.7 Ethical dilemma

In addition to addressing the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants, during the research design and data collection phase, I encountered a few ethical concerns that I was able to manage. One such concern was related to questions 5 and 7 which dealt with double-standard behaviours and difficulties in practicing religion. I initially worried that asking these questions might cause embarrassment or shame to the respondents. This created an ethical dilemma for me as I didn't want to put pressure on the participants but at the same time, I didn't want to miss out on valuable data. After seeking advice from my colleagues at ICEL and a few key community members, I decided to include these two questions in the questionnaire.

In question 4, which was suggested by one of my colleagues, I asked the respondents about the perception of stereotypes surrounding Iranians. After some reflection, I realized that this question was not entirely relevant to the research question and may not greatly impact the overall conclusion. Despite this, as a sign of respect for my knowledgeable and expert colleague, I ultimately decided to include the question but with a positive or negative slant. For example, one of the positive stereotypes of Iranians is their hospitality and generosity towards guests, a well-known characteristic globally. On the other hand, one of the negative stereotypes, common among Iranians and other Muslims, is their lack of punctuality and disorderliness in meetings, which has had negative impacts on international business and political relations.

Before ending this section, I would like to mention similar research that has been conducted. Based on research conducted by scholars from Stanford University, it was found that when negative stereotypes are attributed to individuals or groups, they tend to internalize those beliefs and engage in the negative behaviour associated with that stereotype. A series of five studies showed that people are more likely to engage in unethical behaviour, such as lying, cheating, or stealing, when they feel that they are being devalued based on their group membership. (Belmi, et al, 2016). These findings suggest that repeatedly labelling a person or group with negative stereotypes can lead to the

internalization of those beliefs and the normalization of unethical behaviour. This can be seen in the institutional corruption practiced by government officials in some countries.

Chapter review

In Chapter 4, the activities carried out to achieve the research objectives are explained. The practical aspects of the research, such as finalizing the secondary questions, and creating the qualitative questionnaire and semi-structured interview questions as the primary sources of data collection, were described. The process of determining the number of respondents, selecting them, distributing the questionnaire through the use of Google Form, preparing for conducting the interviews, and choosing the interviewees were also explained in this chapter. Finally, the ethical considerations and concerns in the research were discussed at the end of this chapter. In the following chapter, the results and findings obtained from the collected and analysed data will be thoroughly examined and presented.

5 Project results and findings

The previous chapter outlined the practical aspects and implementation of the research study. The methods and tools used to gather the necessary data were clearly defined and described. All key aspects, including ethical considerations and practical tools, were thoroughly discussed and explained. In this chapter, I will present the results and findings of the gathered and classified information in the form of qualitative data and semi-structured interview data. To start, I will briefly explain the content I plan to cover in this chapter. First, I will recall the research question, then elaborate on the collected data and refine it. The data was collected in the form of responses from the sample group to ten general and ten specialized questions through Google Forms. I will provide a full explanation of each of them later and offer my critical analysis and interpretation. After reporting on the data collected from the qualitative questionnaire, I will move on to reporting on the data collected from seven semi-structured interviews. Finally, I will conduct data analysis using thematic analysis (TA) based on the themes I have defined and extracted from the collected data.

In chapter 5, I aim to provide a clear explanation of my approach to analysing and interpreting the data collected from various sources. To clarify, I have analysed and provided feedback on the responses of all 35 respondents and the raw data from seven key community characters collected through seven semi-structured interviews. Throughout the presentation of the qualitative replies and interviews, I have offered my critical commentary and interpretation for each response. In addition to these individual comments, I have also provided a comprehensive analysis of each section to summarize my findings.

For the data analysis, I have employed thematic analysis based on ten themes defined according to the secondary questions. My analysis and interpretation are guided by the research question, aim, objectives, and theoretical research framework. Before delving into the data analysis, I will briefly recall the research question to refresh the reader's memory and highlight the key components of the study.

5.1: Recalling the research question and related issues

The title for this research practice was set as:

“The experiences of the Young Practicing British-Iranian (YBPBIs) Athna-asheri Shia Muslims in London.” Therefore, the research question can be stated as follows: What are the experiences of Young Practicing British-Iranian (YBPBI) Athna-asheri Shia Muslims in London regarding intercultural communication, and how can their needs be identified and communicated to relevant policymakers in Britain and Iran for potential improvement? This research question can be further dissected and analysed based on its component concepts. The first component is "Understanding the experiences of YBPBIs" which involves collecting relevant data and information from the study group through various data collection methods discussed in the previous chapter. The second component is the concept of "intercultural communication" and its relevance in this research context.

In this research practice report (RPR), the term "intercultural communication" refers to all forms of contact, either physical or virtual, between young practicing British-Iranian (YPBIs) Athna-asheri Shia Muslims and other members of British society, including both Muslims and non-Muslims, in various settings such as the workplace, educational institutions, or daily life. The definition and importance of intercultural communication in social and cultural studies, especially in multicultural and multi-ethnic studies, were discussed in Chapter 2 (2.3 Literature Review). The author has also referred to Ansari's (1998, 2004) studies on British-Muslim typology concerning intercultural communication. (Ansari, 2004) This concept was further explored in Chapter 2, Section 2.3.3; Intercultural Communication.

Moving forward, the next part of the research question focuses on investigating and understanding the social and cultural situation of the young British-Iranian population. This includes aspects such as their piety and adherence to Shia Islam through certain rituals and practices. To gain a deeper understanding of these characteristics of the YPBIs, I included questions on these topics in the qualitative questionnaire and conducted semi-structured interviews with key members of the community. The goal of this research is to analyse and interpret my findings and provide recommendations and suggestions that can be used by Iranian and British policymakers to be more aware of the social and cultural needs and expectations of YPBIs and implement strategic and organisational change if necessary.

5.2: Collected data and information

In the previous chapter, the data were mainly gathered from two sources, which are qualitative questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. In the following parts, I will elaborate on these sources in more detail.

5.2.1: Gathered data from qualitative questionnaires

After distributing the qualitative questionnaire in the form of a Google form, the responses started to come in gradually. The questionnaire was sent through email, a website, or social media apps like WhatsApp, Telegram, or other similar applications. Initially, I sent a few of them directly to a list of email addresses that I had compiled and asked some of my former colleagues and friends to share the link and related cover letters on their mailing lists and websites. Once the forms were received, I started my analysis of the 40 total responses.

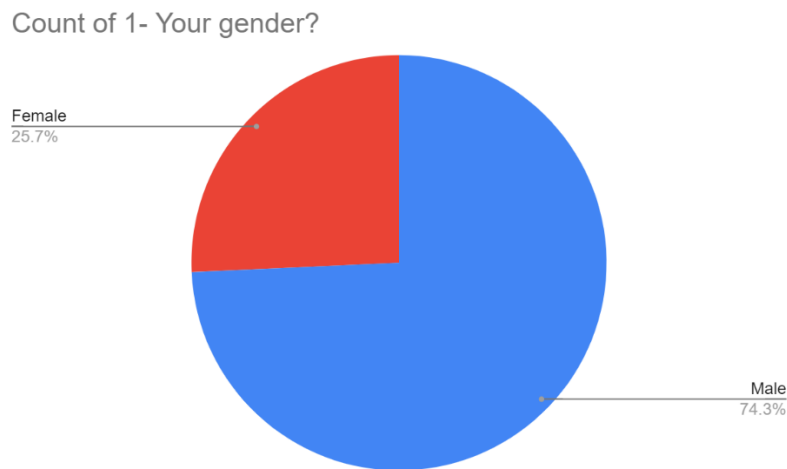
Evaluations of the Qualitative Questionnaire are as follows: The Google form used for the qualitative questionnaire was an excellent tool for data analysis. The responses were accumulated in different rows based on the number of questions. The collected data was divided into two main parts for evaluation. In the first part, general questions about the sample group of 35 YPBIs were answered using multiple-choice options. The second part consisted of specialized questions that were descriptive and textual. These questions were analysed one by one, and the results were displayed in related pie charts taken from the Google form spreadsheet. The charts were informative and self-explanatory. A total of 35 responses were received, out of which two were duplicates (replies 7 and 28). The respondents were briefly described below:

5.2. 1A: Replies to general and common questions in the questionnaire

In this section, I will present the results of the qualitative questionnaire by extracting the information from the response box and related spreadsheet. I will first provide an overview of the common and general characteristics of the sample group by including charts

and summarized information. In the second section, I will delve deeper into each specialized question. Please note that the chart titles were generated by the Google Form application and I was unable to modify their wording or writing style.

Figure 5: The sample group's gender

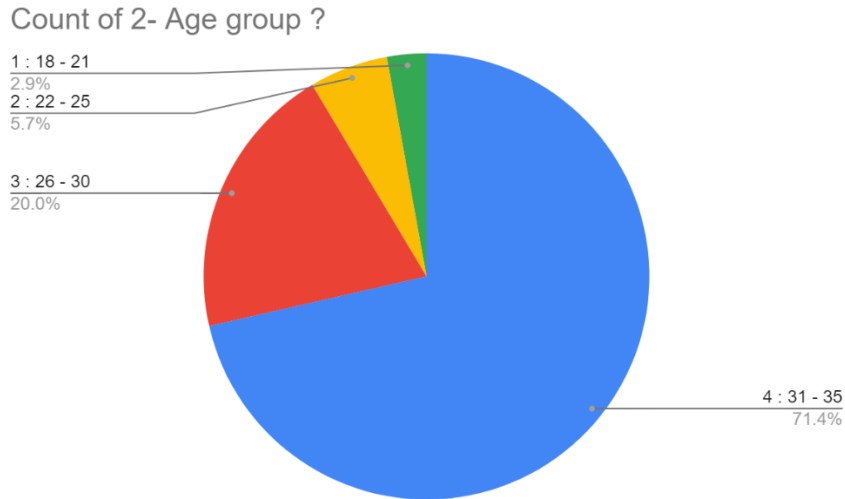


In the first general and common question, the respondents were asked about their gender. The chart shows that roughly 75% of the sample group, which is 25 YPBIs, are male, while 25%, or 9 YPBIs, are female. The responses are as follows: A (Male) = 26 and B (Female) = 9.

In this section, the proportion of males to females among the respondents was discussed. It was observed that the number of male respondents was three times that of female respondents, with 26 males and 9 females. This gender disparity could be attributed to the methods of distributing the Google Form, which was primarily online and sent directly to male respondents known to the researcher. The effect of this disparity on the validity of the gathered data will be discussed in a later section.

The second question focused on the age group of each respondent. The results of this question are presented in a pie chart in the following section.

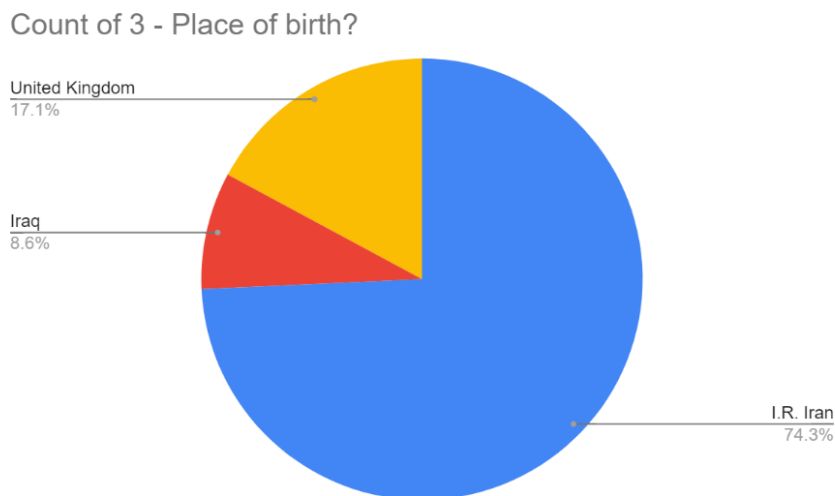
Figure 6: The sample group's age group



A: 18-21=1, B: 22-25 = 2, C) 26-30 = 7, D:31-40 = 25

In this chart, the distribution of YPBIs' age is depicted based on the respondents' replies, which shows the majority (% 71.4) of the sample group were aged between 31- 40. In the next question, the respondents were asked about their place of birth.

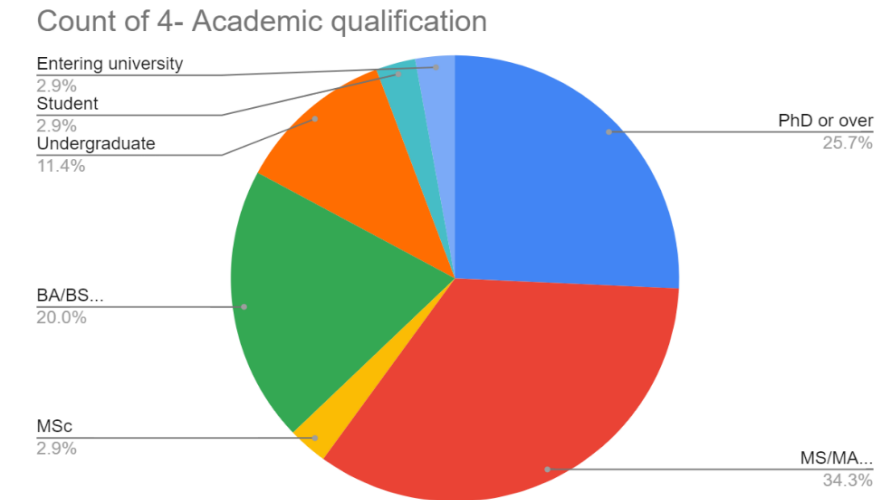
Figure 7: The sample group's Place of birth



A : I.R. Iran = 26 B: United Kingdom = 6 C : Other = 3 (Iraq)

This chart shows that the majority of the members of the sample group were born in the I.R. Iran and only 6 UK born and 3 in Iraq. In the fourth general question, the respondents were asked about their academic qualifications, and their answers to this question are shown in the following discussion.

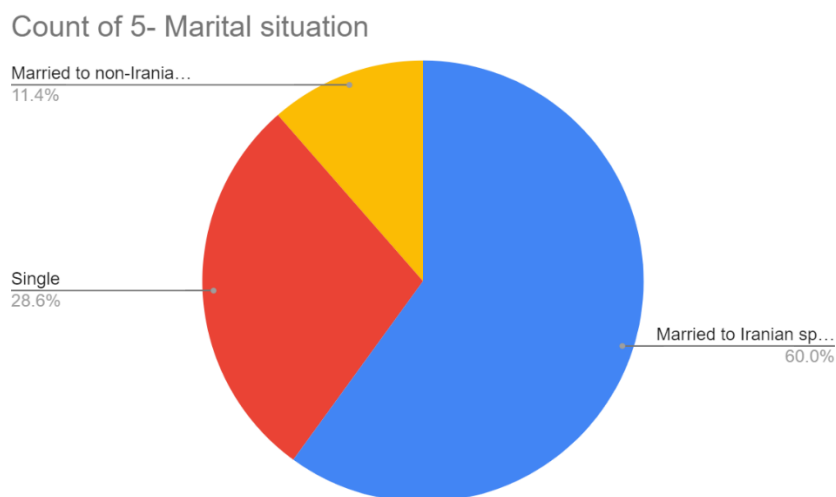
Figure 8: The sample group's academic qualification



A: Undergraduate	4	B: BA/ BS	7
C: MS/MA	13	D: Ph.D. or over	9
E: Other	2		

This chart displays the academic qualifications of the specified sample group. The majority of the respondents have either a Master of Arts (MA) or a Master of Science (MS) degree. The next question, a general inquiry, asked about the respondents' marital status, and their responses are presented in the subsequent pie chart.

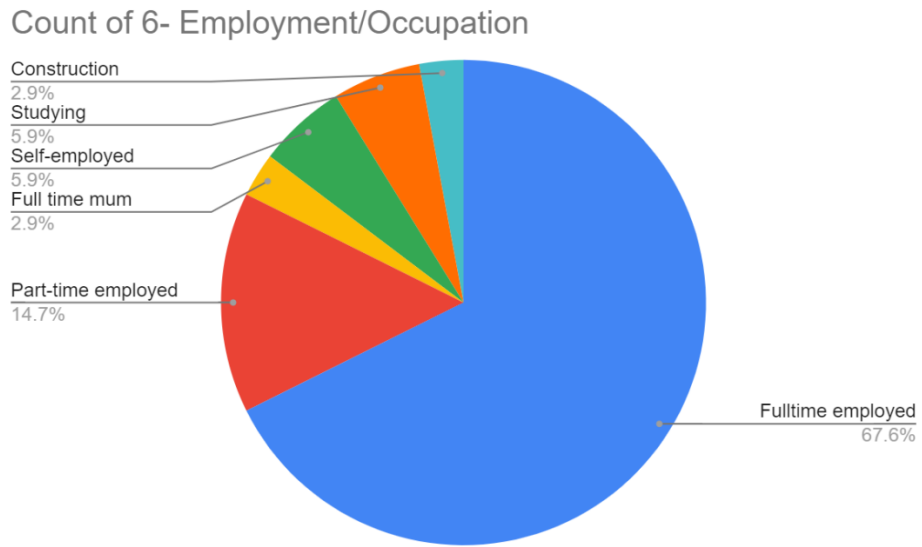
Figure 9: The sample group's marital situation



A: Single	10
B: Married to Iranian spouse	21
C: Married to a non-Iranian spouse	4
D: Divorced	0

The above chart illustrates the marital status of the studied group. The majority of the respondents are married to an Iranian partner. In the sixth question, I asked the respondents about their employment status and the results of their answers are displayed in the following chart.

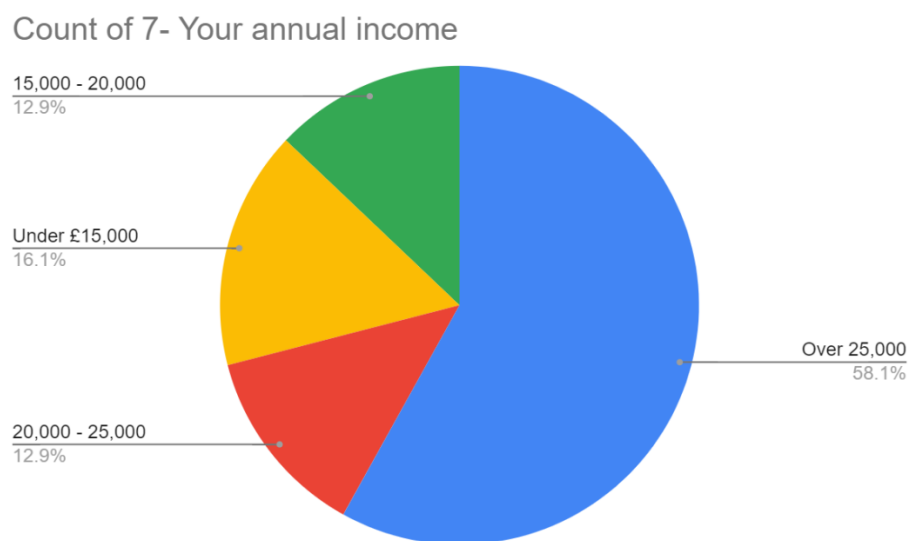
Figure 10: The sample group's Employment/Occupation



A: Full-time employed	24
B: Part-time employed	5
C: Self-employed	2
D: Studying	2
E: Other	2

The study found that 67% of the group were employed as full-time employees, while 14% were part-time employees. The remaining types of employment are shown in the chart above. The seventh question in the survey, which is related to employment, asks about their annual income level with four different options and a "No answer" option in the multiple-choice responses.

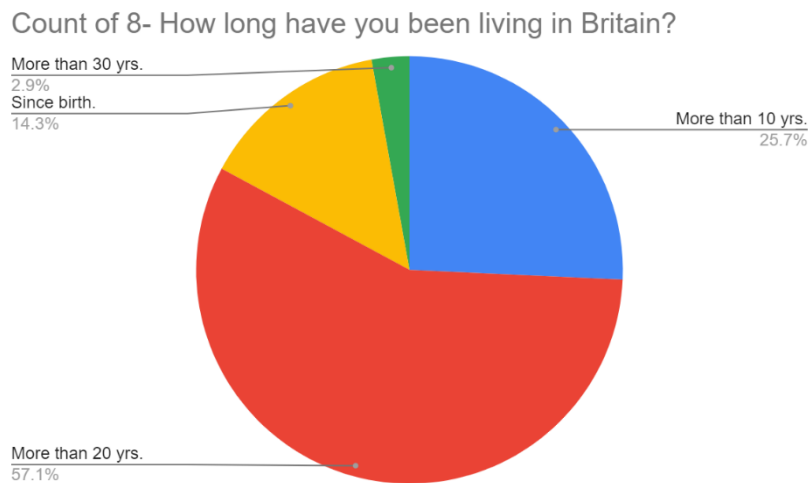
Figure 11: The sample group's annual income



A: Under £15,000	5
B: £15,000-£20,000	4
C: £ 20,000- £ 25,000	4
D: Over £ 25,000	18
E: No answer	4

On this chart, the majority of the respondent's annual income has been stated as over £25.000. In the next question, I asked them to reply about the duration of their stay in the UK.

figure 12: The sample group's Duration of residing in the UK

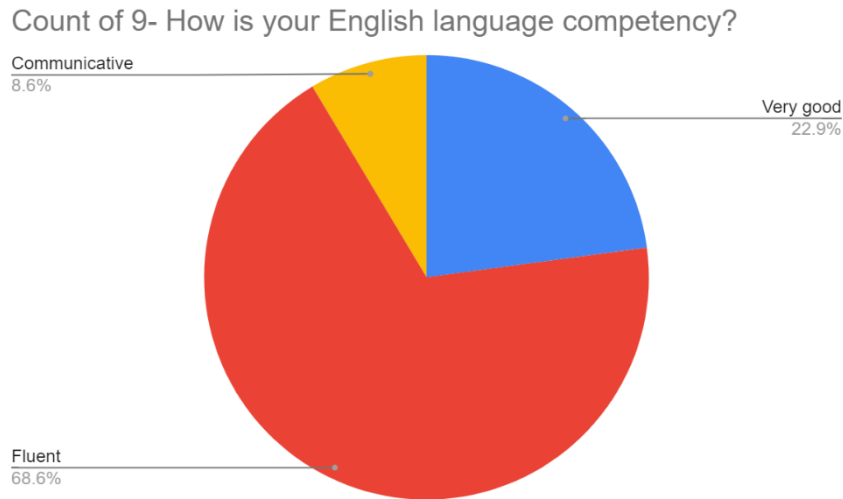


A: Since birth	5	B: More than 30 Yrs.	1
C: More than 20 Yrs.	20	D: More than 10 Yrs.	9

The majority of the YPBIs have lived in this country for over 20 years, indicating they have spent a significant portion of their active life here. This issue of identity building and integration will be explored further in other sections of the report. In the ninth question,

I asked the respondents about their proficiency in the English language and the results are displayed in the accompanying pie chart.

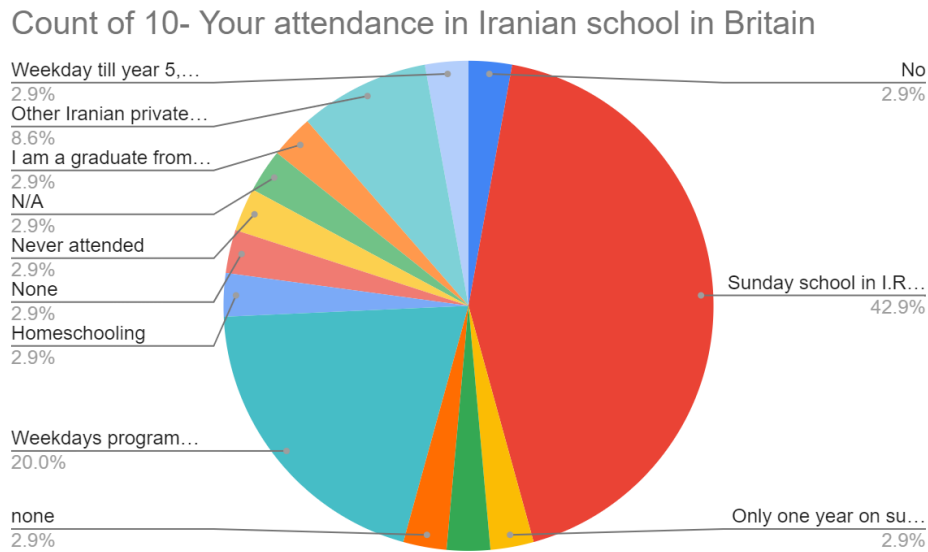
Figure 13: The sample group's English language competency



A: Fluent	24	B: Very good	8
C: Communicative	3	D: Poor	0

Most of the respondents reported being fluent in English, which is understandable given their high level of education and extended stay in the UK. The final question in the section general questions was about their attendance at "heritage schools," specifically Iranian schools. The results are displayed in the following pie chart.

Figure 14: The sample group's Attendance at an Iranian school in London



A: Weekdays I.R. School	8
B: Sundays I.R. School	15
C: Other Private Iranian schools	4
D: Home-schooling	2
E: None	6

"The responses to this question indicate that most of the respondents attend Sunday school at Iranian schools. The Iranian school located in the borough of Brent in London, near the Islamic Centre of England, is a popular destination for the Iranian community in London, particularly for the more devout. The most popular program at the school is the Iranian Sunday school program, which covers the majority of Iranian students. The program is popular because it allows students to maintain fluency in both Farsi reading and writing while attending English schools during the weekdays. The summary of the data collected from the general questions in Part A of the questionnaire is presented in the following table.

Table 6: General statistical characteristics of the sample group (N=35)

Choices	A	B	C	D	E
Questions					
Gender	Male 26	Female 9			
Age group	18 -21 1	22 – 25 2	26-30 7	30 – 40 25	
Place of birth	Iran 26	The UK 6	Other (Iraq) 3		
Academic Qualification	Under. Graduate 4	BA/BS 7	MS/MA 13	PhD & Over 9	2
Marital status	Single 10	Married to IR spouse 21	Married to a Non-IR spouse 4	Divorced 0	
Employment	Full-time 24	Part-time 5	Self-employed 2	Studying 2	Other 2
Income level £000.00	Under 15 5	15 – 20 4	20 – 25 4	Over 25 18	No answer 4
Time living in the UK	Since birth 5	More than 30 Yrs. 1	More than 20 Yes. 20	More than 10 9	
English language fluency	Fluent 24	Very good 8	Communicative 3	Poor 0	
Attending heritage schools	Weekdays IR School 8	Sundays IR The school (I.R. Iranian school) 15	Other Iranian Private School 4	Home-schooling 2	None 6

Before proceeding, I would like to provide a brief overview of the demographic and statistical information of the sample group of Young Practicing British-Iranians (YPBIs) that I worked with. The YPBIs living in London are a subgroup of British-Iranian youth, consisting of devout Shia Muslim men and women between the ages of 18 and 40. They strongly believe in Shia Islam and are dedicated to regularly practicing their religious duties and rituals. They have lived, studied, and worked in the UK, possessing a high level of education and employment status. They are typically part of the second or third generation of British Iranians who migrated to the UK in the last fifty years, primarily after the establishment of the Islamic Republic in 1979.

The YPBIs is actively involved in various aspects of social and economic life in the UK, either studying or working in different fields and sectors. The findings based on the data collected from the sample group of 35 individuals (26 males and 9 females) show that, on

average, they were born in Iran, highly educated (13 have post-graduate degrees and 9 hold Ph.D. or higher), have lived in the UK for over 20 years, are married to Iranian spouses, are almost fluent in English, are full-time employees with an annual income over £25,000, and attend Sunday school at the Iranian school (heritage school). I will further discuss a few of these items in the data analysis section at the end of this chapter. The gender disparity of the sample group will be explained and presented in detail in Chapters 3 and 3.6

5.2.1 B: The specialised questions

Among the replies I received through the Google Form, quite a few numbers of respondents replied to the question in a very brief form and with ‘Yes or No’ answers, but other respondents replied and commented on the questions with more details. The summary of replies and their category has been depicted in table 7.

Table 7: Summary of replies to specialised questions

Choices ----- Questions	Yes only	Yes with detailed Reply	No Only	No with detailed reply	Other	No answer No Preference
Social/cultural fulfilled?	8	10	10	7	-	-
Involvement with Islamic activities	3	12	9	10	1	-
Involvement with domestic Affairs	3	15	7	9	1	-
Double standard Behaviour?	5	10	13	5	2	-
Confidence in being Shia Muslim?	9	21	3	2	-	-
Stereotype Behaviour?	3	7	18	5	2	-
Preference in Marriage	-	-	-	-	-	-
Difficulties performing Islamic duties?	2	7	14	9	3	-
Is the British-Iranian ID preferred?	3	12	4	10	4	2
Cultural integration with British society	5	11	5	7	7	-

About 43% of the respondents replied in full and their responses were easily interpreted. In the table below, I have analysed each qualitative question by referring to the respondents' replies and comments. I would like to mention a few general observations regarding the descriptive questions and the responses provided by the members of the selected sample group. Most of the respondents provided simple "yes" or "no" answers to the questions. However, for responses that contained more than one word, I attempted to highlight the key message and important comments from the respondents. I have done my best to accurately report and present the respondents' replies and comments, but there may be alternative interpretations due to the nature of the question or specific situation. Before discussing each question, I would like to clarify the presentation of information in the Google Form pie chart.

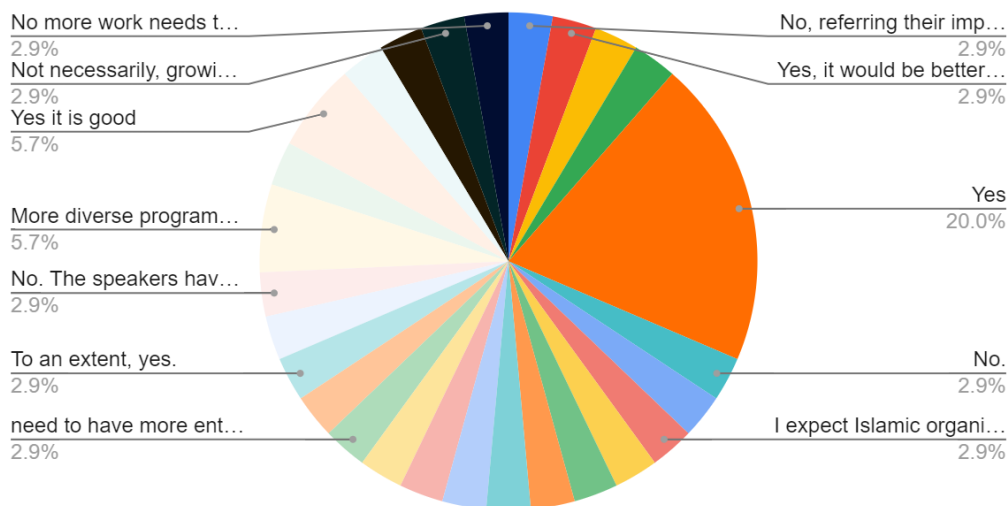
By utilizing the Google Form spreadsheet, I was able to access most of the statistics and charts necessary for classification, categorization, and interpretation. Although these charts are informative and explanatory, unfortunately, in some cases the titles of the charts are not fully visible and the detailed information within the charts, such as numbers and percentages, is also not completely clear. This may be due to limitations of the Google Form application or the large amount of data submitted to the system. Nonetheless, to overcome these limitations, I have attempted to provide more detail in a narrative and explanatory form.

Another consideration regarding data analysis and interpretation is the discussion of each descriptive question. In the following ten questions, after quoting the respondents' replies, I immediately explained and interpreted the subject. Instead of just reflecting on the respondents' replies and postponing the analysis and interpretation until later in the data analysis section, I found it more logical and appropriate to interpret and discuss the matter at that point. However, a comprehensive and general data analysis will be provided later in its designated place.

In the first descriptive question, the respondents were asked about their expectations and needs from Islamic organizations based in London. They were asked if their cultural and social, as well as religious, needs have been fulfilled so far and if they have any additional suggestions or recommendations.

Figure 15: Fulfilment of Social, Cultural, and religious needs and expectations

Count of 1- Have your social, cultural, and religious expectations from the Islamic organisations based in London...



Out of the 35 respondents, 20 replied with either a single "Yes" or "Yes, but," while 15 replied with only "No" or "No, but." To gain a better understanding of the respondents' views and comments, I have referred to a few of their replies.

A married respondent in the age group of 31-40 stated that more children's programs are needed. This highlights the importance of paying more attention and care to the future generation of the British-Iranian community through Islamic centers in London. A well-informed and technologically advanced generation would be a benefit to the community. At the same time, it is essential to preserve the cultural values and traditions of previous generations. Hence, there is a need for more children's programs run by knowledgeable teachers and a sound education system. Currently, the Islamic Centre of England, along with other Shia Muslim centers in London, offers a variety of programs for children, including religious teachings, art, and recreation classes, particularly on weekends and during sacred months like Ramadhan and Muharram. Although these programs are in high demand, there is always room for improvement and expansion.

A single male with a Ph.D. responded that the website of the Islamic Centre should be updated. In today's world, every organization must have a modern and informative website and IT system, especially with the advancement of technology and the widespread use of social media and digital science. The Islamic Centre of England has an active and

updated website, but in light of active competition, it is important to keep it at the most current level. Another respondent suggested having gatherings between older and younger generations to exchange views and experiences. This would benefit both generations, keeping the older generation more active and social. Although physical gatherings may be difficult due to distance or health issues, they could be done remotely through virtual applications such as Zoom.

One of the issues mentioned by a member of the sample group was the need for additional counseling services for families. This is a critical concern given the immense pressure faced by families in today's challenging environment. The family and social affairs section of the Islamic Center has been one of the most active since its inception, offering services to Shia and non-Shia Muslims, converts, and those seeking assistance with marriage, divorce, conversion to Islam, and family disputes. To benefit both partners and children, the family section strives to prevent separation and divorce through counseling sessions conducted by religious scholars and family psychologists. In addition to family counseling, this section is also sought out by the YPBIs as well as other young people for their religious and social concerns.

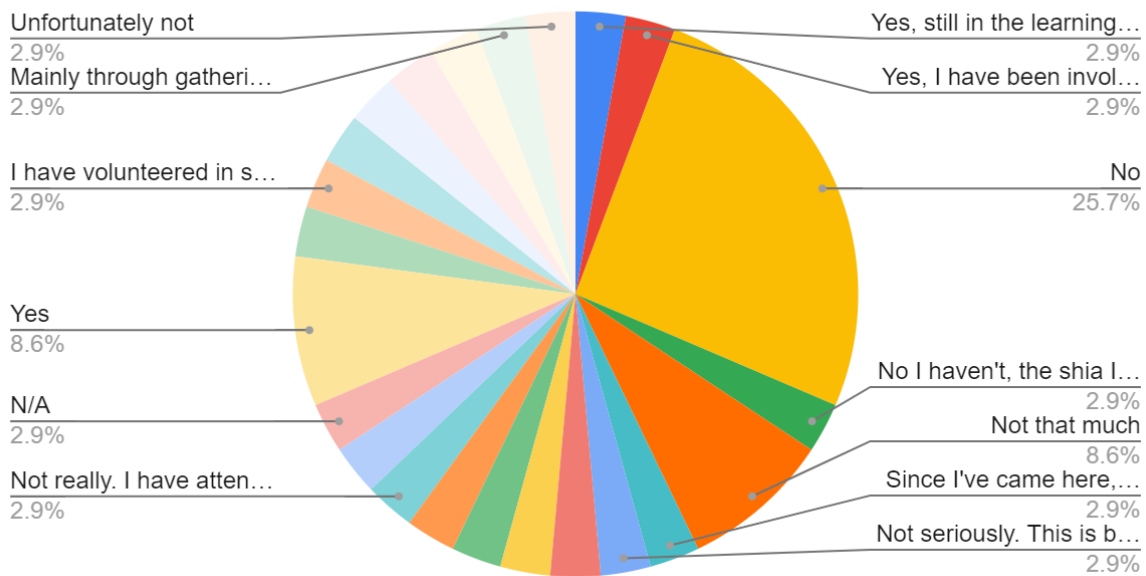
To gain a general understanding of the other comments and replies to this question, I am including a few of the responses in addition to those previously discussed. These include:

- Additional programs specifically for Young People and the Beneficiaries of the Islamic Center (YPBIs)
- Expansion of the Center's activities beyond just religious programs, including those related to science, sports, arts, culture, and national events
- More innovative programs to meet the community's needs, including tailored programs for Shia Muslim student associations in colleges and universities. It is important to promote programs for Islamic student associations, as Shia Muslim students in higher education may feel isolated and uncomfortable being in a minority.

Overall, upon review of the responses received, it appears that while the members of the sample group expressed approval of the current level of religious, cultural, and social programs offered by the resident Shia Islamic organizations, there were additional needs and expectations expressed. In the second specialized question, the participants were asked about their involvement in Islamic activities and interactions with Islamic Centers. The following pie chart illustrates the replies of the YPBIs.

Figure 16: Involvement of the sample group in Islamic activities

Count of 2- Have you been involved in Islamic activities in general and 'Shia Islam related' issues in particular in the fra...



In this question, the participants were asked about their involvement in activities related to Islamic organizations, such as cooperation with Islamic organizations or Shia Muslim student associations. Of the 35 responses, 43% (15) replied that they are involved in Islamic activities, while 20 replied that they are not. In addition to a simple yes or no answers, some participants provided more detailed responses. For example, one male respondent stated that he was involved in Islamic activities during his university studies, in cooperation with the Shia Muslim student association and with a Sunni group. He believes this is a sign of unity among Muslims, as recommended by many Maraje (Grand Ayatollahs)⁶ and scholars from both Sunni and Shia sects. The respondent mentions his own experience with gatherings at the Islamic Center of England and elsewhere that invited speakers and lecturers from both sects to exchange ideas and views on unity (vahdat) in the Islamic world. There is an independent Islamic organization based in Qum, Iran that focuses on promoting unity among Islamic sects; (مركز تقريب بين مذاهب اسلامي) Approximation amongst the Islamic sects).

⁶ According to Shia Islamic jurisprudence, *marj'a* or grand ayatollah is a high-ranking religious scholar with many followers (Moqaleeds), who have reached to the level of *ijtihad* (writing an independent book of Shia practical instructions called *risaleh*). They are usually based in Qom, (Iran) and Najaf (Iraq), as two main holy cities of Shia Islam with their representative in major cities throughout the globe. Marj'a is more or less similar to (Mufti), in Sunni Islam.

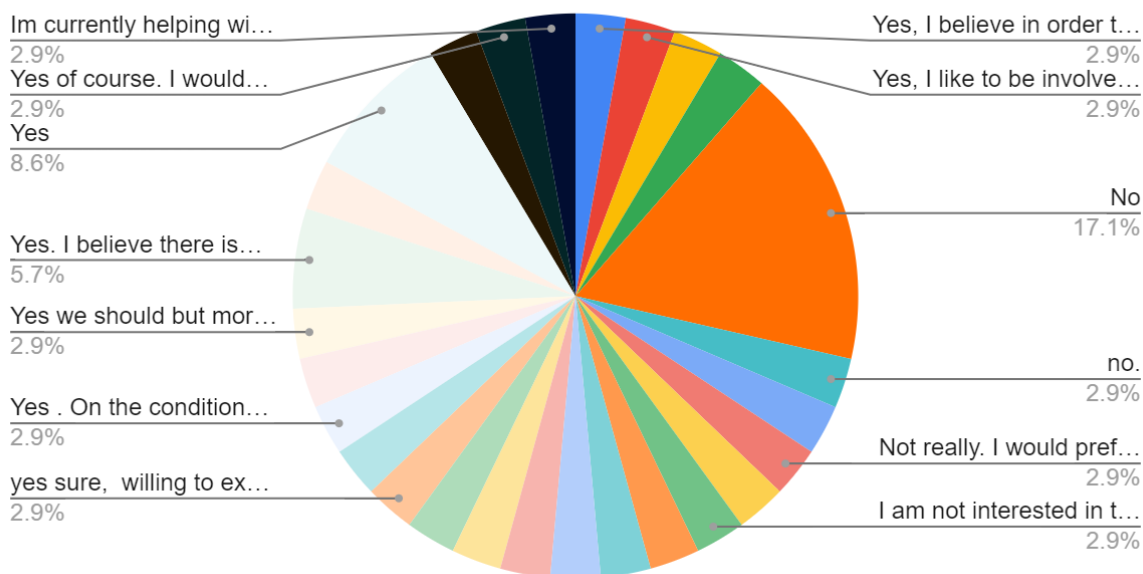
Another respondent replied that they had not been involved in serious activities of that kind and added that, in their opinion, Shia Islam issues in terms of intercultural communication are not promoted enough. There is a need for more forums that engage with different religions and sectors in open inter-faith events. Most of the respondents reported being involved in Islamic activities, particularly during the months of Ramadan and Muharram and other Islamic events and festivals, which provide suitable opportunities for charity work and the propagation of Shia Islam. Some of the other replies to this question included involvement in university Islamic societies, cooperation with the Who is Hussain foundation, helping mosques and Islamic organizations, participating in humanitarian activities, working in Islamic bookshops, volunteering in various multicultural Shia organizations from a young age, participating in interfaith activities, and close cooperation with the Association of Iranian students in Europe. (Kanoon Tawheed)⁷ From these replies, it can be seen that YPBIs have a relatively good level of involvement in Shia Islamic activities, especially during Ramadan and Muharram and other religious festivals and occasions.

In the next question, the respondents were asked about their involvement and willingness to participate in social, economic, and political activities at both the local and national levels. The results of their replies are depicted in the following pie chart.

⁷ Kanoon Tawheed is the Farsi name for the Association of Shia Muslim Iranian students in London, established in west London, UK in 1985. It is a venue for religious, social and cultural activities of Iranian Muslim students studying in various universities and colleges throughout the UK. It has links with other European Iranian Muslim students' associations and it has been supervised and supported by the Iranian embassy based in London.

Figure 17: Involvement of the sample group in national and local activities

Count of 3-Considering the increasing number of the Muslim population in the UK, (Including Shia Muslims) do you like to...



Eighteen respondents replied they are willing to participate, sixteen replied, they are not willing to participate and one responded he/she might be involved. Again apart from the yes or no answers, I went through the more detailed replies and feedback, which I have reflected on a number of these replies as follows:

- A male respondent for example replied; "To have an impact on our society, we have to be closer to each other".
- Another respondent believes that; "Although there is rapid growth in the Muslim population in the UK, the new generation is less religious, and most of the social and political activities are done by the members of the older generation".
- One more positive respondent believes; "I have been always interested to be more involved socially and politically in society's affairs to continue the legacy of our parents and encourage my children to do so as well".
- Another female respondent has said; "I like to be involved, but my main concern is being labelled as pro-Iran or anti-Iran".
- An active respondent said; "This is the right of Muslims to be active in all society's political and social affairs of their community. The Muslims are infringed on and treated as second-class citizens." - Another suggested field of social and political activities, by another respondent, was that;

“Holding gatherings and conferences for the exchange of ideas and views in the framework of intercultural communication is the right action to move forward”.

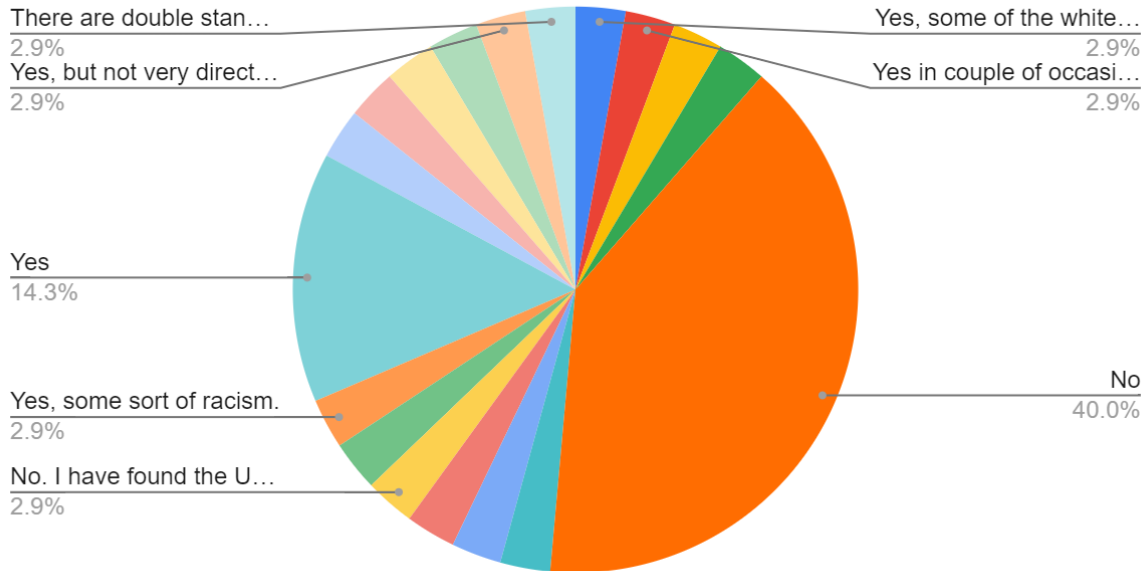
My interpretation and observations from the above replies are that there is generally a positive inclination towards participating in and being involved with social and political activities in society, ranging from local authorities to higher-level political and partisan activities. In recent years, party leaders and local representatives have shown a keen interest in the votes of ethnic minorities and migrants, especially British Muslims. In recent local and national elections, there have been a significant number of Muslim candidates running for high-level governmental and parliamentary positions. Despite the positive responses to participating in local and national activities, there were a few negative attitudes among British-Iranian youth towards such involvement.

A respondent with a negative perspective stated, "Not only Iranian Shias but other Shia Muslims are not included or welcomed in the aforementioned activities in British society." Another respondent who was reluctant to participate said, "I prefer to keep my religion private, as we are not accepted by non-Muslims in this country." A small number of individuals reported that they are already fully occupied with their commitments and therefore not willing to participate in such activities.

The fourth question of the qualitative questionnaire asks about the experiences of young British-Iranian individuals (YPBIs) regarding any possible discriminatory or double-standard behaviours they may have encountered from non-Iranians or non-Muslims in the context of intercultural communication or their daily dealings with members of British society.

Figure 18: Experiencing any discriminatory behaviour from wider society

Count of 4- Have you, as a YPBI, experienced any form of double-standard or discrimination from non-Muslims or non-Ir...



Out of the designated sample group, 20 members reported no experience with double-standard conduct in intercultural communication, while 15 reported having experienced it. One male respondent stated that "some British people believe that we are taking their jobs." Another respondent noted that "non-Muslims sometimes have strict rules for Muslims." Another respondent reported that "there have been a few cases of double-standard, discrimination, or racism, particularly when advancing in the employment ladder."

Along the same line, another respondent stated that "despite claims of protecting freedom of speech and human rights, there are still instances of discrimination and racism that can impact our daily lives in the wider society." Another male respondent reported experiencing discrimination from the police, government officials, Salafists, and racists. A female respondent also mentioned experiencing double-standard behaviour with the Islamic Hijab. One male respondent said, "Double standards exist everywhere, not just for Iranians or Muslims." Finally, another respondent explained that "Discrimination does occur, but not in an overt manner. It happens on a more subtle level, for example in the workplace where they use the excuse of '*cultural fit*' to not hire someone."

Contrary to the respondents who believed that there is some form of discrimination and double standards in British society, another respondent held a different view and said, "There are no serious cases of discrimination, racism, or double standards based on religion

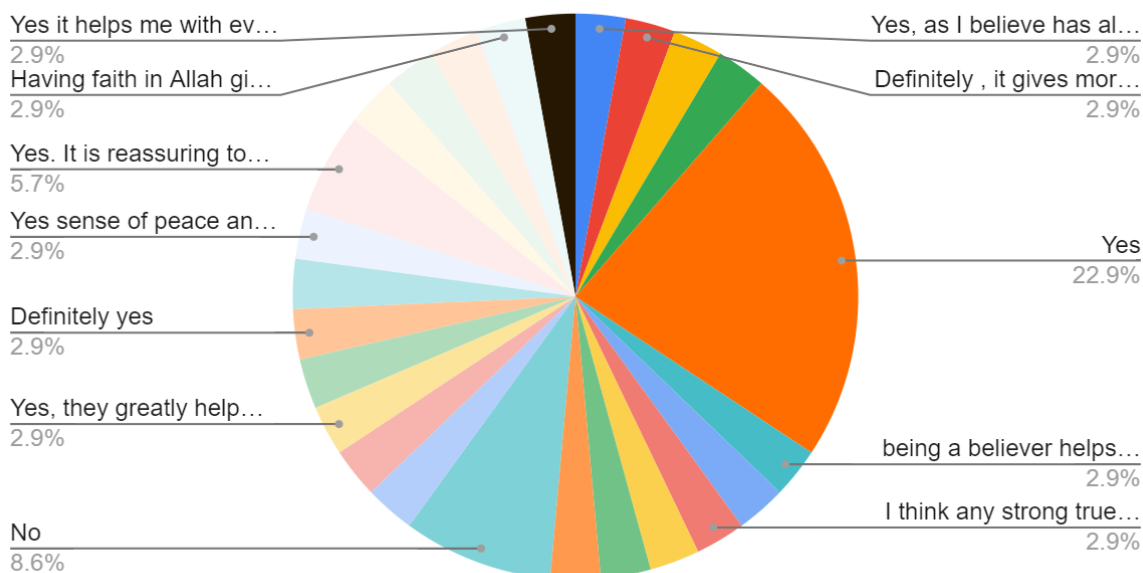
or race in British society, however, there might be some instances of such behaviours due to cultural differences." Another respondent with a positive outlook on this issue said, "No, I have found that the British people are very accommodating and understanding."

The issue of discrimination and double standards in society, including British society, is a delicate and controversial topic. People's perception of this sensitive social issue varies greatly, depending on a multitude of internal and external factors. Although there may be instances of double standards against minorities in British society, I believe that these instances are relatively rare compared to other countries in Europe. British society is fortunate to have robust legal protections, such as equal employment opportunities, access to public funds and social services, and laws against religious and ethnic hatred, to safeguard the rights of its citizens. (Government, 2010)

In the next question, the respondents were asked about their confidence in being a practicing Shia Muslim.

Figure 19: Sample group's confidence in being Shia Muslim

Count of 5-You are considered as a believer and practicing devoted Shia Muslim living in London. Do these attributes giv...



Out of the thirty-five respondents, thirty said yes and only five said no when asked about their confidence in being a practicing Shia Muslim. Possibly the high number of positive replies was due to the positive wording of the question. One of the respondents who replied yes was quoted as saying, "Having faith in Allah gives me the utmost confidence in myself. I am constantly striving to better myself and one day I hope to be considered a true and devoted practicing Shia Muslim."

The majority of respondents who answered positively to the question about confidence in being a practicing Shia Muslim indicated that their belief in Shia Islam and the commitment to its principles and teachings have given them a sense of self-confidence and moral guidance, which strengthens their ethical, wise, and legal behaviour in their society. The five less positive replies still showed some inclination towards the topic discussed.

For example, one respondent said, "I don't feel very strongly about being a Shia. However, as a Muslim, I feel emotional security." This could be because being a Shia means being in the minority, causing a lack of confidence in society. Another reply was, "Living in London is easy as it is a multicultural city. However, I have found places outside of London generally uncomfortable to work/live in." Another respondent said, "I am not saying this because I was born in a Muslim family, however, I felt that the religion of Islam has always given me the option to choose wisely by knowing Allah better and more in-depth." Another respondent believed that "To some

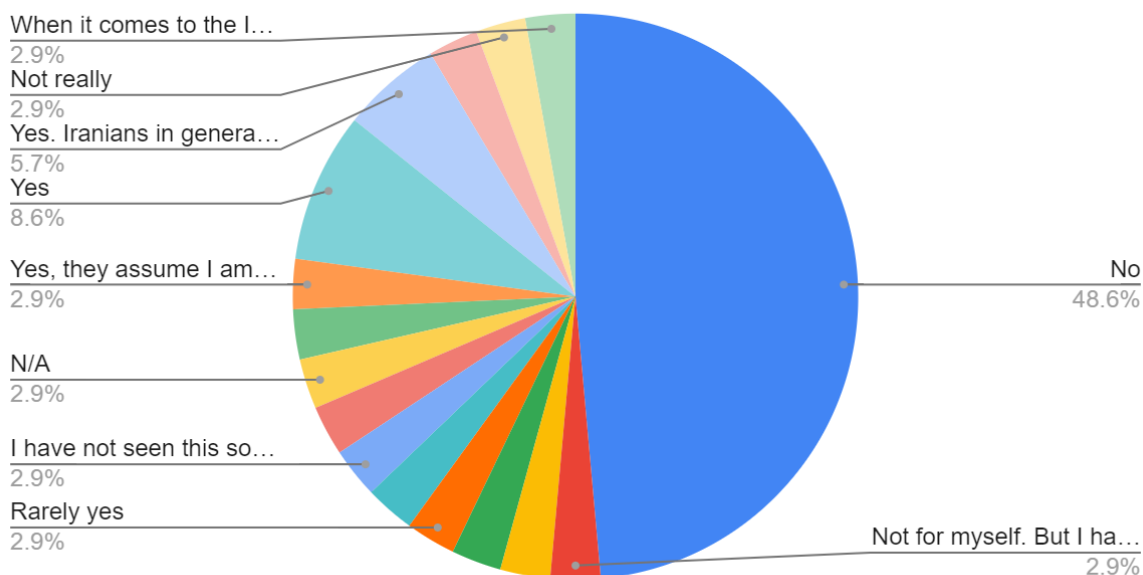
extent because I know that I have a community behind me that would support me in difficulties (hopefully!). Being a member of a certain community and having and practicing a set of shared cultural and national values gives a person a sense of confidentiality and unity." Finally, the last respondent to this question said, *"I would like to think that I am [confident in being a practicing Shia Muslim], but I don't live in London anymore. Definitely, without it, one will be lost as we can see clearly in the Western lifestyle."*

This respondent linked his answer to his place of residence. By referencing the *"Western lifestyle,"* he seems to mean a secular pattern of life that lacks any religious adherence or commitment, which is in opposition to common religious beliefs and practices. This response is also an example of the formation of a specific identity that may not accept cultural integration with the mainstream secular British society because of different and, in some cases, opposing values compared to the prevailing cultural values and norms. This issue is discussed in more detail in other sections of the paper, as part of the data analysis.

In question No. 6, the respondents were asked to share their experiences (positive or negative) of being stereotyped as British-Iranian. The pie chart below displays the distribution of their answers, represented by different colours.

Figure 20: Experiencing any kind of stereotype feeling

Count of 6- Have you experienced any kind of stereotype feeling (negatively or positively) of being British-Iranian in the...



Regarding the question about experiencing any form of stereotyping, 20 members of the sample group replied that they had experienced it, while 15 replied that they had not. As shown in the pie chart, the majority of respondents, 18 in total, reported that they had not experienced stereotypical behaviour in their daily lives.

I have selected a few examples from those who replied positively. One respondent said, "Yes, I have, especially at the workplace. I get called fanatic or ayatollah by non-believing Iranians." This is an example of opposing cultural differences and ideologies among members of the same community. Another respondent replied metaphorically, "Positive. They assume I like kabab koobide," referring to a popular Iranian dish. The last positive reply was, "Yes. Iranians, in general, tend to be stereotyped."

For those who replied negatively, one member of the sample group said, "Not for myself, but I have seen some YPBI feeling negatively when they apply for a new job." This could be due to the negative feelings associated with being in a minority position and a lack of self-confidence. Another respondent stated, "I have not seen this sort of stereotype in London, but some of my friends who live outside of London have experienced it." This could be because London is a cosmopolitan city with a large proportion of its population coming from minority ethnic groups, reducing the likelihood of experiencing negative stereotypes.

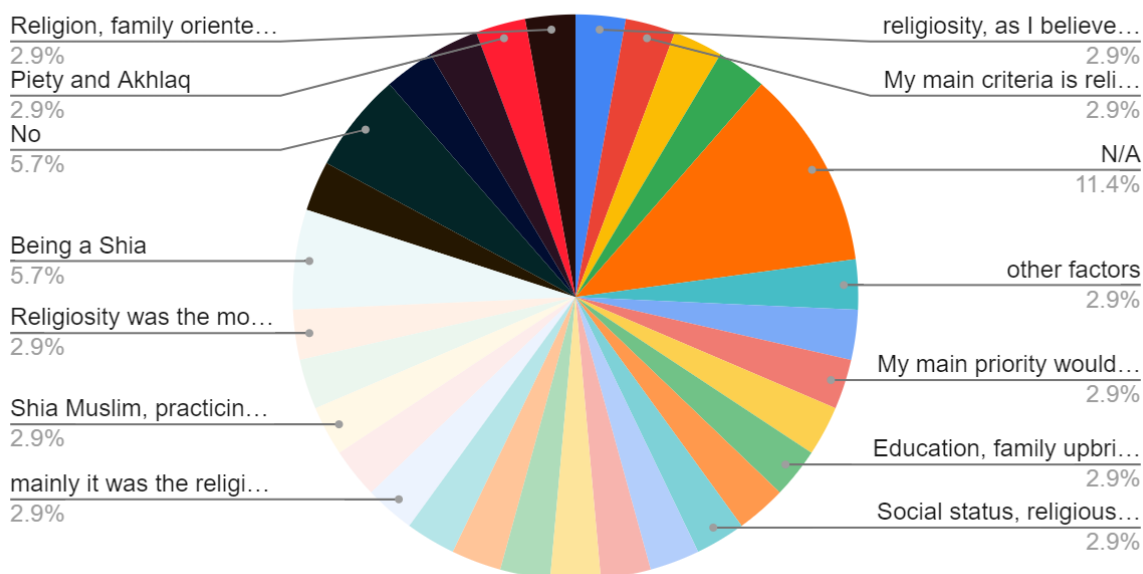
The next reply in this category reads as follows;

-“When it comes to the Iranian community, especially the people living in Iran, the concept of a practicing Muslim in the west is difficult to believe. The main problem for me is the supposed religious groups within our community in the UK have a superiority complex, which creates a toxic negative community. This may be the reason why we have a dis-functioning community in the west”. This is an interesting opinion. I believe that most practicing Iranian Shia Muslims think they are superior to non-practicing or partially practicing Shia Muslims, and this might be due to the in-built support and priority that the Islamic Republic has assumed for them.

Question 7 asks about the main criteria for marriage, which requires explanatory answers rather than just a yes or no response. Possible choices for the criteria were provided, including religiosity, nationality, ethnic background, etc.

Figure 21: The sample group’s preference for Islamic marriage

Count of 7 - As a YPBI, what are/were your main criteria for marriage, such as religiosity, nationality, and ethnic backgrou...



In a survey about the priorities in an Islamic marriage, religiosity was at the top of the list for most of the respondents. Many preferred a practicing Shia Muslim as a partner. While ethnicity and nationality were not deemed important by many, some believed having a “common culture and religious sect” would make life easier. Other qualities sought in a spouse included a good “family background, education, ethics, honesty, good behaviour, devotion to the family, and morality”. One respondent's reply particularly stood out:

“Religiosity and nationality were important. But the main thing was for my spouse to have the same attitude to religion as I do. For many, the way we practice religion in the UK is

based on choice and freedom, whereas those in Iran may practice based on force, culture, and political pressures”.

In this response, the writer is discussing political and legal aspects and compares the social, cultural, and political situations of people's behaviour in different places. For example, wearing an Islamic hijab is not legally or socially required in the UK, even for Shia Muslims, but in Iran, some laws and regulations govern this and other practices in public spaces. The importance of choosing a spouse with similar values for maintaining an Islamic lifestyle in the family, due to the lack of societal pressure in the UK is noted. The comment also sheds light on the attitudes towards British society, where maintaining an Islamic lifestyle is a personal choice, whereas, in Iran, it is mandatory and enforced by law and possibly by public opinion, which may not always be genuine. I have organized all the responses and their relative priorities in a table.

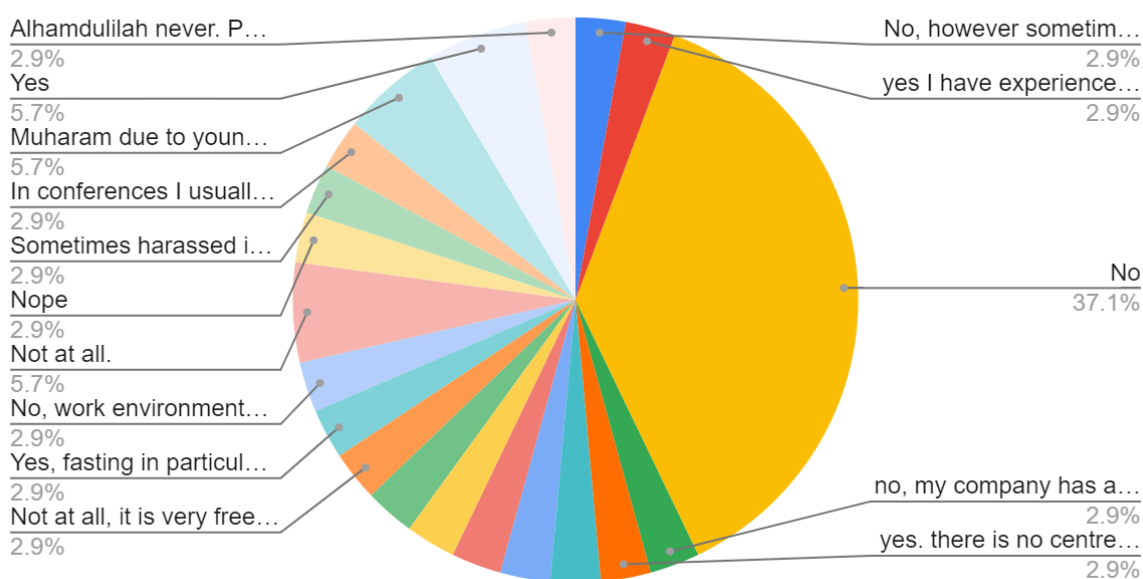
Table 8: Main criteria and preference in marriage

Types of replies	Status
Religion, Shia Islam, Practicing	Very high priority
Nationality, culture, ethnic background	High priority
Family background	Relatively high priority
Moral, good manner	Relatively high priority
Education,	Fairly high
Other factors	Moderate priority

In the next question, I asked my sample group about their experiences with any difficulties in performing their religious practices and rituals in Britain.

Figure 22: Difficulties in performing religious duties and rituals

Count of 8- Have you experienced any difficulty in performing your religious practices and rituals such as praying, fasting, a...



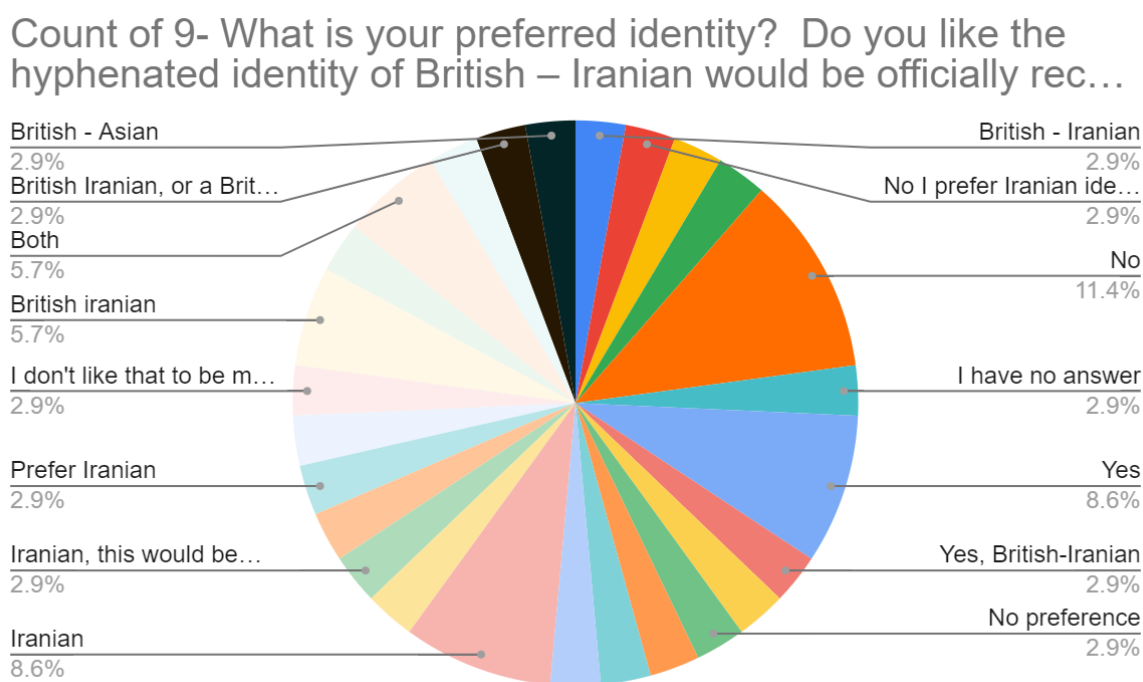
Most of the respondents reported that they were not hindered from worship by mainstream British society and were able to perform their religious rituals and festivals without issue. Only 9 out of 35 respondents reported negative experiences. The detailed responses indicated that these difficulties were not due to societal pressure, but were personal. In some cases, the respondents expressed gratitude towards their employers who were supportive in allowing them to participate in their religious celebrations. One respondent summarized it simply.

- "Alhamdulillah,(Thanking Allah) never! Perhaps because of 2 reasons. 1- The country we live in is much more open than other European countries so fewer issues practicing our beliefs. 2- I made sure nothing stops me from practicing (works, education, etc.)" (Maarten Vink et al, 2019). Attending most of the Shia Muslim religious rituals and ceremonies, I noticed that not only there were no preventive conduct and reactions from the neighbours, local authorities, and other members of the public, but on the opposite, there has been always, support and proving coordinative measures from local authorities and special Metropolitan Police

in providing security and supportive service during sacred months of Ramadhan and Muharram and other religious occasions. One very good example of this kind is the Ashura procession in London on Ashura day (10th of Muharram)⁸

In question 9, the sample group was asked about their preferred identity and whether they preferred to be referred to as British-Iranian or by another term. This important question was documented in the following pie chart.

Figure 23: The sample group's preferred identity



Nineteen respondents replied that they are not happy with the proposed identity of 'British-Iranian'. Fourteen of them were positive about having this hyphenated identity tag, and two replied they prefer both British-Iranian and Iranian identities. As an example, one respondent very briefly and in a metaphoric reply:

The respondent's answer to the question about their preferred identity, "*Yes, feel safer walking on the road,*" suggests that they agree with the British-Iranian label and feel more secure legally and socially. This identity provides them with a sense of confidence and security. For example, when asked about their ethnicity, they can choose the British-Iranian

⁸ In Ashura day, (10th of Muharram, when the martyrdom of Imam Hussain, the third of Muslim Shia believers and the grandson of the Muhammad, the prophet of Islam – Peace be upon them- is marooned, usually there is a big procession in London (and other major cities), run and coordinated by the Shia Islamic Organisation and mosques with the attending of very big number of the Shia Muslims from all ethnic backgrounds (up to 10-15 thousands of attendants).

option, rather than "other" or "none of the above" in paperwork such as with the National Health Service or Passport Office.⁹

The respondent's reply, *"No, I prefer the Iranian identity. I do not agree with a mixed hyphenated identity,"* demonstrates a strong sense of nationalistic self-identification. This separates the choice of location for living and working from an essential identity while accepting a form of dual citizenship and emphasizing cultural, religious, and real belonging aspects in their country of heritage. This approach avoids the negative connotations of a hyphenated identity and could be seen as a fair compromise or choice. The next answer to the same question was:

"British-Iranian is a fair label as we are immigrants." This respondent believes that the hyphenated British-Iranian identity is an appropriate way to identify themselves as they are immigrants in the country. This lack of recognition for the British-Iranian identity compared to other dual identities such as British-Indian or British-Chinese has been a long-standing request from the British-Iranian community with no progress seen yet.

Another respondent believed that;

"Iranian living in London" is a fair response, but it is limited in scope as it only applies to British Iranians living in London. A more comprehensive and inclusive identity should be considered. Another respondent stated that they see themselves as Iranian, which may differ from those British Iranians who were born in the UK.

"I see myself as Iranian, but this may be different for British Iranians who were born in the UK".

This implies that those who were born in Iran can identify as Iranian, while those born in the UK can identify as British-Iranian to differentiate themselves. Another YPBI respondent answered:

- *"I prefer to say only Iranian, however, I respect the country I have lived in for most of my life."* This is another nationalistic choice for identity, and at the same time shows a sense of belonging and respect for the country that he/she has lived in it for a long time. Another member of the sample group replied;

⁹ Currently, the British government, uses the ethnic group categories (dropdown list) for mainly statistical use in different governmental departments and agencies. In normal and standard list, the choices to be select sequentially from the classified list are; White, Mixed or multiple ethnic groups, Asian or Asian British, Black, African, Caribbean or Black British, other ethnic group, or prefer not to say. The next category of choices are; White and Black Caribbean, White and Black African, White and Any other Mixed or Multiple ethnic background or Prefer not to say. The more choices to be selected are; Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Chinese, any other Asian background or prefer not to say. Finally, the last group are; Arab, any other ethnic group, or prefer not to say. <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/style-guide/ethnic-groups>.

- *“I don't like that (British-Iranian) to be my preferred identity, to be honest. I'm still coming to terms with what my actual identity is. I'd say I'm Iranian if anyone would ask. The British part only comes since I grew up here. I respect the people of Britain, not the neoliberal capitalists who run it. This is a very important question! I have been working on it for a long time, not just for myself, but for my peers and children. However, I still consider myself to be Iranian, not British-Iranian.”* The respondent believes that, while they prefer to be referred to as Iranian, they acknowledge that the hyphenated identity of British-Iranian should be officially endorsed and recognized as it has certain benefits and advantages for future generations of British-Iranians.

Finally, the last respondent expresses their stance on the topic by saying:

- *“British Iranian, or a British Muslim with an Iranian upbringing”*

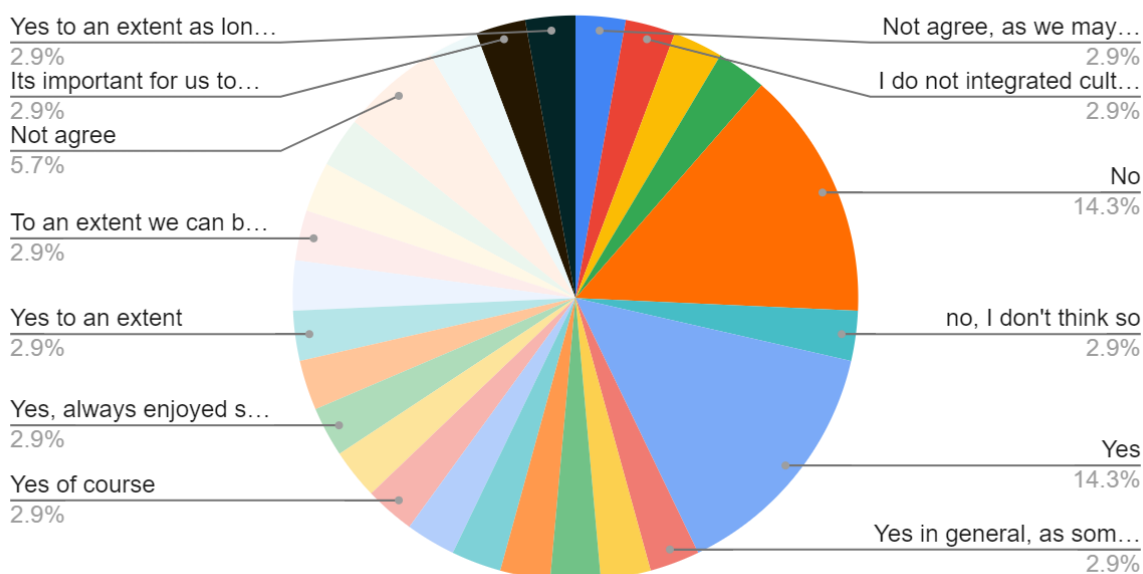
The identity of 'British Muslim' highlights and emphasizes the individual's religion, but it also obscures their national and ethnic background. It may not be the appropriate choice for those who desire their nationality or ethnic roots to be distinguished from other British Muslims.

The issue of identity in the context of the multicultural political and legal environment of modern industrialized nations with a large population of immigrants and asylum seekers has been a long-standing and highly debated topic. I briefly address it in other sections of this report.

In the tenth question of the qualitative questionnaire, I asked the participants to comment on the potential for the integration of Young People of British-Iranian heritage (YPBIs) into British society, as depicted in the accompanying pie chart.

Figure 24: Possibility of cultural integration of YPBIs with British society

Count of 10- By living in Britain we are involved in our daily affairs with the rest of the society in social, legal, and econo...



Out of the 35 respondents, 20 replied with "Yes" and 15 replied with "No" to the question asked. To provide a better understanding of their answers, I have included their detailed replies and my comments on each one. It's important to note that these answers and comments are not absolute and come with certain conditions. For example, one respondent stated:

"Yes, we can integrate, but we can also have our boundaries." This respondent demonstrates that while cultural integration with members of the wider society may be possible, cultural differences may require the maintenance of certain barriers, such as traditions and cultural heritage, and limitations.

The next response to the same question was:

"Yes, we have to respect the values of the country we live in and be able to integrate with the society and lead a good example of true Muslims to be able to make changes through legal matters if something doesn't work in our favour." This response indicates a strategic approach to reconciling social and cultural differences in a multicultural setting.

Another response to this question was:

"Yes, very much so. I don't see or feel any barriers in these domains." This response seems to lean towards the far end of the spectrum, suggesting a tendency towards assimilation.

"Yes, I can do it perfectly." This response mirrors the previous one and supports the same reasoning.

Another short reply was:

"Yes, of course." This straightforward answer may not align with the majority and dominant trend, but it still represents a clear response.

"Yes, but there are limitations." The respondent is referring to cultural differences and religious/ethical barriers that prevent YPBIs from full integration into society. The similarity in these answers is noteworthy and indicates a shared understanding among the respondents.

Another reply, in the same vein, stated:

"Yes, I've always enjoyed the social aspect with friends and colleagues. I've never felt pressured by anyone to act or do anything other than what was my choice."

The reply continues with another statement that reads, *"Yes, to an extent, as long as it does not clash with my beliefs."* This response echoes the previous feedback, expressing a conditional form of integration. The final reply in the positive category was, *"We can be integrated to some extent, but there are limitations due to our faith. That being said, people should show tolerance, understanding, and respect for others' beliefs, regardless of what creed they follow."*

I believe this to be a valid analogy and conclusion that should be taken into consideration and followed.

In regards to negative replies, there were a few concerns raised by the respondents. One respondent stated, *"I do not agree with this idea as it may lead to the loss of our religious characters,"* showing their strong commitment and loyalty to their religion and faith. In the conclusion, I have delved further into this matter and discussed it in greater detail.

Another respondent, when asked the above question, replied, *"I do not integrate culturally with them, but society has affected my discipline and goals for the future."* This aligns with the conclusions of the current RPR and my previous study on BASM in the UK, which is a form of conditional integration. Another short reply was, *"No, I don't think so,"* which is a straightforward personal answer indicating resistance to the idea of full cultural integration with the secular society.

A relatively longer reply to the question under scrutiny was;

- *"I do not think we can culturally integrate. There can be cohesion and harmony but not integration because we as Muslims do certain things that non-Muslims do not do e.g., Not drinking, not shaking hands with the opposite sex, etc. Making long-lasting friends with non-Muslims will be difficult"*

because the social activities we do are different due to the restrictions we have in our religion. It's not that we do not want to make long-lasting strong friendships with non-Muslims but it is very difficult to form one because of the social activities we can have together"

This respondent has expressed his comment extensively with complete explanation and it is in full agreement with the average reply to the raised question, as well as complies with my findings and conclusion in both the current work-based research and my previous study. I have expanded and discussed this subject other in parts of the RPR.

"This is a complex issue as our cultures differ in how we spend our leisure time. Typically, we tend to spend more time with our family members." The respondent is implying a sentiment shared by many others, that full cultural integration is not achievable for a typical Young Practicing British Iranian.

Another respondent believed; *"It depends on the individuals. I have many friends who, although not Muslim, are good-hearted people. However, there are many Muslims whom I don't feel comfortable with because they are only Muslims in the name."* This is an intriguing comment that sheds light on the dynamics of intercultural communication and the social and cultural characteristics present in a multicultural society.

The following reply was given by another respondent to this question: *"Not as much as it should be. There is a barrier and I believe that more effort is needed to reach an agreement."* The phrase implies that a majority of the British-Iranian community should agree on a form of cultural integration even conditionally.

The next response is; *"To some extent, cultural integration is possible, but to some extent, it is not. It is somewhere in between."* This reply aligns with other responses to this question and expresses a similar idea.

The next respondent responded: *"I have many non-Iranian friends. I meet them, have dinner with them, and socialize with them, but we respect our differences."* This and two other previous comments reveal the same results and findings.

Finally, the last response from the sample group reads as follows;

"We need to be open to different cultures and allow ourselves to be integrated, learning from one another. I don't think we can expect others to accept us if we're not accepting of other communities. I believe, in order to take that step, we need to first accept ourselves." This is another perspective expressed by the respondent, and I believe it is wise and noteworthy advice if we want to integrate with members of the wider society.

5.2.2 Data gathered from Semi-Structured Interviews

In this section, I have compiled the data from semi-structured interviews with seven members of young British-Iranian community members of the British-Iranian community. I outlined the questions asked in the semi-structured interview in Chapter 4, section 4.1.2. In this section, I will focus deeper on the content of each interview. It is worth noting that, due to the Covid-19 pandemic in the UK and under strict health regulations, I conducted the semi-structured interviews primarily online and with a limited number of designated members of the young British-Iranian community and my previous colleagues.

To gather information, I sent a pre-set list of questions along with a cover letter introducing myself and explaining my purpose of conducting research to a selected group of young practicing British Iranians (YPBIs) and a few of my previous colleagues. I made sure to fully explain my intention and the details of the research over the phone or other forms of communication before sending the questions and cover letter. I requested the interviewees to respond to the questions one by one via voice or audio messaging. All seven recorded audio files were kept secure and later transcribed into a written format, which is included in the appendix. Based on the data collected through the qualitative questionnaires and the extracts and feedback from the interviewees, I conducted a thematic analysis to arrive at the following analysis.

Table 9: Details of Semi-structured Interviewees

Row	Abbreviated Name	Position	Qualification	Date
1	S.H.	Scholar, religious advisor in ICEL	M.A. Psychology Religious Studies	10/09/2020
2	A.M.	Psychologist, family consultant	PhD	14/09/2020
3	E.P.	YPBI	PhD	20/09/2020
4	S.S.	Coordinator of Iranian Students Association YPBI	PhD	25/09/2020
5	S.A.H.	School Headmaster	PhD	12/10/2020
6	S.M.R.	Scholar, religious advisor, Senior family consultant	Religious studies, Qom Seminary Iran	25/10/2020
7	M.S.	Chair of IHRC	MA, Law	10/11/2020

The first person I interviewed was S.H. (Haneef, 2020) a Shia scholar who works and lives with the Shia Muslim community, specifically in close contact with YPBIs. The interview was conducted via the Zoom app. S.H. has been involved with the Shia community for almost 40 years, having converted to Shia Islam. He serves as one of the Ulamas (religious scholars) providing religious services for the community. When I asked him about the definition of YPBI, he stated that *“a Young Practicing British Iranian Shia Muslim is someone who shares the general beliefs of Shia Islam and observes as many of the rules of Shariah as they can.”*

Regarding the integration of YPBIs into the main British society, S.H. had a comprehensive view. He referred to those YPBIs who have lived in the UK most of their lives and have established their life here, stating that *“they are well integrated into British society, with some being more assimilated and others less so.”* He added that *“there are some assimilated Iranians who are integrated into British society, but still fully Muslim and Iranian.”*

When I asked him for his comment and advice in the situation where a YPBI wants to live in a harmonious relationship with members of the multicultural and multi-ethnic of the UK while considering existing cultural and ideological differences, he responded by saying that *“There are many Iranians with a religious Shia orientation who are deeply committed to their Iranian heritage, but they also lead normal lives in society, work hard and are aware that these*

principles are a part of their religion. So, there is no conflict between being a Shia Muslim and being a good citizen."

Continuing with the next question, when I asked him about his thoughts on the "dual identity" status of YPBs, he stated, *"There are two aspects to it. One is conscious and the other is unconscious. Despite having a British passport, I do not consider myself British. However, I feel more comfortable living in this environment than in Iran. This is the unconscious aspect, a sense of belonging to this country even though it's not acknowledged. You may adopt British cultural practices, but there is no conflict with your Iranian background or religious beliefs."* In response to my question about YPBs' involvement in local and domestic activities, he said; *"It largely depends on the individual's desire to be considered British. British Iranians, like other British Shia Muslims, tend to be inward-looking communities. This self-perception is historical and is mainly due to being a minority. In these situations, Shias used to do Taqieh which would involve hiding their religious identity for protection."*

The issue of the involvement of the YPBs in domestic and local activities and its impact on the cohesion policy was discussed with S.H. He added, *"The problem with the Iranian community is that they don't see themselves as a united community. Iranians need to work internally to first create cohesion among themselves. For example, if an Iranian is elected as an MP or local government councillor, they must follow their party's strategy and not work for the benefit of the Iranian or Shia Muslim community."*

When asked about the involvement of the YPBs in community affairs, their needs, and expectations from Islamic centers, and his own involvement and experience working with the British-Iranian community, S.H. replied, *"My involvement with the YPBs mainly focuses on religious issues. I believe that Islamic centers should be more involved in the planning and programming level. In most cases, these centers are run by Ulama (religious scholars) who are not from this country and are not familiar with the needs and expectations of the younger generation."*

This issue is not just limited to the Iranian community but also affects other Shia communities, such as the Pakistanis and Iraqis. For instance, young religious Iranians are concerned about the secular ideas they receive from the educational system, which can present strong arguments against religion. Islamic centers should address these issues and try to provide a resolution. They could also do more to promote the proper practice of Islamic culture in society. The best way to achieve this is by including young, practicing Shia Muslims in the planning and programming levels of these centers, especially in regard to teaching and educating the younger generation. At the end of my interview with him, I thanked him for sharing his views and for taking the time to speak with me.

M.A. (Moafi, 2020) is a British-Iranian community member who has lived in the country for 40 years with his family. He is both a practicing Shia Muslim and a psychologist. In his work, he has had extensive experience working with Iranian families and, specifically, with young British Iranians (YPBIs).

Regarding YPBIs, M.A. defines them as 'Shia Muslims who observe the minimum requirements of Islam, such as praying, eating Halal food, and researching religious and scientific subjects, as long as they are not in conflict with the UK law.'

In terms of integration of the British-Iranian community within British society, M.A. believes that 'the second generation of British-Iranians are well-integrated with the wider British society, while still maintaining their religious identity.'

M.A. then spoke about his own life experience as a YPBI. He came to the UK as a 16-year-old student and is now 55 years old. He lived, studied, worked, and mixed with the UK population without any issues. He believes that 'there is no conflict between being a Shia Muslim and living in the UK while observing one's religious beliefs.'

When asked about finding the balance between being a Shia Muslim and living in British society, M.A. replied that *"as long as British society does not impose its liberal ideas on them and they do not forget their Shia Muslim identity, they can live in a clear balance between the two."* He added that this is what he has done himself and what he wants for his children. Continuing my discussion with M.A. about the balance between being a law-abiding British citizen and a YPBI, he stated, *"There is no conflict between being a law-abiding citizen and a YPBI."* When asked about his sense of belonging to the UK, he responded, *"I consider myself an Iranian, but after living here for 40 years, I have a deep respect for British society and would do anything to contribute to its betterment."* Regarding involvement in domestic social and political affairs, he said, *"I have been involved in community work, but not as much in the local borough. I just haven't had the time to be involved as much as I would like."*

At the end of the interview, I asked about his involvement with the Iranian community and young practicing Shia Muslims (YPBIs). He explained that he had been actively involved in helping families and advising the youth on how to find themselves and live in society, with a focus on helping them lead happier and conflict-free life in the UK. When asked if he had any further comments on the issue, he added that 'he believed Muslim and non-Muslim organizations could work better together to create an atmosphere where people do not feel suppressed or have feelings of Islamophobia.' He expressed hope that more could be done to improve the lives of the youth and the next generation and expressed gratitude for the time spent on the interview and for sharing his views on the subject.

In my third interview, I spoke with E.P (Pedram, 2020), a YPBI who has been actively involved with the affairs of the YPBI community. E.P is currently a science teacher at a local British high school and works with the Iranian school in the UK to improve Iranian students' performance in higher education. He has been living in the UK for 23 years and holds undergraduate degrees and a PhD from one of the reputable universities in London. During his time as a student, he was involved with the Islamic Student Association (Kanoon Tawheed) for five years.

In response to my first question, he stated, *"In my opinion, a practicing Shia Muslim is someone who follows the teachings of Shia Islam in their religious practices."* When I asked about the integration of YPBIs with British society beyond just cultural integration, he commented, *"It's a tough question to answer. Some are integrated and some are not, but generally speaking, religious British-Iranian youth are not fully integrated. It largely depends on how you define integration. If you consider integration to mean celebrating Christmas or engaging in cultural practices that are common among British-born citizens, then the answer is no. However, if you define integration as acceptance, tolerance of different opinions, working and collaborating with others, and exchanging ideas, then in those terms, they have been integrated."*

In continuation of our conversation, I asked him about his views on the cultural integration of Young Practicing British Iranians (YPBIs) with members of British society. He replied, *"The religious Iranian youth are not culturally integrated with the majority of British society. However, YPBIs have managed to maintain their cultural heritage, similar to many British Indians, who have done so by accepting others' cultural values and differences while still keeping their own cultural values intact."*

Regarding the question of YPBIs living in harmony within the secular and liberal British society, he stated, *"I believe that the majority of the population in British society are secular and liberal, and this dominance of liberalism and secularism in British culture is the reason for this. Generally, there is harmony between the secular and religious communities, with mutual respect and understanding between these two groups of ideas. Diversity in society is a natural phenomenon, and British society promotes this idea by educating people to accept these differences and live in harmony and equilibrium with others."*

In response to a question about a possible contradiction between being a law-abiding British citizen and a YPBI, he said, *"Absolutely not! I don't see any contradiction between being a law-abiding British citizen and practicing Iranian culture in this society."* When asked about his sense of belonging to Britain, he replied, *"I came to this country as a schoolboy and attended high school and university here. I earned my Ph.D. degree, got married, and raised my children here. I have a job I love and many good opportunities and memories in this country. While I have maintained my cultural and religious traditions, I have also enjoyed the benefits of a good life here. So, yes, I have positive feelings about this country, although I still see myself as an Iranian living in*

the UK."When asked about YPBIs' involvement in British society's domestic affairs, he said, *"I was very active politically and socially while in university, particularly in regards to YPBI affairs, when I held various responsibilities in Kanoon Tawheed. However, I am now fully occupied with my family and work."*

The fourth person I interviewed, was S.S (Saljooghi, 2020), a 36-year-old young British-Iranian from the British-Iranian community, who replied that 'he has been actively involved in organizing various programs, ranging from religious to cultural, such as Nowrooz, Yalda, and the anniversary of the Islamic Republic Day, in cooperation with others. S.S also mentioned that he has been working with various Iranian organizations, including the Islamic Centre of England, IHRC, Ahlol-beyit Islamic Mission, the Cultural department of the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Iranian school, and many others.'

S.S is quite active in the British-Iranian religious community in London and has many contacts with Iranians through his informative websites and social media activities in religious, cultural, and scientific domains. He described himself as a Ph.D. scientific researcher and explained his involvement with the Iranian community and YPBIs, mainly in science-related subjects.

In response to my question about his perception of practicing Shia Muslims, S.S said that a *"YPBI is someone who follows Allah's instructions and commandments, which have been conveyed through the prophet Muhammad (PBUH and his household) and emphasized and recommended by the Ahlol-bayt (the prophet of Islam's sacred progenies)."*

In response to my inquiry about the integration of YPBIs with British society, he stated, *"Religious Iranians are integrating with members of the British society to the extent that their Shia Islamic religious practices, which are based on the teachings and principles of the Prophet of Islam and his sacred household, permit."* He continued to answer my fifth question about the balance between the religiosity of YPBIs and the dominance of secular and liberal ideas in British society by saying, *"I believe that religious British-Iranians have a blend of both secular and liberal ideas in their beliefs because Shia Islam incorporates many secular and liberal ideas. However, these ideas need to be properly communicated and explained to the people, especially the younger generation, so they can effectively engage with wider society while still adhering to Islamic rulings and teachings."*

In response to my sixth question about the potential contradiction between being a YPBI and a law-abiding British citizen, he stated, *"While there are some differences between the law-abiding British citizen and a YPBI, the difference arises when religion comes into play and*

instructs the YPBI on how to act and respond following Islamic principles for a successful life in this world and the afterlife. However, there is not a significant contradiction between the two." When I asked about his sense of belonging to the UK, he made it clear that "As Shia Muslims, we believe that the Earth and the entire universe were created by Allah and belong to him, for the use and benefit of all human beings worldwide. Thus, the sense of belonging to any specific place, such as Britain or anywhere else, is artificial and conventional, and makes no difference to me."

In response to my eighth question about involvement in domestic social and political activities, he stated, *"I enjoy being involved in social and political activities within my community and the area where I live. While there may be differing opinions on how to approach these activities, if I can make a positive impact through my involvement, I am more than happy to do so."* Finally, when asked about his involvement with the Iranian community and YPBIs, he said, *"I am fully engaged with the British-Iranian community. I participate in programs at Islamic centers and use social media to raise awareness about religious and scientific subjects based on Islamic and Quranic teachings."*

The fifth British-Iranian community (BIC) member I interviewed was S.A.H. (Hussaini, 2020) who has lived in London for nearly twelve years. Since his arrival, he has been actively involved with British-Iranian families and Young Practicing Shia Muslims (YPBIs) either directly or indirectly. In his introduction, S.A.H. explained that he works in one of the educational organisations in London. Through his position, he has been in contact with a large number of pupils and their families. He also emphasized that he has been in close contact with these families not only through his profession, but also by participating in various religious, cultural, and social programs held in Islamic centers as well as in other places.

In response to my question about his definition of a YPBI, he stated that "a practicing Shia Muslim is someone who leads a positive and optimistic life, performs religious rituals such as praying and fasting, helps those in need by giving charity, avoids sins such as gossiping, and actively works for the sake of Allah and Islam." I then asked him about the integration of the Iranian community with British society, and in what ways.

In reply to my question, he believes that *"they are integrated to some extent. They interact with British society in their daily activities such as work, study, and other social activities like shopping and dining out. However, when it comes to cultural integration, there is limited integration due to cultural and religious differences. But, in areas where there are no religious restrictions, such as sports like football and wrestling, cultural integration could occur."*

In response to my fifth question about the balance between the British Iranians and the majority of the British people and how to achieve an equilibrium, he stated, *"The cultural*

differences between our two communities stem from historical, political, and traditional differences in cultural values. Currently, most Iranians tend to follow religious and pro-revolutionary ideals that conflict with the more liberal and secular values of the British people. These obstacles, along with other social, cultural, and political barriers, make full integration between the two communities nearly impossible." In my sixth question, I asked for his views on any potential contradictions between being a law-abiding British citizen and a YPBI. He responded; *"There is no contradiction. Shia Islam encourages its followers to observe the laws of the land and respect the values and customs of the local people. Therefore, members of both the British and YPBI communities are generally law-abiding citizens."* When it comes to a YPBI's sense of belonging to the UK, the interviewee mentioned that, *"as someone who has lived and worked in the country for over a decade and I have attended various religious, social, and cultural programs, I have constructed a personal attachment to the UK and considers it as my second home. Additionally, I have seen instances where British-Iranian youths expressed a strong sense of belonging to the UK."*

In response to the question about his involvement in local, social, and political activities, he replied that he has no experience in these fields, except for routine administrative affairs with the local authorities regarding his administrative activities. In response to my ninth question about involvement with the British-Iranian community and cooperation with Iranian organizations, he stated that he attends various religious, social, and cultural events, but his primary focus is to communicate with Iranian families and students' parents to improve the level of services he provides for the British Iranian youths and their families.

In response to my final question about any comments or suggestions for the British-Iranian community and organizations involved with them, he said, *"I believe that one of our Islamic beliefs is to find common ground and work together to bring love and peace to our fellow human beings. This is reflected in the Quranic verse which states, 'Those who save a life, it is as if they have saved all of humanity, and those who take a life, it is as if they have taken the life of all humanity."*

The sixth person I interviewed was S.M.R (Razavi, 2020)., a Shia Muslim scholar who has worked with various communities of Shia Muslims, including British-Iranian and young British-Iranians, for over forty years.

When asked to introduce himself briefly, he said that he has lived in the country for almost forty years and has mostly been involved with the British Shia Muslim community, particularly with Iranian families. In response to a question about the definition of a practicing Shia Muslim, he commented that a 'practicing Shia Muslim is someone who, in

addition to believing in the Shia belief system, also follows the guidelines and prohibitions set by Shia Islam jurisprudence.'

When asked about his views on the integration of British-Iranian youth into the main British society, he stated that *"the religious community of British-Iranians and their children integrate with British society as long as it does not violate Islamic rules and regulations. The first generation of religious migrants may have faced some difficulties in the early stages of migration, but subsequent generations have fewer problems as long as the integration does not compromise their religious beliefs and practices."*

Regarding cultural integration, he explained that; 'the majority of religious and even secular British Iranians participate in special Islamic ceremonies, religious gatherings called Majalis and rituals, such as Ashura in Muharram or the Ramadan fasting month, which are held by Islamic centers or other mosques. Even non-practicing migrated celebrities often attend these religious events and festivals.'

In response to my fifth question regarding the balance between liberal/secular ideas in British society and the religious commitment of young British Iranians to Shia Islam, he stated: *"As long as the dominant majority does not impose liberal and secular ideas on Muslim communities, there are no significant problems, and thus balance and harmony between the Shia Muslim community and the rest of secular society can be maintained. Young British-Iranians can adopt the same approach in British society."*

In response to my sixth interview question about the potential conflict between being a practicing Shia Muslim and a law-abiding British citizen, he said; *"Being a law-abiding individual, regardless of one's religious beliefs, means following the laws of the country. There is no conflict between these two concepts as even Shia Islam emphasizes respecting and following the laws of the land."*

Concerning my seventh question on the sense of belonging that a YPBI might have towards Britain, he made the following comments: *"It is natural that YPBIs, mainly from the second or third generation of the British-Iranian community, who have lived most of their lives here, studied, and worked as successful British-Iranian citizens, would have a sense of belonging and affection towards the UK. This feeling does not conflict with their religious beliefs and practices."* In response to my eighth question about the involvement of YPBIs, he said: *"We have observed that YPBIs are always involved in Islamic and religious programs at various Shia mosques and Majalis, especially during the sacred month of Ramadan, Muharram, Ashura marching, and many other occasions. They hold gatherings and activities, as well as Islamic student gatherings and associations for universities and other Islamic and Quranic educational programs."*

To respond to my last question about his views on the engagement of YPBIs with the Iranian community and YPBIs, he added that: *"I believe that one of the main challenges*

facing the British-Iranian community is the issue of official recognition and acceptance of their identity by government agencies and wider society. While communities of Indians, Pakistanis, and Bangladeshis are officially recognized here, the Iranian minority has yet to receive this endorsement from the government. In contrast, the Iranian community in the US, particularly in California, has been well-accepted and recognized by the US government and society, and as a result, they do not face as many problems in this regard."

The seventh person I interviewed was M.S. (Shajareh, 2020), who had a long history of involvement with the British Muslim community and the British-Iranian community, primarily in legal, social, and cultural fields. Unfortunately, his responses to my interview questions were lost due to a technical issue, and I regret that I am unable to include his insightful comments about YPBIs in this section. However, as I previously interviewed him for my previous study on BASM, I would like to quote some of his responses to questions that were similar to the ones I asked in my current interview.

Regarding the subject of encouraging and advising children to participate in religious and cultural events held at mosques and Islamic centers, he stated: *"We should engage our youth by encouraging them to take part in appropriate and suitable religious and ethical programs designed specifically for them. Simply relying on routine and traditional rituals and events held at Islamic centers and mosques is not sufficient to appeal to our young people. These programs should be tailored to meet the needs and standards of the society in which we live."*

In response to my question about the role of education in our multicultural society, he continued, *"One study in the field of education found that even in secular families, parents wanted their children to attend religious schools. They believed that religious education provided better moral protection and had a higher standard than mainstream education. These choices are not based on prejudice or exclusion, they are calculated decisions made for the betterment of the family."*

In response to my question about the typology of British-Shia Muslims within the British-Iranian community, he stated:

"British-Shia Muslims or British Muslims in general, differ in two aspects: generation and ethnic background. Some are from the first generation of British Muslims, while others belong to the second, third, or even fourth generations. Additionally, they come from different ethnic backgrounds and for various reasons. For example, many Pakistani-Shia Muslims migrated to the UK for economic reasons, while some Iraqi Shias fled the oppressive regime of Saddam Hussein. Additionally, some Iranians immigrated to the UK after the Iranian Revolution to pursue a Western lifestyle."

Finally, in response to my question on the social and cultural integration of British-Shia Muslims (BASM) and the main British society, he stated:

"When we talk about integration, it's difficult to determine who is truly integrated and who is not. Integration can come in many forms and someone may be integrated with one aspect but not with another. For example, an Iraqi or Iranian surgeon who works for the NHS is making a significant contribution to British society and is therefore socially integrated. However, other groups may have compromised moral values but are not integrated culturally. They only associate with fellow Iranians or Iraqis and view others as outsiders. Although these groups may be integrated ideologically, they are not socially integrated. Our research shows that despite facing discrimination, British Muslims, including British Shias, are content with living in the UK. They are not against the system, they want to contribute and make the system better, and this is a very positive finding."

The responses to ten specialized questions and the contents and feedback of comments from seven interviewees were reflected upon and analysed to some extent in previous sections of this chapter. In the next section, I will perform data analysis on the key points gathered from the two main sources, namely qualitative questionnaires and semi-structured interviews.

5.3 Data analysis

The data collected from the responses to the qualitative questionnaire were stored in a spreadsheet format in Google Forms' repository. As previously stated, I utilized the statistical and analytical capabilities of Google Forms to classify and categorize the data. I also created charts and tables, which I have depicted and discussed in earlier sections of this chapter. By using thematic analysis and other refining methods, I transformed the data into more interpretable information, which I will explain in the sections that follow, dedicated to the research results and findings.

Recalling the main points discussed in the research question, so far I have evaluated and reviewed various findings and results from the gathered information and sources in order to achieve the research's aims and objectives. In this section, I aim to provide additional insights by highlighting and discussing a few important points in this regard. Before that, I will provide a general overview and explanation of the sample group's general and personal characteristics based on the information they provided.

The Young Practicing British-Iranians (YPBIs) living in London is a part of the British-Iranian youth population consisting of pious Shia Muslim men and women between the ages of 18 and 40. These individuals firmly believe in Shia Islam and regularly practice their

religious duties and rituals. They have primarily lived, studied, and worked in the UK, often with a high level of education and employment. They typically come from the second or third generation of British Iranians who migrated to the UK in the last fifty years or so, primarily after the establishment of the Islamic Republic in 1979. YPBIs are currently active in various aspects of social and economic life in the UK, either working or studying in different fields and industries.

5.3.1: General (personal) characteristics

The results and findings based on the data gathered from the sample group of 35 participants, with 26 males and 9 females, showed that on average they were born in Iran, highly educated with 13 having post-graduate degrees, 9 having Ph.D., and over 20 years of living in the UK. They were married to Iranian spouses, almost fluent in English, full-time employed with an annual earning of over £25,000, and mostly attended Sunday school at the I.R. school (the heritage school). In the data analysis section of this chapter, a deeper discussion of these findings will be provided. Explanations for the gender disparity in the sample group have already been presented in Section 3.6, "Research Sampling" on Page 85.

After collecting the data and information from the sample group of 35 members, I utilized their detailed responses to identify and categorize the themes that were related to my secondary research questions that were included in the qualitative questionnaire. I did this by using the spreadsheet in Google Forms.

5.2.1 B: The specialised questions

Ten themes that resulted from the implementation of the secondary questions are as follows:

1. Meeting the religious, social, and emotional needs of YPBIs
2. Engagement with the Islamic activities
3. Participation in British society's national, economic, and political activities
4. Double standard behaviour from the British society
5. Confidence in being Shia Muslim in daily affairs
6. Experiencing any kind of stereotypical feelings

7. Preferred criteria for Islamic marriage
8. Difficulties in performing religious duties in British society
9. Preferred identity for British-Iranians
10. Integration of BIs with the main British society

Now, based on the data and information gathered from the 35 respondents and seven interviewees, I will begin to discuss, interpret, and assess whether the themes derived from the data align with the research question, aim, and objectives, as well as the theoretical framework of the study.

- **Fulfilment of the religious, social, and cultural needs and expectations**

Considering the 8 absolute positive replies (Yes), it can be inferred that these respondents are satisfied with the current level of services they receive from the Islamic centres. Meanwhile, 10 conditional positive replies indicate that this group of respondents would benefit from additional and complementary services from the Islamic centers.

The same observation can be made for the 10 absolute negatives (No) responses and 7 conditional negative answers to this question. It appears that there is still a disparity between the level of services provided by Shia Islamic centers in London and the expectations of British Iranians, particularly the YPBIs. This issue, along with others, has been addressed in the conclusion, recommendations, and suggestions section (Chapter 6). It is suggested that the Shia Islamic centers in London and relevant authorities give attention to this matter and take steps to address the gap.

- **Engagement with the Islamic activities**

The results of the survey on the involvement of Young Practicing British-Iranians (YPBIs) with Islamic centers revealed that a larger portion of the sample group (19 people) are less involved due to a lack of free time or other commitments, compared to the 15 respondents who reported being active in cooperating with these centers. The level of this involvement and cooperation is not clearly defined and it is unclear whether this cooperation is occasional, limited to specific times of the year, or a permanent aspect of their lives. The question was broad and could have different interpretations based on individual

circumstances. The charitable works, religious rituals, and ethical practices performed for the sake of Allah could be considered Islamic activities.

- **Participation in British society's activities**

In terms of involvement in domestic social and political affairs, the results revealed a more positive inclination towards being active in these activities (18 compared to 16). The 15 conditional positive responses in this category are intriguing as they indicate a desire to participate in social and domestic matters. As noted in one of the interviewees' responses, Shia Muslims tend to be inward-looking communities and often conceal their religious identity known as Taqieh. This may be due to the minority status of Shia Muslims worldwide compared to the majority status of Sunni Muslims.

- **Experiencing any kind of double standard behaviour in British society**

When asked about experiences of double-standard behaviour, 13 respondents answered that they have not experienced any such behaviour. Five of them answered conditionally "No" and two answered "Other." The overall result suggests that the majority of respondents have not experienced double-standard behaviour in society. This kind of behaviour has been a historical aspect of the UK and has been evident in the administration of a multicultural British society.

- **The self-confidence of being Shia Muslim believer**

Regarding the question of feeling emotionally secure and internally confident about being a Shia Muslim in daily life, a significant majority of the respondents (30 out of 35) replied positively, with 21 giving an absolute "yes" and 9 giving a conditional "yes." Given that the members of the sample group were practicing and pious Shia Muslim believers, it is not surprising to see such a high number of positive answers to this question.

- **Experiencing any kind of stereotypical feelings**

The responses to the question of whether British Iranians are being stereotyped were diverse, with some falling on either end of the spectrum. 18 respondents believed that Iranians are not typically stereotyped. Stereotyping is the belief that individuals from a certain ethnic or racial group are different from the rest of society and can be either positive or negative. For example, in Iran, there is a common perception that people from Isfahan are perceived as greedy, while those from Shiraz are known for their outgoing and relaxed personalities. Additionally, Iranians are also known globally for their hospitality and generosity, which is a common trait found in many communities around the world

- **Preferred criteria for Islamic marriage**

The topic of question seven was the primary criteria for an Islamic marriage. The responses were in multiple-choice format and not simply in the form of yes or no answers, due to the nature of the question. The answers ranged from religious considerations to family values, ethnic and national identity, education, and other factors. Some responses were a combination of these characteristics. The responses were categorized and displayed in Table 8 on page 134 to illustrate the different selections. The data for this question was collected through qualitative questionnaires. Since the Young Practicing and Pious Shia Muslims (YPBIs) are believed to follow strict religious practices, the majority of their ideal spouse criteria was focused on marrying a "Shia Muslim counterpart."

- **Difficulties in performing religious duties in British society**

The experiences of difficulties in performing Islamic duties were mainly reported negatively, with only a few cases of double standards due to being Iranian Shia Muslim (14 absolute no's and 9 conditional no's). This supports the common belief that British society is tolerant towards the diverse cultural norms and practices of minority ethnic communities due to its multicultural nature. It has also been noted that British people have a historically tolerant and hospitable attitude towards foreigners, which can be traced back to Britain's colonial trade and political strategies. However, it should be noted that this opinion may not be supported by social scientific theories and is rooted in liberal traditions from the 18th and 19th centuries, primarily towards fellow Europeans. At the same time, scientific racist ideologies were produced and perpetuated to justify the British slave trade and imperialism

in the same period, leading to the argument that this issue is complex and not as straightforward as presented. This is especially true in the post-Brexit period

It is important to note a similarity between this question and question four, which addresses double standards and discriminatory behaviour, and the overlap in responses. As previously stated, some of the Young Practicing and Pious Shia Muslims (YPBIs) in the sample group reported that either they or their friends and relatives had experienced discrimination and double standards from non-Muslims. In the case of British-Shia Iranian Muslims, particularly YPBIs, this type of mistreatment and harmful behaviour took the following forms when expressed by other members of British society towards the YPBIs. Different forms of difficulties faced by Young Practicing and Pious Shia Muslims (YPBIs) in Britain include:

8 A) Negative judgments and perceptions about religious individuals by other members of British society who hold different secular and liberal ideologies.

8 B) Conflicts and disputes with other British Muslims who have sectarian attitudes and practices towards Shia Islam.

8 C) Tensions with non-practicing British Iranians who have different ideologies and political orientations in their daily cultural and social life in Britain. One example of this group would be disputes between the Iranian Shia Muslim student association and the National Iranian student association in British universities and colleges.

8 D) The Islamic Hijab for Muslim females is a controversial topic that often elicits double-standard behaviour from some members of British society and the media. The hijab, a symbol of Islam, is a debatable issue for both Shia and Sunni Muslims in non-Muslim countries. Despite its wide-ranging impact, occasional reports of negative reactions toward women wearing hijab in various public settings such as supermarkets, transportation, and academic institutions exist.

- **Preferred identity for British-Iranians**

The question of preferred identity for the Iranian community living in Britain was asked, as to whether they were willing to be officially referred to as British-Iranian. The respondents replied nearly evenly, with 12 saying an absolute "yes" and 2 with a conditional "yes", compared to 4 absolute "no" and 12 with a conditional "no." Two of the respondents chose

"both", while another replied "British-Asian" which was counted as "other." Finally, two of the respondents chose "no preference" and were placed in the "no preference" group.

This question was one of the key questions that stirred up an old feeling among young British-Iranian individuals. This feeling is rooted in the traditional and cultural values that are passed down from older generations to the more recent ones. Before receiving the replies from the respondents, I had speculated that most of the young British Iranians would choose the British-Iranian identity. However, upon receiving the actual replies, I observed that the answers were not what I had expected. Some of them preferred a more general identity that was less nationalistic and more religious, such as British-Muslim, "British-Shia Muslim", or simply Iranian.

In the social sciences, identity-related issues are often sensitive and debatable subjects that occupy a significant portion of the existing literature. The reason why most of the sample group did not choose the British-Iranian identity could be rooted in their religious and Shia Islamic beliefs, which place more emphasis on Islamic values than on ethnic and nationalistic values. At this point, I would like to bring up two studies conducted by scholars on the topic of British Muslim Identity, which is directly relevant to the identity of YPBIs.

In his study, Professor Ansari argues that the engagement of British Muslims with British society has taken different forms since 1945, including assimilation, accommodation, and competition. Assimilation involves the group adapting to and identifying with the host society, ultimately losing its separate identity. Accommodation, on the other hand, involves the group preserving its own identity and adapting minimally to the social environment. In the process of competition, the group asserts its cultural values in opposition to the dominant culture.

According to Ansari, in plural societies like Britain, both dominant and minority cultures influence each other and strive to achieve co-existence while retaining their values and traditions. This process is referred to as integration, where the minority group retains its culture and religion but adapts to become a permanent and accepted member of society in all external aspects of the association. (Ansari, 2004)

(Ameli, 2004) focused on the British Muslim identity from a religious orientation and, by referencing previous classifications made by scholars such as (Sheppard, 2016), (Ramadan, 1999), and (Castells, 1977), proposed a new typology for British Muslims. The typology included the following:

- Nationalist Identity: The BASM with this tendency prefer to identify themselves with their nationalistic identity (such as Iranian, Indian, Pakistani, etc.) based on their

ethnic heritage, even though they believe in and accept some aspects of British culture.

- **Traditional Identity:** A high proportion of the older generation of the British Muslim community belongs to this category. They follow traditional religious norms and values that emphasize the origin of Islam and have a less tendency towards politicized Islam, treating it as resistant to change.
- **Islamist Identity:** This type of identity refers to those who believe that Islamic norms and values should be followed and practiced exactly as they were in the era of the Prophet of Islam (PBUH) without any compromise or change. They are similar to the previous type but have a distinct difference in that they firmly believe in maintaining Islamic values as their political ideology and actively try to implement Sharia law in both their personal and social life, as well as spread it globally.
- **Modernized identity category,** individuals are making efforts to reconcile with the dominant cultural norms of society by reinterpreting Islamic principles in line with contemporary issues. They prefer a combination of traditional and modern identities (Projective identity) and believe in the validation of social connections in civil society.
- **Secular Identity:** This group of people tends to have secular views and religion plays a minor role in their lives. They practice religion privately and believe in separating religion from politics and social life. They aim to free society from traditional and religious barriers, promoting political and economic development.
- **Anglicized or Westernized identity:** This type of identity refers to British Muslims who have fully assimilated into British culture and adopted Western values and norms. They have lost their cultural roots and connections, such as language and traditional customs, and have fully embraced a British or Western way of life.
- **Hybrid Identity:** This type of identity is a mixture of various influences, and lacks a clear and distinct characteristic. It is partially influenced by the norms and values of previous generations and partially influenced by the current norms and values practiced by the wider society, which are encountered through various sources such as schools, workplaces, social and religious gatherings, media, etc.
- **Undetermined Identity:** This category includes individuals who have not yet established a clear identity for themselves. This group can include young people who exhibit unpredictable behaviour and tend to switch from one identity to another in society. (Ameli, 2004)

- **Integration of BIs with the main British society**

The cultural integration of Young British Iranians (YPBIs) with British society was evaluated with a distribution of 5 absolute 'Yes' responses and 11 conditional 'Yes' responses. Additionally, there were 5 absolute 'No' responses and 7 conditional 'No' responses, and 7 replies were classified as 'other.' Despite social, legal, economic, and political integration between the British-Iranian community and the rest of British society, limitations and obstacles still exist when it comes to cultural integration, mainly due to cultural differences such as the consumption of alcohol and pork by non-Muslim British people. This was a common belief among the respondents of the qualitative questionnaire and semi-structured interviews.

This is not only true for BICs but also other members of the British Muslim community. It's important to note that the extent of cultural integration is greatly influenced by the individual's level of religiosity. There have been cases of Iranian and other British Muslims who have not only achieved cultural integration with the rest of British society but have fully assimilated with British society and fully adapted themselves into British mainstream culture. This can be seen in the cases of recent Iranian asylum seekers who renounce their Shia Muslim beliefs and convert to Christianity to secure their legal status.

According to a Shia Muslim scholar with extensive experience working with the British-Iranian community and particularly with young British-Iranian Shia Muslims (YPBIs), a true and practicing Shia Muslim cannot be fully integrated with British society due to differences in cultural values and norms. For example, going to a local pub and drinking alcohol is a common activity for the English people but this normal tradition is not allowed for Muslims based on Shariah law. However, from a social perspective, such as participating in business with the English, attending school or university, and being involved in social activities, the British-Iranian Shia Muslim community can be considered integrated with British society." (Bahmanpour, 2011)

I discussed the same topic of cultural integration of British-Iranian Shia Muslims (BASMs) with British society with another important figure in the British-Iranian religious community. (Shomali, 2009) mentioned that; 'there is a challenge in determining the extent to which members of the British Shia Community should be integrated. There are two types of integration, active and passive, and the BASM community should strive for active integration with British society. By active integration, he means a deliberate integration that balances the preservation of religious and cultural values with the norms and values of wider British society. This can present a challenge when there is a conflict between personal

values and the norms of the larger society. In these cases, one must decide between prioritizing their own values or adapting to the standards of the host society. Shomali believes that dialogue with wider society is necessary to address these challenges.' (Shomali, 2009)

In conclusion, I believe that British Iranians, including the Young Professional British Iranians (YPBIs), have generally integrated with the main British society in social, economic, trade, and legal aspects. However, full cultural integration between YPBIs, who are devout Shia Muslims in belief and practice, and the generally secular and liberal members of British society is currently not feasible. It's important to note that cultural integration is a broad and diverse subject, so there may still be some instances of cultural integration between YPBIs and other members of society, as long as the principles of Islamic forbidden acts (Harams) are respected. For example, in the realm of athletic and sporting activities, which are considered cultural, members of a particular team can participate with other non-Muslim Britons. A quote from one of the interviewees highlights this point: "In terms of cultural integration, there is very limited integration due to many cultural and religious differences, but it is possible in fields where there are no religious restrictions, such as sports like football, wrestling, and virtual competitions. (Hussaini, 2020)

5.4 Results and Findings

As previously mentioned, ten secondary questions were asked of the members of the sample group based on the main research question. These questions were listed and explained in the previous part. In this section, I aim to report and explain the results and findings of this study and determine if the goals of the research, which primarily involve answering the unclear aspects of the research question, have been achieved. My main objective in conducting this work-based research was to investigate, understand, and learn about the social, cultural, and religious needs and expectations of Young Professional British Iranians (YPBIs) through their daily experiences and interactions with the multicultural society of Britain, in the context of intercultural communication.

I have previously described how I collected data and information from my sample group through various phases of a formal work-based study as part of an academic Doctor of Professional Studies (DProf) program. The current Research Project Report (RPR) is the result of this work. To present the final results and findings of the RPR, I have organized and summarized my findings into three main categories: religious issues, social and cultural matters, and other expressed concerns.

5.4. 1 YPBIs' religious issues

Regarding the religiosity of Young Professional British Iranians (YPBIs), while it may not be the most prominent characteristic of this group, it is still a significant aspect of their identity. They are known for their religious beliefs and firmly observe the principles and practices of Athna-ashari Shia Islam. In the following section, I will present the results and findings related to the YPBIs' religious issues, organized into four categories: 1) Religious needs and expectations, 2) Involvement in Islamic activities, 3) Confidence in being a Shia Muslim, and 4) Experiences with performing religious duties.

5.4.1A Religious needs and expectations

The results and findings related to religious needs and expectations were discussed and evaluated in detail based on the responses to questions in the qualitative questionnaire and interviews. It was revealed that approximately 50% of the respondents in the sample group were either happy or fairly happy with the religious needs and expectations provided by the Islamic centers, but still felt that more programs and services were necessary.

The areas that require more attention and consideration by relevant Islamic centers and organizations were suggested by the respondents of the sample group. These areas include:

- Sharing and exchanging ideas in the planning and programming phase to provide programs based on their needs and expectations
- Updating current programs to meet the tastes of the youth
- Offering more children's programs
- Providing more counseling services for families
- Expanding activities beyond religious programs
- And all other areas previously mentioned.

5.4.1B Involvement in Islamic activities

The results of this study, based on the data collected from the sample group, revealed that despite a high level of interest and willingness, the level of involvement of

YPBIs in Islamic activities is relatively low. This is due to various reasons such as limited free time and conflicting personal and family commitments, especially during the sacred months of Ramadan and Muharram.

5.4.1C Confidence in being Shia Muslim

The results show that a high number of respondents have confidence in being devout Iranian Shia Muslims, which gives them a sense of self-confidence and helps them to behave ethically and wisely in their daily life.

5.4.1D Difficulties in performing religious duties

The results of the sample group showed that, although some respondents reported experiencing occasional difficulties in performing their religious and ritual exercises, the majority did not report any serious difficulties. This suggests that the people in England generally tend to be tolerant of cultural and traditional rituals and festivals of ethnic minorities.

5.4.2 Experiences and Issue related to Social/cultural matters

In this section, I have organized the results and findings on the social and cultural needs and expectations of the YPBI sample group into four categories, namely: 1) Integration of YPBIs into British society, 2) Sense of belonging to the UK, 3) Involvement of YPBIs in domestic social, economic, and political matters, and 4) Experiences of any double standards and discrimination in behaviour.

5.4.2 A Integration of YPBIs and the British society

In this part of the paper, the issue of the integration of YPBIs with the majority of society, who are culturally different from them, has been addressed and critically discussed in the data analysis section. One of the key questions and concerns raised throughout the paper, in the research question and secondary questions, as well as in various chapters of

the RPR, is the issue of integration of YPBIs with the wider society. This was given further consideration in the section titled “ 5.4.3 C Preferred identity for British-Iranian” on page 166.

The results of the research on the subject of integration of YPBIs into British society showed that full cultural integration is not possible due to the significant differences in cultural values and norms. This topic has been thoroughly discussed in the data analysis section.

5.4.2 B Sense of belonging to the UK

Regarding the YPBIs' feelings and sense of belonging towards the UK, the results and findings based on the information gathered from the qualitative questionnaire and interviews showed that there is a relatively positive sense of belonging towards the UK. This sentiment was expressed both indirectly, through the replies to the questionnaire, and directly through the interviews. The majority of the interviewees expressed a positive feeling of belonging to the UK, with some even considering it their second home.

5.4.2 C Involvement with domestic social, economic, and political affairs

The responses of the sample group and the opinions and feedback of the interviewees on this question revealed that the YPBIs are not very keen on participating in the domestic social, economic, and political affairs of British society due to various reasons. An intriguing reply to this question, which was mentioned in the data analysis section, explains one of the reasons for this reticence. The interviewee, who has had close dealings with the British Muslim community in the UK and specifically with YPBIs, believes that "historically, British Shia Muslims have demonstrated a negative tendency towards actively participating in the legal, social, or political affairs of the society. This is due to the inward nature of Shia-Muslim communities, which is rooted in being in a minority and practicing a hidden identity or Taqieh. (Razavi, 2020) 5.2.2 Data gathered from Semi-Structured Interviews

5.4.2 D Experiencing any double-standard behaviour

The results indicated that, although a few respondents reported instances of double-standard behaviour, the general trend was towards less instances of such behaviour in society. As explained in the data analysis section, the main reason for this behaviour is due to the long history of multiculturalism and coexistence with other cultures in the UK which is quite different compared to some other European countries. Above that, the challenges and struggles of minority groups in the UK for defending and acquiring their equal rights in different aspects of social, political, and legal rights should not be ignored.

5.4.3 Other expressed concerns

The results and findings of the other concerns raised in the qualitative questionnaire were analysed and presented in the following order:

- Stereotyping of Iranians, both negatively and positively.
- The criteria and preferences in marriage.
- The preferred identity for British-Iranians, with brief explanations.

In the following parts, I will elaborate more on each subject:

5.4.3 A Iranian stereotyped character, negatively or positively

The results and findings regarding the subject of British Iranians being stereotyped showed that they are perceived negatively for their lack of punctuality and order, and positively for their hospitality and kindness. In the case of religious stereotypes, it was reported that practicing Iranian Shia Muslims feel a sense of superiority compared to non-religious or less-religious people. However, it should be noted that these claims have not been scientifically or statistically proven.

5.4.3 B Main criteria and preferences in Islamic marriage

The results indicate that the majority of respondents prefer a spouse with a Shia Islamic background rather than a nationalistic or personal background. This priority for marriage is displayed in Page 134.

5.4.3 C Preferred identity for British-Iranian

The results and findings regarding the question of preferred identity showed that the views of the sample group are divided and not uniform for a hyphenated British-Iranian identity. It is noted that the results could be different for other groups of British Iranians and in different circumstances.

Chapter review

The fifth chapter of the RPR is the most substantial chapter of the report, as it encompasses all the various materials and information related to the practical aspects of the research. This chapter presents the responses and feedback from the respondents to both general and specialized questions in the qualitative questionnaires (Google Form) as well as the data gathered from the semi-structured interviews. The gathered data and information were analysed and interpreted through the use of tables, charts, and other research tools to determine if the gathered information effectively addressed the research questions. Thematic analysis and other analytical techniques were employed to critically analyse the data and the results of the analysis are reflected in the results and findings section of the chapter. The following chapter will proceed with the overall conclusion, suggestions, and recommendations.

6 Conclusion, recommendations, and suggestions

The instinct of curiosity is inherent in humans and has been passed down through generations. It has served as a driving force for exploration and innovation throughout the history of civilised man. This persistent desire to discover, research, and explore, which accompanies us from early childhood to our final days, reminds me of a famous saying by the Prophet of Islam (peace be upon him), who advised the Muslim community to "*seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave.*" Taking this valuable advice to heart, I have devoted a significant portion of my time and life, even in my old age to learning and seeking new sources of knowledge and understanding.

The ongoing effort to conduct this research is a testament to my lifelong commitment. I hope that the suggestions and recommendations I present in this chapter will prove beneficial to the relevant stakeholders, such as the Islamic Centre of England, Islamic College, Middlesex University as well as British Iranians, particularly the Young British Iranians, and other potential users of this document in both Britain and Iran.

I hereby assert that the main goals and objectives of this research have been achieved within its defined scope and limitations. The essence of this achievement is outlined as follows:

- Acquiring a deeper understanding and gathering more information about the British-Iranian community, particularly the Young Practicing British-Iranians residing in London, through the data and information gathered from the designated sample group.
- Aiming to provide relevant statistical information and estimates on the study population and seeking to gain a deeper understanding of the group's characteristics, including their religious, social, and cultural attitudes and how they interact with the multicultural British society in their daily experiences of intercultural communication. Further exploring and recognizing the expectations and needs of the group from related Iranian Islamic organizations based in London, such as the Islamic Centre of England and the Islamic College, as well as other relevant authorities.
- The objective of this project was to produce a comprehensive research report containing relevant and informative information about the Young Practicing British Iranians and related materials. The report aims to include partial views, comments, and feedback from the group regarding relevant issues and subjects and present them to the attention of relevant Iranian and non-Iranian organizations, which are potential stakeholders in this research project. Additionally, the report introduces

several Shia Muslim centers based in London that are directly involved with the affairs of British Iranians and Young Practicing British Iranians and explains their roles and functions in this context.

- This research aimed to add to the existing literature by incorporating the information gathered from the study sample group, and my personal and professional experiences as a result of working with the community and as an insider researcher, as well as other relevant inputs, for the benefit of stakeholders and end-users in the British-Iranian community and similar communities. The research also highlighted potential areas for further investigation and new research on related issues. It also seeks to better understand the experiences of Young Practicing British Iranians in intercultural communication with British society and to gather their perspectives on the topics of integration, particularly cultural integration, with the wider society.

6.1 Conclusions

Now that the research on Young Practicing British Iranians living in London has been completed, I will present my concluding remarks. I will start with a general overview of the sample group and then address the specialized secondary questions and qualitative questionnaire about the research question.

The Young Practicing British Iranians living in London are part of the larger British-Iranian community and a sub-system of British Shia Muslims, who are part of the larger system of British Muslims. These communities are interrelated in terms of religious affiliation and can learn from their shared experiences and similarities.

The implementation of the research discussed in the five previous chapters of this Research Project Report has produced results and findings that have been reflected in its recommendations and suggestions. These will not only assist the stakeholders in their strategic planning and programming but may also be of benefit to other interested individuals and end-users in relevant Muslim or non-Muslim organizations in this country and beyond.

6.1.1 Concluding remarks on the general specification of the YPBIs

The Young Practicing British-Iranians (YPBIs) residing in London are a group of dedicated Shia Muslim men and women, aged between 18-40, who are devout in their beliefs and practices of Shia Islam. They have a strong connection to Britain, having lived, studied, and worked in the country, and possess a high level of education and employment.

These individuals typically come from second or third generations of British-Iranian families who migrated to the UK in the past fifty years, predominantly after the establishment of the Islamic Republic in 1979. They are actively engaged in various aspects of social and economic life in Britain, either as students or employees in various industries and sectors. A comprehensive analysis of the collected data and information can be found in Chapter 5.2.1 B: The specialised questions on Page 153.

6.1.2 Concluding remarks on the raised key subjects

In previous sections, the responses and comments of the YPBIs to ten specialized questions in the qualitative questionnaire, as well as further insights and feedback from semi-structured interviews, were documented, discussed, and analysed in different parts of chapter 5. I have concluded on several key topics based on the replies and analysis presented in the same chapter. The ten key topics raised with the sample group and some key individuals from the BI community include:

1. Whether their social and cultural expectations and needs were met.
 2. The extent of their participation in Islamic activities.
 3. Their willingness to engage in British social and political matters.
 4. Any experiences of discriminatory behaviour.
 5. Their thoughts on being a devoted and practicing Shia Muslim.
 6. Feedback on the issue of stereotypes about Iranians.
 7. A preference for Islamic marriage.
 8. Any difficulties in practicing Islamic duties in society.
 9. Their preferred identity.
 10. The degree and feasibility of cultural integration with members of the diverse British society.
- The social, cultural, and religious expectations and needs of the YPBIs from Iranian and Islamic organizations in London have only been partially met. There are still unfulfilled needs, expectations, and suggestions that require attention from the relevant organizations. In general, there is still a disparity between the services provided by the Shia Islamic centers in London and the expectations of British Iranians, particularly the YPBIs. This may require a focus on organizational and strategic changes within the responsible Islamic centers.

- Regarding the involvement and cooperation of the YPBIs with Islamic centers and related organizations, the majority of the survey respondents have a positive attitude towards volunteering and working with these centers, particularly during the sacred months of Ramadan and Muharram.
- In relation to the involvement of YPBIs in social, political, and other local activities of British society, while there is some positive inclination and willingness to participate, there is less actual engagement and participation reported among religious British-Iranian youth in London at the national level. The main reason for this reluctance has been reported lack of free time, as well as a passive feeling of belonging to an ethnic and religious minority group.
- When it comes to experiencing discriminatory and othering behaviour from non-Muslim members of British society, the majority of survey respondents believe that there is less discrimination and prejudice. British policy and related legislation have been continually improved to maintain a balance between the interests of the majority and the needs and demands of minority groups in the multicultural and multi-ethnic society.
- In response to the question of feeling confident in being a Shia Muslim and feeling secure and protected in dealing with daily challenges in London, the vast majority of respondents replied that they feel secure and protected because they believe in Shia Islam and practice its religious duties and rituals, making their behaviour both in personal and public life lawful and appropriate. This positive response is likely because the majority of the survey participants were practicing and pious Shia Muslims.
- Regarding the subject of British-Iranians being stereotyped, the majority of the respondents replied "No." This suggests that YPBIs do not experience being stereotyped. This perception can be a common psychological characteristic of certain communities or racial groups who feel different from others, and this perception can be positive or negative.
- As to do with responses from the YPBI sample group, the primary preference for marriage among them is a practicing Shia Muslim spouse. The responses regarding other desired characteristics varied among individuals and have been detailed in Chapter 5. These additional characteristics included things such as family background, education, good heart, honesty, mannerisms, and devotion to family, morality, and good manners known as *ahklaq (manner)*.
- The responses to the question about facing difficulties in carrying out Islamic duties were mostly negative, which shows that there are not many significant issues in this area. This aligns with the general perception that British society is

tolerant of the diverse cultural practices and customs of minority ethnic groups, as its institutions, laws, and cultural structures generally support a multicultural environment.

- My findings regarding the preferred identity of the members of the sample group indicate that they are generally indifferent to choosing between a British-Iranian identity or other options. Some of them prefer a more general identity with less nationalistic associations and more religious attributes, such as "British-Muslim," "British-Shia Muslim," or simply "Muslim." Before conducting this research project and collecting the responses, I had not expected such a varied array of preferences.
- Regarding the issue of the cultural integration of YPBIs with the mainstream culture of British society, the results of this study showed that, despite partial social, legal, and economic integration, there is a general belief among the respondents that there are limitations and obstacles to full cultural integration due to existing cultural differences. This is not only true for BICs but for other members of the British Muslim community as well.

6.2 Recommendations and suggestions

Based on the results and findings, I have made the following recommendations and suggestions. These are directed towards stakeholders who are directly related to the issues raised in this research project, such as Iranian and Shia Muslim organizations, like the Islamic Centre of England and the Islamic College, and other affiliated centers and organizations. Additionally, young British Iranians and members of the larger British-Iranian community could also benefit from the information provided in this report. The recommendations and suggestions provided in this report can also benefit other British-Muslim communities and authorities. This includes researchers, lawmakers, local authorities, and NGOs who work with ethnic and religious minorities. Additionally, any other interested parties may find value in these recommendations and the other information presented in this document.

I have organized my recommendations and suggestions into two main categories: "Religious Needs and Expectations" and "Social and Cultural Issues". However, there is some overlap between the points made under each heading. These recommendations and suggestions are based on the findings presented in this report, the conclusions drawn, and my own personal and professional experiences. As an insider researcher and someone who has worked with the community for most of my professional life, some of the

suggestions and recommendations may not solely come from the information gathered from the sample group, but also from my own personal and professional experiences being a part of the British-Iranian community, particularly the YPBIs, for a substantial period of my life.

6.2.1 Religious needs and expectations

It would be beneficial to involve representatives of Young Professional British Iranians (YPBIs) in the planning and development of religious programs that cater to their needs and those of their families. This could be achieved by inviting them to participate in various educational, religious, and other relevant programs based on Shia Islamic teachings offered by relevant institutions. These institutions can reach out to YPBIs directly or through social media platforms and gather their suggestions and ideas through questionnaires and other survey methods. This information can then be incorporated into the strategic plans and policies of existing Shia Muslim organizations located in London in the following domains.

- Designing religious programs in a more contemporary way, taking into account the advanced technology, social, and cultural aspects of British society, is recommended. This could be achieved by coordinating with formal and informal organizations involved with the British-Iranian community, including NGOs that deal with youth affairs and focus on YPBIs and their relevant issues. To further involve the interested YPBIs, they could be invited to participate in organizing and running their own preferred religious programs through charity and volunteer work.
- Providing more online religious educational programs, webinars, and conferences in Persian and English to attract a larger audience interested in religious topics. Additionally, offering more family services and counseling services for the family members of YPBIs in Britain by seeking the assistance of existing groups of Shia Muslim scholars, psychologists, legal experts, and other relevant professionals to provide guidance and legal support in various areas.
- Expanding cooperation with organizations such as Islamic Associations of Shia Students in universities and colleges, Kanoon Tawheed, I.R. Iranian School, and other religious gatherings, in order to improve joint religious programs and attract more young people. This should be done with the support and supervision of Islamic centers.
- Arranging inter-faith programs by inviting scholars from different religions to exchange ideas and views on shared religious beliefs, values, and teachings. This type of activity has already been held in London-based Shia Muslim organizations, and can be further developed and expanded in creative ways. Given the strong

influence of secular thoughts and non-religious ideas in British secondary education and colleges, as well as in the cultural system of British society, it is important to incorporate the main principles of Shia Islam into the Religious Education curricula in British schools. There have been efforts to do this in the past by local Shia Islamic centers, which should be improved and continued.

- Suggesting the establishment of an umbrella organization to oversee, provide guidance, and bring all Shia Islamic organizations and centers to a shared religious understanding regarding various issues. These include disputes such as the annual Hajj and other popular pilgrimages, the sighting of the moon for Ramadan and other religious holidays, charitable works and aid for members of the Muslim community through Islamic centers and charitable organizations, and other activities that can be managed and carried out jointly to promote unity and mutual understanding. Cooperation with the resident representatives of Shia Muslim religious leaders (Maraji) in London should be established and maintained.
- Expanding the dialogue with other Muslim organizations and authorities, with the support and assistance of international umbrella Muslim institutions, such as the Organization of the Islamic Countries (OIC), to resolve historical conflicts and disputes among the followers of different sects of Islam and strive towards the unity of all Muslims worldwide. Providing valuable Islamic books and digital resources to address the contemporary issues and problems facing Muslims and other faith groups, guided by the principles of Shia jurisprudence.

6.2.2 Social, cultural, and other issues

Working in collaboration with relevant British authorities and organizations, British Muslims (including Shia Muslim authorities) should strive to eliminate barriers related to discriminatory, Islamophobic, and other xenophobic behaviours and practices. This includes addressing instances of bullying and religious or ethnic-based discrimination in secondary and higher education institutions, as well as other settings where intercultural communication takes place. Holding joint meetings with relevant authorities to facilitate the participation of Young Practicing British Iranians and other British Athna-ashari Shia Muslims (YPBIs and BASMs) in local social, economic, and political affairs. This aims to provide opportunities for them to be more actively engaged in these aspects of society and to ensure equal rights for the growing Muslim population, including the Shia Muslim community, in Britain. The following areas are a few examples.

- Conducting additional surveys and research on the recognition of a hyphenated British-Iranian identity and seeking the appropriate measures and methods from relevant Iranian and non-Iranian authorities to facilitate this request, which would benefit the entire British-Iranian community.
- Conducting further research and studies on topics such as the integration of minority religious and ethnic groups into the mainstream cultural and social system and its impact on the well-being of these minorities.
- Establishing an umbrella Islamic organisation to enhance and develop the activities of existing bodies. This organization will provide supervision, advice, and guidance to all British Muslim organisations, including Shia Islamic organisations, concerning common and relevant issues. The organisation will also advocate for national and local authorities for improved services and public facilities.
- Finding the best criteria for preserving and securing equal rights for ethnic and religious minorities, such as Shia Muslim immigrants and asylum seekers, and convincing mainstream British society that these groups deserve the same rights to sanctuary and citizenship as others in the country. Facilitating cooperation with UN agencies and other international NGOs in international activities. Organizing independent and joint conferences, seminars, webinars, and other gatherings to enhance the status and position of British Shia Muslims and the British-Iranian community, particularly the Young Practicing British Iranians (YPBIs).

6.3. Endnotes

به پایان آمد این دفتر؛ حکایت همچنان باقی است... (سعدی)

"This book came to an end, but the story is still going on" (Sa'di, 2002) Persian poet !)

At the beginning of this chapter, I pointed out that our lives are a continuous learning journey. This is a comprehensive and dynamic process that starts at birth and ends at death. In between, we learn, practice, and gain new experiences as to how to carry out our daily activities and survive in a complex physical and social environment. Before I start doing this work-based research, I had limited knowledge about the topics covered in the study. However, after several years of involvement in various phases of this research and reviewing relevant literature and sources of information, and gathering data from the designated sample group, I have gained more knowledge about different aspects of not only topics and subjects related to the research question, but I also familiarised myself and gained new knowledge and insight with other domains of human sciences. By reflecting on this information and sharing it with others, I hope to provide new insights that can be used for the benefit of our community and others who may be interested.

The long history of civilised man is full of struggles and challenges for a better and more prosperous life physically or mentally for all members of society. Going back to an earlier time in history reveals this fact from remaining old caves and engraved stones in the form of early paintings, inscriptions, and clay sheets that after the settlement of the Hunter-gather human beings and the start of the agricultural era in the contemporary Middle East and creation of the early primary communities and nomad tribes, this intention and curiosity had been perused by those people in search for a better life. Later in ancient cities and civilisations and by the flourishing of languages and writing ability systems, the recording and reporting about different battles, migrations, and people's movements in search of food, wealth, and happiness had been possible and today we can have access to them.

In the long journey of the civilised man from the agricultural era to the current time of post-modernism and beyond, the element of the *arts and culture* or as a whole in search for satisfying the non-physical aspects of our life has played a significant role and parallel to our physical and materialistic needs and expectations. The metaphysical part of our needs and expectations which is indirectly connected to our spirit and soul has been always an important part of the limited and short period of our life which with the advance and improvement of the materialistic condition of our life, the metaphysical needs and expectation have grown and developed more and more. One of the important elements of

our cultural life which have played a significant role in the history of the civilised man is the *religion* which is more related to the current research subject and I intend to critically discuss it as far as it is relevant to the context of this paper.

Religion has been defined in the Britannica encyclopaedia as “*the human being’s relation to that they regard as holy, sacred, absolute, divine or worthy of special reverence. It is also commonly regarded as the people considering the way people deal with ultimate concerns about their lives and faiths after life.*” Therefore religion is for human beings and it is the personal relations of man and *the Holy Spirit* which has different names and terms in different religions. Currently, the major practicing religions in different parts of the world with the order of the number of believers are Christianity (% 31.2), Islam (% 24.2,) Hinduism (%15.1), Buddhism (% 6.9), Sikhism (%. 0.3) and Judaism (0.2). Abrahamic faiths consist of Christianity, Islam, and Judaism. It is reported that %16 of the world's population has *no religion*. There are other minor religions practiced by some people around the world. (Statistics, 2015)

By having a short glance at the issue of culture and one of its significant elements, i.e., the *religion* I wanted to highlight the relevance and importance and the role of religion, particularly the religion of Islam and exclusively Shia Islam in the context of the current study.

I hope that this study on Young Professionals and Business Individuals (YPBIs) has provided clarity on some previously unstudied aspects of this subject. Additionally, I believe that by encouraging our young students, researchers, and community members to conduct further research on this or related topics, the quality of life for them and future generations will be improved. Implementing this study and preparing the research project report, like any other similar work in the humanities, has taught me a lot. I hope that the new knowledge and findings from this study have also added something, however small, to the existing literature and knowledge for all future researchers and interested individuals. This report is a modest attempt at sharing the information with others. The results of this study, with all its strengths and limitations, will be further developed and expanded if it encourages others to conduct new research and investigations on this or any related subjects. This will also help to correct any limitations or unintentional mistakes that may be present in this report.

Throughout my life, I have always been eager to share my experiences and knowledge with others who are interested in this field of research. Through this study, I have gained new insights and a deeper understanding of the complexities surrounding the integration of Young Professional British Iranians (YPBIs). I have come to realize that integration is a multi-faceted concept that can be seen in different dimensions, including

economic, social, political, and cultural. I now understand that full cultural integration is challenging in a multicultural society due to the resistance to change and the enduring cultural values within minority ethnic communities, particularly for first-generation immigrants. However, the possibility of higher cultural integration increases among second or third-generation immigrants. I am happy to share these findings with others and hope that they will be of benefit to researchers and individuals interested in this subject. It is important to acknowledge that even if full cultural integration between ethnic and religious minorities and the mainstream culture is not achieved, these communities can still coexist peacefully through mutual understanding. This is in line with the principle of social and cultural pluralism. The relationship between the YPBIs, BIC, and BASM community may not be completely homogeneous, as they have differences as well as similarities, but they still manage to interact with each other peacefully and productively through intercultural communication.

The topic of the ideal social context for multicultural settings has been and will continue to be, a subject of debates and discussions among policymakers, social scientists, and members of ethnic minorities, to foster respect and understanding of different cultural values and norms. As long as there is an open and constructive dialogue in academic institutions, universities, and religious communities, there is always hope for mutual understanding and resolution of conflicts, leading to a better future for all. Through respectful and productive debates among intellectuals, religious leaders, policymakers, and others, hopefully, these discussions will come together to address and solve the many problems and inequalities facing people around the world, by the grace of Allah. Insha'Allah!

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Appendices :

Appendix 1: Sample of the details of the semi-Structured Interviews

The first person I interviewed S.H., a Shia scholar who works with the Shia Muslim community, including British Iranians and Young British Iranians in Islam (YPBIs). Below is a transcript of our conversation:

Myself: Bismillah Rahman al-Rahim (In the name of Allah, The Benevolent, The Merciful). I know you are not a YPBI, but since you have been working with this community for a long time and we have the pleasure of being colleagues at the Islamic Center of England, I would like to ask for your thoughts and opinions on this matter. To start, can you briefly introduce yourself and discuss your involvement with the YPBIs?

S.H.: Of course. I converted to Shia Islam about forty years ago. After a few years, I travelled to the holy city of Qum in Iran to study at Hawzeh, and I lived in Iran for nineteen years. Currently, I am working at the Islamic Center of England as a religious scholar, providing religious services to the community.

Myself: Can you give me your definition of a YPBI and what it means to be considered a practicing Shia Muslim according to Shia Islam Jurisprudence? What is your opinion on this?

S.H.= "Well a young practicing British Iranian Shia Muslim, is a person that shares the general beliefs of Shia Islam. Islam is the final revelation of God with the prophet of Islam (PBUH), in contrast to Sunnis, we Shia Muslim believe that the successor to the prophet Muhammad, not in terms of prophecy, but in terms of spiritual and social community leadership, was announced to be given to Ali and his eleven decedents socially chosen by God! We believe that these Imams (as we call them) are Ma'asum (infallible) and divinely guided by God, to guide the people in religion, without any error. A young practicing Shia Muslim, also observes as many rules of Shariah as he/she can. For instance in the case of girls or women observing their Hijab when they are outside in the public or things that stay away from alcohol or making sure that eating halal food. Here I should say that there some variation for instance there are a few practicing girls or women who are not wearing Hijab, but they know that it is an Islamic rule that should be followed. That is the practicing one. These are the basic things that should be followed."

Myself: Can a practicing Shia Muslim be defined as someone who not only believes in the principles of Shia Islam but also follows the ten commandments of Ebadeh, such as praying, fasting, paying Khoms and Zakah, and adhering to the rest of the practical principles according to Shia Fiqh (Jurisprudence)?

S.H. = "Yes as I said those principles that have been prescribed, such as attending the mosques or Islamic centres to commemorate the anniversary of Imams' births and deaths and participating in rituals and other religious ceremonies."

Myself: Concerning the current situation of British-Iranians and YPBIs in British society, how do you evaluate the status of this community in terms of integration with the main British society? I know maybe regarding cultural integration (as I studied in my previous study on BASM) it might not be true, but what about other dimensions of integration such as social, economic, legal, or in other dimensions in this multicultural setting?

S.H= *“Regarding the Iranian community here we should be aware that what section of the community and YPBIs we are looking at? For instance, there a few of YPBIs who are students, and who are here on the temporary base. I am not talking about them. I am referring to those YPBIs who have lived here for most of the time of their life and have established their life here. I think they are pretty much integrated very well with British society. They are very successful being students or professionals and so on. There is no doubt about that. The majority of the BICs are secular here, but they do like any other ethnic communities, are identified with the general Iranian community as such, and identifying themselves with the cultural aspects of Iranian heritage. I should say that there are two different things. Integration and assimilation. In integration you bring your cultural values with you, being a part of the wider society, but in the case of assimilation you lose your identity and culture, and in the case of mixing with the British society the assimilated person’s culture becomes attached to the Anglo Saxons type of the culture. So in the case of the Iranian-British community, they are between two ranges of integration and assimilation, some are more assimilated and some are less assimilated. More assimilated ones are usually identified by certain characteristics, for instance, wealth, richer you are the more tendency to be more assimilated than the poorer you are. Like the people who are coming from the third world countries that they come to this country, they want to change their culture, they want to marry to Christian ladies, they want to practice in a new culture and that type of the extremes. In the case of BICs I can say there are some of the assimilated Iranians that they are integrated, but still, they are full Muslims and fully Iranian.”*

Myself: The next question relates to the previous subject as well. Given the cultural differences between Iranians and the British, particularly with regards to religious and cultural traditions, how can we maintain a balanced relationship in this multicultural and multi-ethnic environment?

S.H. = *“In a liberal setting and considering the existence of diversified cultures, you might find some conflicts and some difficulties in that type of integration. For instance, the Hijab is allowed in this society but might produce some difficulties in terms of prejudice, but this is basically with the media. In these cases, the young people can check and assess the environment, they should use the critical thinking approach. Because if in certain cases I am not allowed to do this or that, there should be some ways to compromise, but there are some areas that you have not to compromise and it depends upon as how we have been brought up and what were the values when we were at home, there are a lot of Iranians who are religious and at the same time they are conscious about the Iranian heritage, and they function pretty normal in the society, in their job they know how they should have relations with other people and do the right interaction with the people and so on and these are part of the religion, so I don’t see really any sort of contradiction between these two.”*

Myself: What is your opinion on the sense of belonging to Britain for someone who holds dual citizenship as a YPBI?

S.H. = *“ In the issue of the sense of belonging I should say that there are two aspects in it. One is the conscious aspect to it and the other is an unconscious aspect to it. In the case of myself, I am not British, although I have a British passport. Suppose an Iranian has lived in this country for 20 or 25 years of his life, so you can say I*

am not British, I am Iranian. Nevertheless, I am more comfortable living in this environment than living in Iran's environment, this is the unconscious aspect. This is the sense of belonging to this country but you do not acknowledge that you belong to this country. You are British in your cultural practices. So there is no conflict with your Iranian background or your religious background. For instance, in a British environment, you can practice your right to freedom of expression, but you cannot do the same thing in Iran. So again, there is no conflict. It depends on your perception. For instance, if they are people who cannot integrate with British people whatsoever, so they should go to Iran and live there as they like. But if you can live here very comfortably and you behave in a manner which is very like British people, and you can act in what you think and what you believe, then you are British, on the cultural level. You can also be British and not British selectively. For example, you may say I love Britain, but I don't like the British relationship with the United States, or I like Britain but I don't like the British history of oppressing the people of the world in their colonial era."

Myself: What is your opinion on the involvement of YPBIs in domestic activities of society, such as working with local authorities, given the rapid growth of the Muslim population, including the British-Iranian and Shia communities?

S.H. = *"I think it is pretty much to do with your elective desire of being British! There is a pattern of behaviour, not only in Iranians but generally in Shia Muslim communities that they are much closed and in-warded kinds of communities. They do not like to go out of themselves. Sunnis, in this country, have been involved in politics and domestic affairs of the society, but you do not see that many Shia Muslims active in this kind of activity. If you think more in-depth and look for the historical reasons for that, you can find that throughout the history of Islam the Shia Muslims being in a minority situation, they did not disclose their identity as Shia Muslims and they used to do Taghieh (hiding their religious identity in dangerous circumstances.)"*

Myself: Turning to the subject of cohesion policy, do you think that the involvement of YPBIs would aid in the process of cohesion?

S.H. = *"Yes, I think that would help, but I do not think that we need to the conventional politics. I think first we need to consolidate our community, then we can influence our social society, this is the strategic politics that we should follow. This is the way that for instance, the Jewish community does. They do not themselves run for the mayor or MP or similar positions, they somehow influence the politicians and political figures to implement their plans and wishes. The problem with the Iranian community is that they did not see themselves as a consolidated community and Iranian should work inwardly to make cohesion amongst themselves first. If your community is not consolidated, whoever has been elected for a political position from that community for instance from a political party, will defend the rights and interests of that certain party and not the rights of the Iranian community? He/she defend the rights and interests of the people who have voted for him and not the interest of his fellow countrymen."*

Myself: Can you provide your thoughts on the involvement of the YPBIs in the affairs of their community and share your personal experiences of working with the British-Iranian community? Also, can you elaborate on the needs and expectations of the YPBIs from Islamic centers such as the Islamic Centre of England?

S.H: *“ My involvement with the YPBIs is mainly on religious issues. I think the areas that the Islamic centers needed to be more involved in are basically in the planning and programming level. In most cases, the Islamic centres are run by the Ulamas who are not from this country and are not brought up in this country so they are not familiar with the needs and expectations of the youths from the younger generations. This matter is not specifically the problem of the only Iranian community, but this is the same case with other Shia countries such as Pakistanis and Iraqis. For example, the young religious Iranians are concerned with the religious inputs and ideas that they get from the educational system which brings with it very coherent and powerful arguments against religion. So the Islamic centres should work on these types of subjects and try to resolve them. Also, in the case of the Islamic culture, and how the Islamic culture is practiced in this society. So, this centre could do much more and address these issues and the appropriate way to do this is to integrate and incorporate the young practicing Shai Muslims in the planning and strategic programming levels of these centres in the fields of teaching and educating the younger generation.”*

Myself: Can you share your final thoughts and comments on this matter?

S.H. = *“ I think this kind of the projects that you have carried out is very helpful and enlightening and inshallah the results and findings of the project will be available for the leaders of the Iranian Shia communities and also we should have outreach the members of our communities specially in this time of the pandemic, by the mean of a telephone for instance and help those who are feeling isolated or alienated from the rest of the Iranian community and trying to make them involved which is very helpful for consolidating the Iranian community.”*

Myself: Thank you so much for your valuable time.

Appendix 2 : Detailed replies to specialised questions (QQ) :

Detailed replies to Q 1:

1- Have your social, cultural, and religious expectations from the Islamic organisations based in London been fulfilled so far? Do you have any more suggestions? Please explain.
No, referring their impact on society.
Yes, it would be better if Islamic organisations hold some events for young children to improve their basic religious knowledge.
No, I dont feel like I get engaged socially. There isn't many in my age brackets
The Islamic organisations in London run variety of programmes throughout the year for all ages and in different languages, there are more and more organisations being formed every year and reaching out to the wider communities
Yes
Yes
No.
1) They are far away from my home 2) mostly their websites are not up to dated.
Yes
Yes
Yes they have met expectations. More programmes for young British Iranians
I expect Islamic organisations to extend their activities beyond religious activities.
Yes.
Not very much, they have to broaden their vision
Partially. The Islamic Organizations need to be more innovative in their approach towards the needs of the Muslim communities.
Yes, there's plenty of centres available. Online lectures and universities societies.
So far yes, need to add more counselling services.
Yes, London has a number of mosques/ masjids with full of Iranians which could be attended. However, universities and English school have very few Iranians, so the social aspect is multicultural.
Yes
Yes, could have more online programs
Yes
need to have more enthusiastic programs for youths. However this can be done after the pandemic.
Yes
No . They need more activity to be done . Our community is in a crisis . They need to make a move.
To an extent, yes.

Yes more so when I was younger. Now we need more programs tailored to current affairs and bringing Iranian Muslims together.
No. The speakers have usually been picked out of convenience, not expertise or popularity amongst people
More diverse programmes to allow the second and third generation to meet and network
More diverse programmes to allow the second and third generation to meet and network
No. The religious expectations have been fulfilled, but the social and cultural not.
Yes it is good
To an extent. Perhaps much more pre COVID but not since the lockdown and COVID issue started.
Yes it is good
Not in recent years - when I was a child (20 years ago) kanoon tawheed fulfilled our needs as it was run and organised by students living in the UK and the objective was to fulfil the needs of the people living here rather than to organise events just for the sake of organising it and reporting back to superiors in Iran.
Not necessarily, growing up in the UK I personally lacked any sort of events tailored towards the Iranian youth. Other events/organisations would often have a short period of activity and would lack in consistency when it came to a long term plan.
No more work needs to be done

Q2 :

2- Have you been involved in Islamic activities in general and 'Shia Islam related' issues in particular in the framework of intercultural communication? Please give further elaboration.
Yes, still in the learning progress under supervision of knowledgeable people.
Yes, I have been involved in Islamic society activities at university. As the group of Sunni students were much larger than Shia, so most of the events were held in their framework.
No
No, I haven't, the Shia Islam issues in terms of intercultural communication is not promoted well enough in my opinion. There needs to more forums that engage with different religions and sectors in open/inter faith events
Not that much
Not that much
Since I've came here, no.
Not that much
No
No
Not seriously. This is because Muslims, in general, have not a good social reputation in here.
No
Not really,
I have worked with Shia Islam and Shia Sunni activities but I have done no work in intercultural framework.

Yes, Who is Hussain foundation.
Yes, helping out in the mosque
Not really. I have attended very few Shia Islam related issue events
No
No
Not much due to full time work and long commute
N/A
Yes
Yes , i have done humanitarian activism . Worked at a bookshop in one of our Shia community centres. Prepared news reports about activities happening in the community and a load of other things as well.
I have volunteered in several multicultural Shia organisations since a young age.
Yes interfaith charity work. Attending related programs.
No
No
No
Yes, especially when I was at university. But after that and when started working, this happened more in personal level, rather than proper activities.
Yes
Yes during my student life I was involved in many organisations that were mainly on community enhancement.
Yes
Yes - both in kanoon tawheed and as part of student societies in university and privately
Mainly through gathering with a group of friends and during university I was involved with ABSoc.
Unfortunately not

QQ2 : Have you been involved in Shia Islamic activities?

Row	Yes	No	Other
1	Yes		Yes, still in the learning progress under supervision of knowledgeable people.
2	Yes		Yes, I have been involved in Islamic society activities at university. As the group of Sunni students were much larger than Shia, so most of the events were held in their framework.
3		No	No
4		No	No I haven't, the Shia Islam issues in terms of intercultural communication is not promoted well enough in my opinion. There needs to more forums that engage with different religions and sectors in open/inter faith events
5		No	Not that much

6		No	Not that much
7		No	Since I've come here, no.
8		No	Not that much
9		No	No
10		No	No
11		No	Not seriously. This is because Muslims, in general, have not a good social reputation in here.
12		No	No
13		No	Not really,
14	Yes		I have worked with Shia Islam and Shia Sunni activities but I have done no work in intercultural framework.
15	Yes		Yes, Who is Hussain foundation.
16	Yes		Yes, helping out in the mosque
17		No	Not really. I have attended very few Shia Islam related issue events
18		No	No
19		No	No
20		No	Not much due to full time work and long commute
21		No	N/A
22	Yes		Yes
23	Yes		Yes, i have done humanitarian activism. Worked at a bookshop in one of our Shia community centres. Prepared news reports about activities happening in the community and a load of other things as well.
24	Yes		I have volunteered in several multicultural Shia organisations since a young age.
25	Yes		Yes interfaith charity work. Attending related programs.
26		No	No
27		No	No
28		No	No
29	Yes		Yes, especially when I was at university. But after that and when started working, this happened more in personal level, rather than proper activities.
30	Yes		Yes
31	Yes		Yes during my student life I was involved in many organisations that were mainly on community enhancement.
32	Yes		Yes
33	Yes		Yes - both in kanoon tawheed and as part of student societies in university and privately
34	Yes		Mainly through gathering with a group of friends and during university I was involved with ABSoc.

35		No	Unfortunately, not
Total	15	20	

QQ3 : Do you like to be involved in social/political affairs of the society?

Row	Yes	No	Other
1	Yes		Yes, I believe in order to have impact on our society, we have to become very close to each other.
2	Yes		Yes, I like to be involved more. Although there are more Muslim population in the UK, but the new generation of the YPBI are less religious. So, most of the social and political activities are held by old generation.
3		No	No because even non-Iranian shies were not as engaging and welcoming. I felt isolated.
4	Yes		yes always like to be involved in Shia events socially and politically to continue the legacy of parents teaching and help get my children involved in these activities to
5		No	No
6		No	No
7		No	no.
8		No	No
9		No	No
10		No	No, I do not simply have the time to attend any social or political activities
11		No	Not really. I would prefer keep my religion for my own, as we are not welcome by non-Muslims.
12		No	Not at all
13		No	I am not interested in these sorts of activities.
14	Yes		Yes. The main concern is being labelled as pro-Iran or anti-Iran.
15		No	No, I'm not entirely interested in political matters.
16		No	No as now we have too many commitments however it is a good initiative
17	Yes		Yes, I would like to, however it depends on the nature of the political issue. I haven't really gone because I am not aware of such political activities.
18		No	No
19	Yes		Yes, more charitable work opportunities
20		No	Not really, very busy with my current professional career
21	Yes		yes sure, willing to expand the religion of peace more and more through speech and communicating with different types of cultures.
22		?	Maybe

23	Yes		Yes. On the condition that the work done is planned and discussed with those aware of community issues, and an Iranian stance is not undertaken to deal with this.
24	Yes		Yes, I believe that the rights of Muslims are infringed, Muslims are treated as second class citizens yet they do not know it. And society is oblivious of this too.
25	Yes		Yes, we should but more platforms needed to teach us how to engage with media.
26		No	No
27	Yes		Yes. I believe there is a need for more social Islamic events to allow people to meet and form a stronger community
28	Yes		Yes. I believe there is a need for more social Islamic events to allow people to meet and form a stronger community
29		No	Not much. I have so many concerns at personal level in life that I cannot have extra concerns.
30	Yes		Yes
31	Yes		Yes we should have a say in those areas. Main concern is to have a structure and guidance work on things collectively rather than individual to reduce the risk of going astray.
32	Yes		Yes
33	Yes		Yes
34	Yes		Yes of course. I would love for youth growing up in these times to have regular events and feel welcomed by the community.
35	Yes		I'm currently helping with youth community within my mosque. I would not be involved as I'm too busy but I think great initiative
Total	18	16	

One answer was : Maybe !

Q3 :

3-Considering the increasing number of the Muslim population in the UK, (Including Shia Muslims) do you like to be involved more in social and political activities as a YPBI? Please explain your concern positively or negatively.
Yes, I believe in order to have impact on our society, we have to become very close to each other.
Yes, I like to be involved more. Although there are more Muslim population in the UK, but the new generation of the YPBI are less religious. So most of the social and political activities are held by old generation.
No because even non-Iranian shies were not as engaging and welcoming. I felt isolated.
yes always like to be involved in Shia events socially and politically to continue the legacy of parents teaching and help get my children involved in these activities to
No
No

no.
No
No
No, I do not simply have the time to attend any social or political activities
Not really. I would prefer keep my religion for my own, as we are not welcome by non Muslims.
Not at all
I am not interested in these sort of activities.
Yes. The main concern is being labelled as pro-Iran or anti-Iran.
No, I'm not entirely interested in political matters.
No as now we have too many commitments however it is a good initiative
Yes I would like to, however it depends on the nature of the political issue. I haven't really gone because I am not aware of such political activities.
No
Yes, more charitable work opportunities
Not really, very busy with my current professional career
yes sure, willing to expand the religion of peace more and more through speech and communicating with different types of culture's.
Maybe
Yes. On the condition that the work done is planned and discussed with those aware of community issues, and an Iranian stance is not undertaken to deal with this .
Yes, I believe that the rights of Muslims are infringed, Muslims are treated as second class citizens yet they do not know it. And society is oblivious of this too.
Yes we should but more platforms needed to teach us how to engage with media.
No
Yes. I believe there is a need for more social Islamic events to allow people to meet and form a stronger community
Yes. I believe there is a need for more social Islamic events to allow people to meet and form a stronger community
Not much. I have so many concerns at personal level in life that I cannot have extra concerns.
Yes
Yes we should have a say in those areas. Main concern is to have a structure and guidance work on things collectively rather than individual to reduce the risk of going astray.
Yes
Yes
Yes of course. I would love for youth growing up in these times to have regular events and feel welcomed by the community.

I am currently helping with youth community within my mosque. I would not be involved as im too busy but I think great initiative

QQ4 : Experiencing any form of double standard behaviour?

Row	Yes	No	Other..
1	Yes		Yes, some of the white British think we are here in their country taking their jobs.
2	Yes		Yes in couple of occasions. Non-Muslims sometimes have stricter rules for Muslims
3	Yes		Yes at work, specially when trying to move up the work ladder.
4		No	no I personally haven't
5		No	No
6		No	No
7		No	No
8		No	No
9		No	No
10		No	No, nothing serious
11		No	I have not felt obvious double standard or discrimination due to my religion, but practically not welcome in many cases.
12		No	No. I have found the UK very accommodating and understanding.
13		No	I have not personally experienced and it may be because of living in London as a multicultural environment.
14		No	No
15	Yes		Yes, some sort of racism.
16		No	No
17	Yes		Yes
18		No	No
19	Yes		Yes
20		No	No
21	Yes		Yes, unfortunately even this country claims that is a country of freedom of speech however you still see discrimination and racism in many places and even it might delay you day to day life because of this.
22	Yes		Maybe a little
23	Yes		Yes

24	Yes		Only by the police, Salafis, Gov. officials and enemies of Islam.
25	Yes		Yes due to hijab
26	Yes		Yes
27		No	No
28		No	No
29	Yes		Yes, but not very directly. Its more in hidden levels that discrimination happens. Like in the work place. They call it 'Cultural-fit'. They don't give you job, because you don't culturally fit in the organisation.
30		No	No
31	Yes		There are double standards everywhere and it's not just in non-Iranian or non-Muslims.
32		No	No
33		No	No
34	Yes		Yes
35		No	No
Total	15	20	

Q4 :

4- Have you, as a YPBI, experienced any form of double-standard or discrimination from non-Muslims or non-Iranians in the UK?
Yes, some of the white British think we are here in their country taking their jobs.
Yes in couple of occasions. Non-Muslims sometimes have stricter rules for Muslims
Yes at work, specially when trying to move up the work ladder.
no I personally haven't
No
No
No
No
No
No, nothing serious
I have not felt obvious double standard or discrimination due to my religion, but practically not welcome in many cases.
No. I have found the UK very accommodating and understanding.
I have not personally experienced and it may be because of living in London as a multicultural environment.
No
Yes, some sort of racism.

No
Yes
No
Yes
No
yes, unfortunately even this country claims that is a country of freedom of speech however you still see discrimination and racism in many places and even it might delay you day to day life because of this.
Maybe a little
Yes
Only by the police, Salafis, gov officials and enemies of Islam.
Yes due to hijab
Yes
No
No
Yes, but not very directly. Its more in hidden levels that discrimination happens. Like in the work place. They call it 'Cultural-fit'. They don't give you job, because you don't culturally fit in the organisation.
No
There are double standards everywhere and it's not just in non-Iranian or non- Muslims.
No
No
Yes
No

QQ5 : More emotional confidence/security of being a devoted Shia Muslim?

Row	Yes	No	Other
1	Yes		Yes, as I believe has all the power and therefore, only God can protect us.
2	Yes		Definitely, it gives more belief and confidence to achieve my goals in every aspect of life.
3	Yes		I feel like I get tested more with my faith in God and sometimes that brings about more insecurities.
4	Yes		yes I feel safe and proud to be a practising Shia Muslim in the UK
5	Yes		Yes
6	Yes		Yes
7	Yes		being a believer helps to increase the confidence during the hard time specially
8	Yes		Yes

9	Yes		Yes
10	Yes		Yes it gives me confidence
11	Yes		I think any strong true believer, regardless, could rely on emotional security and confidence in daily life.
12		No	I don't feel very strongly about being a Shia. However, as a Muslim I feel emotional security. Living in London is easy as it is a multi-cultural city. However, I have found places outside of London generally uncomfortable to work/live.
13	Yes		It will give me inner security and as a result I feel confidence.
14	Yes		Yes. It's part of my identity that I am proud of.
15		No	No
16	Yes		Yes, as you we rely solely on God, he eases our tensions and pains.
17	Yes		Yes.
18	Yes		Yes
19	Yes		Yes
20	Yes		Yes, they greatly help with my work ethic and dealing with high stress work loads
21	Yes		I am not saying this because I was born in a Muslim family, however I felt the religion of Islam has always given me the opt3uins to choose wisely and knowing the Allah subhanallah better and more in depth.
22	Yes		Definitely yes
23	Yes		Yes
24	Yes		Yes, definitely.
25	Yes		Yes sense of peace and belonging
26	Yes		Yes
27	Yes		Yes. It is reassuring to be a part of this group and have this defined identity
28	Yes		Yes. It is reassuring to be a part of this group and have this defined identity
29	Yes		To some extent, because I know that I have a community behind me that would support me in difficulties (Hopefully!)
30		No	No
31	Yes		I would like to think that I am but I don't live in London anymore. Definitely without it one will be lost as we can see very clearly in the western lifestyle.
32		No	No
33	Yes		Yes, as I feel I belong to a school of thought and community.
34		No	Having faith in Allah gives me the upmost confidence in myself. I am constantly in a process to better myself in all components, and Insha'Allah one day I could be considered as a true practicing devoted Shia Muslim.
35	Yes		Yes, it helps me with every decision I make

Total	30	5	
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Q5 :

5-You are considered as a believer and practicing devoted Shia Muslim living in London. Do these attributes give you more emotional security and confidence in your daily life? Please expand this more if you want.
Yes, as I believe has all the power and therefore, only God can protect us.
Definitely , it gives more belief and confidence to achieve my goals in every aspect of life.
I feel like I get tested more with my faith in God and sometimes that brings about more insecurities.
yes I feel safe and proud to be a practising Shia Muslim in the UK
Yes
Yes
being a believer helps to increase the confidence during the hard time specially
Yes
Yes
Yes it gives me confidence
I think any strong true believer, regardless, could rely on emotional security and confidence in daily life.
I don't feel very strongly about being a Shia. However, as a Muslim I feel emotional security. Living in London is easy as it is a multi cultural city. However, I have found places outside of London generally uncomfortable to work/live.
It will give me inner security and as a result I feel confidence.
Yes. It's part of my identity that I am proud of.
No
Yes, as you we rely solely on God he eases our tensions and pains.
Yes.
Yes
Yes
Yes, they greatly help with my work ethic and dealing with high stress work loads
I am not saying this because I was born in a Muslim family, however I felt the religion of Islam has always given me the opt3uins to choose wisely and knowing the Allah subhanallah better and more in depth.
Definitely yes
Yes
Yes, definitely.
Yes sense of peace and belonging
Yes
Yes. It is reassuring to be a part of this group and have this defined identity

Yes. It is reassuring to be a part of this group and have this defined identity
To some extent, because I know that I have a community behind me that would support me in difficulties (Hopefully!)
No
I would like to think that I am but I don't live in London anymore. Definitely without it one will be lost as we can see very clearly in the western lifestyle.
No
Yes as I feel I belong to a school of thought and community.
Having faith in Allah gives me the upmost confidence in myself. I am constantly in a process to better myself in all components, and Insha'Allah one day I could be considered as a true practicing devoted Shia Muslim.
Yes it helps me with every decision I make

QQ6 : Experiencing any form of stereotype behaviour negatively or positively?

Row	Yes	No	Other
1		No	No
2		No	Not for myself. But I have seen some YPBI feeling negatively when they apply for a new job.
3	Yes		Yes, I have specially at work place. Getting called fenatic or ayatollah by non-believing Iranians.
4		No	No
5		No	No
6		No	No
7		No	No
8		No	No
9		No	No
10		No	Rarely yes
11	Yes		I see myself a bit isolated.
12		No	No
13		No	I have not seen this sort of stereotype in London but some of my friends who live outside of London, they have experience it.
14		No	No
15		No	No
16		No	No
17	Yes		Positive. They assume I like kabab koobide!
18		No	No

19		No	No
20		No	No
21			N/A
22		No	Not that I can think of
23		No	No
24	Yes		Yes, they assume I am not religious.
25		No	No
26	Yes		Yes
27	Yes		Yes. Iranians in general tend to stereotype
28	Yes		Yes. Iranians in general tend to stereotype
29			Not sure.
30	Yes		Yes
31		No	Not really
32	Yes		Yes
33		No	No
34	Yes		When it comes to the Iranian community, especially the people living in Iran, the concept of a practicing Muslim in the west is difficult to believe. The main problem for me is the supposed religious groups within our community in the UK have a superiority complex, which creates a toxic negative community. This may be the reason why we have a dis functioning community in the west.
35		No	No
Total	10	23	

N/A = 1 Not sure = 1

Q 6 :

6- Have you experienced any kind of stereotype feeling (negatively or positively) of being British-Iranian in the process of intercultural communication?
No
Not for myself. But I have seen some YPBI feeling negatively when they apply for a new job.
Yes I have specially at work place. Getting called fenatic or ayatollah by non-believing Iranians.
No
No
No
No
No
No

Rarely yes
I see myself a bit isolated.
No
I have not seen this sort of stereotype in London but some of my friends who live outside of London, they have experience it.
No
No
No
Positive. They assume I like kabab koobide!
No
No
No
N/A
Not that I can think of
No
Yes, they assume I am not religious.
No
Yes
Yes. Iranians in general tend to stereotype
Yes. Iranians in general tend to stereotype
Not sure.
Yes
Not really
Yes
No
When it comes to the Iranian community, especially the people living in Iran, the concept of a practicing Muslim in the west is difficult to believe. The main problem for me is the supposed religious groups within our own community in the UK have a superiority complex, which creates a toxic negative community. This may be the reason why we have a dis functioning community in the west.
No

QQ 7 : Your main criteria for marriage?

Row	Yes	No	Other

1			Religiosity, as I believe that the person has believe in God, knows the God is watching them all the time,”.
2			My main criteria is religiosity, the other factors are less important.
3			I wanted to get married and nationality was not high priority. Religiosity was a big factor.
4			religiosity, nationality, ethnic background, family relationships
5			N/A
6			N/A
7			other factors
8			N/A
9			Religious and cultural synergy.
10			My main priority would be good values, family orientated and a human being
11			These were: religiosity, nationality but mainly humanity standards.
12			Education, family upbringing, mannerisms, interests
13			Background of family and nationality would be the most important factors to me.
14			Social status, religious status, and economical status to be of similar level. Also, I should have known her and family for a while.
15			Within same cultural backgrounds, religious and educated.
16			Religious is important. Not too much emphasis on ethnicity
17			Shia, good heart, friends and generous. Doesn't have to be Iranian, however preferred.
18			Starting a family
19			Mostly religiosity. there are more avenues to find cases of same nationality.
20			Compatibility in believes and values and great level of devotion to family
21			mainly it was the religion and a food person in heart however family played a important role as well. This shows how the girl has been raised.
22			N/A
23			Family background and belief system.
24			Shia Muslim, practicing, devoted, preferably Iranian, then Lebanese then open after that.
25			Main criteria were religion cultural and educational compatibility and preference of Iranian nationality
26			Religiosity was the most important. Nationality was only important because I'd feel closer and more relatable to a person who understands my culture and language
27			Being a Shia
28			Being a Shia
29			Religious was important, nationality was important, Ethnic background wasn't that important, education level was important, Social level and background of family was important

30			No
31			Religion was a factor not so much nationality. But ethics, moral, education, family, looks we're all factors.
32			No
33			Religiosity and nationality was important. But the main thing was for my spouse to have the same attitude to religion as I do. As many the way we practice religion in the UK is out of choice and freedom where as those in iran may practice based on force, culture and political pressures.
34			Piety and Akhlaq
35			Religion, family oriented and honest
Total			

Q7 :

7 - As a YPBI, what are/were your main criteria for marriage, such as religiosity, nationality, and ethnic background, or any other factors. Please explain if you don't mind.
religiosity, as I believe that the person has believe in God, knows the God is watching them all the time,".
My main criteria is religiosity, the other factors are less important.
I wanted to get married and nationality was not high priority. Religiosity was a big factor.
religiosity, nationality, ethnic background, family relationships
N/A
N/A
other factors
N/A
Religious and cultural synergy.
My main priority would be good values, family orientated and a human being
These were : religiosity, nationality but mainly humanity standards.
Education, family upbringing, mannerisms, interests
Background of family and nationality would be the most important factors to me.
Social status, religious status, and economical status to be of similar level. Also, I should have known her and family for a while.
Within same cultural backgrounds, religious and educated.
Religious is important. Not too much emphasis on ethnicity
Shia, good heart, friends and generous. Doesn't have to be Iranian, however preferred.
Starting a family

Mostly religiosity. there are more avenues to find cases of same nationality.
Compatibility in believes and values and great level of devotion to family
mainly it was the religion and a good person in heart however family played an important role as well. This shows how the girl has been raised.
N/A
Family background and belief system.
Shia Muslim, practicing, devoted, preferably Iranian, then Lebanese then open after that.
Main criteria were religion cultural and educational compatibility and preference of Iranian nationality
Religiosity was the most important. Nationality was only important because I'd feel closer and more relatable to a person who understands my culture and language
Being a Shia
Being a Shia
Religious was important, nationality was important, Ethnic background wasn't that important, education level was important, Social level and background of family was important
No
Religion was a factor not so much nationality. But ethics, moral, education, family, looks we're all factors.
No
Religiosity and nationality was important. But the main thing was for my spouse to have the same attitude to religion as I do. As many the way we practice religion in the UK is out of choice and freedom where as those in iran may practice based on force, culture and political pressures.
Piety and Akhlaq
Religion, family oriented and honest

QQ8 : Experiencing any difficulty in performing your religious practices?

Row	Yes	No	Other
1		No	No, however sometimes, I am not feeling safe of exposing my idea in this environment
2	Yes		yes I have experienced difficulties. For example one of the Muharam festivals was during my final year exams at the university, so I was only able to attend for couple of hours
3		No	No
4		No	no, my company has always been supportive. Sometimes for Shia religious occasions I will have to book from my holiday entitlement to celebrate or attend majalis for Ashura
5		No	No
6		No	No

7	Yes		yes. there is no centre close to my home. fasting in the work environment is sometimes very odd....
8		No	No
9		No	No
10		No	No difficulties
11		No	I have always felt free.
12		No	Not at all
13		No	Not at all, I have not have any difficulty in this respect.
14		No	No difficulty. I have found that any workplace I have been they are very understanding and accommodating.
15		No	No
16		No	Not at all, it is very free here more than some Muslim countries.
17	Yes		Yes, fasting in particular. As a student I found it difficult to concentrate whilst fasting. That shouldn't be an excuse but it's the truth.
18		No	No
19		No	No
20		No	No, work environment and friends are very accommodating. Back during my studies, university provided a great communal pray room.
21		No	Not at all.
22		No	Nope
23		No	No
24	Yes		Sometimes harassed in university prayer rooms for praying with a turba, and general not feeling welcome in Sunni spaces.
25		No	No
26	Yes		In conferences I usually have to worry about whether they have a room I could pray in
27	Yes		Muharam due to young children
28	Yes		Muharam due to young children
29		No	No
30	Yes		Yes
31		No	Alhamdulillah never. Perhaps because of 2 reasons. 1- the country we live in is much more open than other European countries so less issues practicing our beliefs. 2- I made sure nothing stops me from practicing (works, education etc)
32	Yes		Yes
33		No	Not at all.
34		No	No
35		No	No
Total	9	26	

Q 8 :

8- Have you experienced any difficulty in performing your religious practices and rituals such as praying, fasting, and attending Muharram festival? Please explain your experiences.
No, however sometimes, I am not feeling safe of exposing my idea in this environment.
yes I have experienced difficulties. For example one of the Muharam festivals was during my final year exams at the university, so I was only able to attend for couple of hours
No
no, my company has always been supportive. Sometimes for Shia religious occasions i will have to book from my holiday entitlement to celebrate or attend majalis for Ashura
No
No
yes. there is no centre close to my home. fasting in the work environment is sometimes very odd....
No
No
No difficulties
I have always felt free.
Not at all
Not at all, I have not have any difficulty in this respect.
No difficulty. I have found that any workplace I have been they are very understanding and accommodating.
No
Not at all, it is very free here more than some Muslim countries.
Yes, fasting in particular. As a student I found it difficult to concentrate whilst fasting. That shouldn't be an excuse but it's the truth.
No
No
No, work environment and friends are very accommodating. Back during my studies, university provided a great communal pray room.
Not at all.
Nope
No
Sometimes harassed in university prayer rooms for praying with a turba, and general not feeling welcome in Sunni spaces.
No
In conferences I usually have to worry about whether they have a room I could pray in

Muharam due to young children
Muharam due to young children
No
Yes
Alhamdulillah never. Perhaps because of 2 reasons. 1- the country we live in is much more open than other European countries so less issues practicing our beliefs. 2- I made sure nothing stops me from practicing (works, education etc)
Yes
Not at all.
No
No

QQ9 : Your preferred identity ?

Row	Yes	No	Other
1	Yes		British - Iranian Feeling safer of walking on the road.
2		No	No I prefer Iranian identity. I do not agree with mix hyphenated identity.
3	Yes		British-Iranian
4	Yes		British-Iranian is a fair label as we are an immigrant
5		No	No
6		No	No
7			I have no answer
8		No	No
9	Yes		Yes
10	Yes		Yes, British-Iranian
11	Yes		British _ Iranian
12			No preference
13	Yes		Yes I do as an British-Iranian person.
14		No	I prefer to b called Iranian.
15		No	Iranian living in London.
16		No	Iranian
17	Yes		, British Iranian
18		No	Iranian
19		No	Iranian, this would be different for people who were born here.
20	Yes		Yes

21		No	I prefer to stay only Iranian, however I respect the country I have lived for most of my life.
22		No	Prefer Iranian
23	Yes		I don't see why not
24		No	I don't like that to be my preferred identity to be honest. I'm still coming to terms with what my actual identity is. I'd definitely say I'm Iranian if anyone would ask. British part only comes since I grew up here. I respect the people of Britain not the neoliberal capitalists who run it.
25		No	No
26		No	Iranian
27	Yes		British Iranian
28	Yes		British Iranian
29	Yes		Yes, I think its fair to say British-Iranian
30			Both
31		No	A very important question. I have been working on for a very long time. Not much for myself but for my peers and children. But I still see myself Iranian not a British-Iranian.
32			Both
33	Yes		Yes
34		No	British Iranian, or a British Muslim with an Iranian upbringing
35			British – Asian
Total	14	16	

Two respondents preferred both one reply; British-Asian, and two replies; No preference.

Q9 :

9- What is your preferred identity? Do you like the hyphenated identity of British – Iranian would be officially recognised, like British – Indian or British-Bangladeshi?	
British	Iranian
Feeling more safe of walking on the road.	
No I prefer Iranian identity. I do not agree with mix hyphenated identity.	
British-Iranian	
British-Iranian is a fair label as we are an immigrant	
No	
No	
I have no answer	
No	
Yes	

Yes, British-Iranian
British _ Iranian
No preference
Yes I do as an British-Iranian person.
I prefer to be called Iranian.
Iranian living in London.
Iranian
, British Iranian
Iranian
Iranian, this would be different for people who were born here.
Yes
I prefer to stay only Iranian, however I respect the country I have lived for most of my life.
Prefer Iranian
I don't see why not
I don't like that to be my preferred identity to be honest. I'm still coming to terms with what my actual identity is. I'd definitely say I'm Iranian if anyone would ask. British part only comes since I grew up here. I respect the people of Britain not the neoliberal capitalists who run it.
No
Iranian
British iranian
British iranian
Yes, I think its fair to say British-Iranian
Both
A very important question. I have been working on for a very long time. Not much for myself but for my peers and children. But I still see myself Iranian not an British-Iranian.
Both
Yes
British Iranian, or a British Muslim with an Iranian upbringing
British – Asian

QQ10 : As a YPBI, can you be culturally integrated with British society?

Row	Yes	No	Other
1		NO	Not agree, as we may lose our religious characters.

2		No	I do not integrate culturally with them, but the society has affected my discipline and goals for future
3	Yes		Yes, we can but we can also have our boundaries
4	Yes		Yes, we have to respect the values of the country we live in and be able to integrate with the society and lead a good example of true Muslim to be able to make changes through legal matters if something doesn't work in our favour
5		No	No
6		No	No
7		No	no, I don't think so
8		No	No
9	Yes		Yes
10	Yes		Yes, in general, as sometimes I feel a bit isolated
11	Yes		Yes, I can. But sometimes I see myself a bit isolated.
12	Yes		Yes. Very much so. I don't see or feel any barriers in these domains.
13	Yes		Yes, I can do perfectly.
14		No	I do not think we can culturally integrate. There can be cohesion and a harmony but not integration because we as Muslims do certain things that non-Muslims do not do e.g. Not drinking, not shaking hands with opposite sex etc. In order to make long lasting friends with a non-Muslim will be difficult because social activities we do is different due to the restrictions we have in our religion. It's not that we do not want to make long lasting strong friendship with non-Muslims but it is very difficult to form one because of social activities we can have together.
15	Yes		Yes
16		No	This is a tricky one as our cultures in differ in what we do in our social time. We tend to spend time with family a lot more.
17	Yes		Yes of course
18		No	No
19	Yes		Yes, but there are limitations
20	Yes		Yes, always enjoyed social aspect with friends and colleagues. Never had pressure from anyone to act or do anything other than what was my choice.
21	Yes		It depends to the individuals, I have many friends that even if they are not Muslims, they are good persons at heart, however there re many Muslims that I don't feel comfortable with because they are Muslims by name only!
22	Yes		Yes, to an extent
23	Yes		Yes, I can integrate with them.
24		No	To an extent we can be integrated, to an extent we cannot due to our faiths. That being said, people should be tolerant and understanding and respectful to one others' belief, no matter which creed they follow.
25		No	Not as much. There is a barrier as I think more engagement is needed

26		No	No
27	Yes		Yes
28	Yes		Yes
29	Yes		To some extent is possible to integrated, but t some extent not. So so
30		No	Not agree
31		No	I have many non-Iranian friends, I meet them, have dinner and socialise with them. But we respect our differences.
32		No	Not agree
33	Yes		Yes
34	Yes		Its important for us to be open to different cultures and allow ourselves to be integrated allowing us to learn from one another. I don't think we can expect others to be accepting of us if we're not accepting of other communities. I personally believe in order for us to take that step we need to be accepting of ourselves as a first step.
35	Yes		Yes to an extent as long as it doesn't clash with my beliefs
Total	20	15	

Q 10 :

10- By living in Britain we are involved in our daily affairs with the rest of the society in social, legal, and economic domains. As a YPBI can you be culturally integrated with them as well? Please explain if you agree or not agree.
Not agree, as we may loose our religious characters.
I do not integrated culturally with them, but the society has affected my discipline and goals for future
Yes we can but we can also have our boundaries
yes we have to respect the values of the country we live in and be able to integrate with the society and lead a good example of true Muslim to be able to make changes through legal matters if something doesn't work in our favour
No
No
no, I don't think so
No
Yes
Yes in general, as sometimes I feel a bit isolated
Yes I can. But sometimes I see myself a bit isolated.
Yes. Very much so. I don't see or feel any barriers in these domains.
Yes I can do perfectly.
I do not think we can culturally integrate. There can be cohesion and a harmony but not integration because we as Muslims do certain things that non-Muslims do not do e.g. Not drinking, not shaking hands with opposite sex etc. In order to make long lasting friends with a non-Muslim will be difficult because social activities we do is different due

to the restrictions we have in our religion. It's not that we do not want to make long lasting strong friendship with non-Muslims but it is very difficult to form one because of social activities we can have together.
Yes
This is a tricky one as our cultures in differ in what we do in our social time. We tend to spend time with family a lot more.
Yes of course
No
Yes, but there are limitations
Yes, always enjoyed social aspect with friends and colleagues. Never had pressure from anyone to act or do anything other than what was my choice.
It depends to the individuals, I have many friends that even if they are not Muslims they are good persons at heart, however there re many Muslims that I don't feel comfortable with because they are Muslims by name only!
Yes to an extent
Yes i can integrate with them .
To an extent we can be integrated, to an extent we cannot due to our faiths. That being said, people should be tolerant and understanding and respectful to one others beliefs, no matter which creed they follow.
Not as much. There is a barrier as I think more engagement is needed
No
Yes
Yes
To some extent is possible to integrated, but t some extent not. So so
Not agree
I have many non Iranian friends, I meet them, have dinner and socialise with them. But we respect our differences.
Not agree
Yes
It's important for us to be open to different cultures and allow ourselves to be integrated allowing us to learn from one another. I don't think we can expect others to be accepting of us if we're not accepting of other communities. I personally believe in order for us to take that step we need to be accepting of ourselves as a first step.
Yes to an extent as long as it doesn't clash with my beliefs

Appendix 3: A sample of the Invitation letter for interviewees

In the name of Allah, The beneficent, The Merciful

Invitation for the semi-structured interview

Dear Sister/Brother

Salamon Alaikom !

I hope this message finds you well. I am conducting research on "Young Practicing British-Iranian (YPBIs)" in London, and I am reaching out to you because of your involvement with the British-Iranian community or your experience working with them. I would be honoured if you would participate in a one-hour open-ended semi-structured interview with me. The interview will be conducted digitally via mobile phone and will cover the following topics:

Current issues facing YPBIs and the British-Iranian community in the UK

The role of religiosity in daily life

Social and cultural (including religious) needs and expectations from Islamic organizations in London

Issues of British-Iranian identity and the possibility of intercultural integration between YPBIs and British society

Sense of belonging to the UK

Increased involvement in British social, local, governmental, and political affairs

Any other relevant topics.

If you are interested, please let me know a convenient date and time for the interview, and I will arrange it through the "Zoom" application. I appreciate your time and consideration of my request.

May Allah Ta'ala give you more health and prosperity

Yours sincerely,

Kh Tajbakhsh

Appendix 4 : Possible and useful inputs for RPR

Taken from BASM thesis :

- Typology of BSMs :

- Typology is simply the classification and sorting of some attributes or characteristics in a physical or social entity which is a mean to know and finding out about the phenomenon under study more clearly. This method is very common in social sciences and could be found in most of researchers' works.
- In the case of studying the BSM community, typology could be done by highlighting one or more characteristics of this social entity. As I explained in pervious chapters, Ansari and Ameli who have done similar studies on British Muslims few years back have done some sort of typology in their research. Ansari has classified this community based on the 'degree of British Muslims assimilation'. He explains this issue as follows:
 -
 - *"British Muslim approaches to engagement with the wider society have taken several forms. The most significant being the sub-cultural, the counter cultural, the accommodationist, and assimilationist.*
 - *The sub-cultural response entails separation from the cultural mainstream, with the desired degree of separation depending on the proponents. The counter cultural response attempts to safeguard distinctiveness in the midst of the mainstream, and by exercising influence in favour of reform strives to win concession from the wider society. The accommodationist response opposes withdrawal and isolation from the wider society but differs from the counter cultural response in its positive evolution of the mainstream culture or at least being less dissatisfied than the other respondents. Those who hold this view fear labelling and alienation are relatively tolerant of other faith and ideologies. And feel that their children should avoid social and cultural conflicts, if necessary, by conforming to the mainstream. Indeed, those who support this position wish to be recognised as part of the mainstream, although Islamic identity for them remains paramount. The assimilation response, while not explicitly endorsing religio-cultural adsorption into the mainstream, does tend towards it quite strongly. It allows Islamic specificity to give way to the vague generalities of civil religion with perhaps a few identical religious or ethnic vestiges being retained." (Ansari 2004: P 214)*
 -
- Dr Ansari, believes that British Muslims engagement with British society since 1945, have been in a mixed form of "accommodation", "competition "and "assimilation"

- (Ansari: 2004). He then explains that “by the process of ‘assimilation’ the immigrants feel at ease with the culture of adopted land and has internalised its values. The group has adapted to and identifies itself with the host society and has been accepted by it so completely that it has merged into the whole and lost its separate identity.” (ibid)
- In continuation of this matter, he then elaborates the process of ‘accommodation’ as opposed to ‘assimilation’ where the group somehow ‘*encapsulate*’ *itself within their own group and adapting very slowly and minimally to social environment.*
- Following to that he describes the process of ‘competition’ as the group are in opposition to the mainstream by asserting their own values. Finally, he concludes that “*in a plural society like Britain, not only are the values of the dominant group being affected by the minority cultures, but dominant and subordinate groups have also striven to achieve co-existence while continuing to adhere to their own values and traditions. Social scientists have described this process as ‘integration’ according to which a minority group retains its own culture and religion but adapts itself to and is accepted as a permanent member of the society in all its external aspects of association.*” (Ansari: 2004)
- Dr Ameli has focused on British Muslim identity from the angle of ‘religious orientation’ and by referring to previous classification of other scholars such Shepard (1987), Tariq Ramadan(1999) and Castells(1997) proposes a new typology for British Muslims as follows:
 - 1- Nationalist identity: The BSM with this tendency although believing and accepting some aspects of British culture, but prefer to identify himself/herself with his/her nationalistic identity, like Iranian, Indian, Pakistani, etc, based on their ethnical heritage.
 - 2- Traditional identity: those believed in this class of identity constitutes a high proportion of older generation of the British Muslim community and they follow traditional religious norms and values emphasising of the origin of Islam with less tendency toward politicised Islam and treating as ‘resistant to change’.
 - 3 – Islamist identity: This kind of identity refers to those who believe that Islamic norms and values should be observed and practiced exactly according to its original form in the era of the prophet of Islam (PBUH) and no way for compromise or change.
 - They are comparable and similar to the previous type, but there is fundamental difference with them and that is their firm believe to maintain Islamic values as their political ideology and trying to implement Sharia law to their personal and social life as well as to spread it throughout the world.
 - 4 – Modernized identity: In this category people are trying to adjust and adopt themselves with dominant cultural norms of the wider society by interpretation of Islamic concepts compatible with updated daily affairs. Their preferred identity is a blend of traditional and

modernised identity (projective identity) and they believe in legitimization of social relationship in civil society.

- 5 – Secular identity: In this group of people who tend to have secular ideas, religion plays a minor role in their life and they practice it in a more private manner. They believe in separation of religion from politics and social life and freeing the society from traditional and religious obstacles and boundaries and pave the way for political and economic development.
- 6 – Anglicized identity (Westernized identity): This sort of identity refers to British Muslims who have assimilated into British culture and have adapted themselves on Western values and norms. They have lost their cultural roots and affiliation such as language and traditional habits and follow full British or Western way of life.
- 7 - Hybrid identity: This is a kind of mixed identity that lacks any distinctive characteristics and it is from one side attached to norms and values of their previous generations and from the opposite side is affected by the current norms and values practiced by wider society exposed to them via surrounding environment such as schools, workplace, social and religious gatherings, media, etc.
- 8 – Undetermined identity: Those who can be fall in this category are those who have not shaped their identity yet and are still undetermined about their way of life. Amongst them are young people with unpredictable behaviour and shifting from one to another one in society
- (Ameli : 2004 p: 133 – 139)
- In case of British Shia Muslims and considering the goals and objectives of the study based on my findings from the sample group, I have viewed and classified this community from three linked windows; 'adherence to the British society, parental link and ethnicity and involvement in society's social affairs. In following lines, I have explained about them in more details.

Appendix 5 : A Google Form Sample :

YPBI questionnaire (Google Form)

In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful!

This questionnaire is about my work-based research on YPBIs (Yong Practicing British-Iranians) in London. Partial fulfillment of my Dprof program at Middlesex University.

Please kindly spare a few minutes to complete this questionnaire if you are a YPBI aged between 18 - 35 (inclusive) living in London or Greater London. Please be assured that your replies will be considered confidential and will be used only for the purpose of this research. If you have any questions about this subject, please send me an email at kkiaan@gmail.com or call me on 07787974823. Questions marked with red * are compulsory to answer.

* Required

1. 1- Your gender? *

Mark only one oval.

Female

Male

2. 2- Age group ? *

Mark only one oval.

1 : 18 - 21

2 : 22 - 25

3 : 26 - 30

4 : 31 - 35

3. 3 - Place of birth? *

Mark only one oval.

I.R. Iran

United Kingdom

Other:

4. 4- Academic qualification *

Mark only one oval.

Undergraduate

BA/BS...

MS/MA...

PhD or over

Other: _____

5. 5- Marital situation *

Mark only one oval.

Single

Married to Iranian spouse

Married to non-Iranian spouse

Divorced

6. 6- Employment/Occupation

Mark only one oval.

Fulltime employed

Part-time employed

Self-employed

Studying

Other: _____

7. 7- Your annual income

Mark only one oval.

- Under £15,000
- 15,000 - 20,000
- 20,000 - 25,000
- Over 25,000

8. 8- How long have you been living in Britain? *

Mark only one oval.

- Since birth.
- More than 10 yrs.
- More than 20 yrs.
- More than 30 yrs.
- Other: _____

9. 9- How is your English language competency? *

Mark only one oval.

- Fluent
- Very good
- Communicative
- Poor

10. 10- Your attendance in Iranian school in Britain *

Mark only one oval.

- Weekdays program In I.R. Iran School
- Sunday school in I.R. Iran School
- Other Iranian private school
- Other: _____

Skip to question 11

Specialised
descriptive
questions

In the following ten questions, you are kindly requested to reply to the questions in more detail, expressing your views and comments as a ' young practicing British Iranian Shia Muslim living in London (YPBI)'. Thank you so much for sharing your views and ideas with me.

11. 1- Have your social, cultural, and religious expectations from the Islamic *organisations based in London been fulfilled so far? Do you have any more suggestions? Please explain.

12. 2- Have you been involved in Islamic activities in general and ‘Shia Islam related’ issues in particular in the framework of intercultural communication? Please give further elaboration. *

13. 3-Considering the increasing number of the Muslim population in the UK, *(Including Shia Muslims) do you like to be involved more in social and political activities as a YPBI? Please explain your concern positively or negatively.

14. 4- Have you, as a YPBI, experienced any form of double-standard or discrimination from non-Muslims or non-Iranians in the UK? *

15. 5-You are considered as a believer and practicing devoted Shia Muslim living in * London. Do these attributes give you more emotional security and confidence in your daily life? Please expand this more if you want.

16. 6- Have you experienced any kind of stereotype feeling (negatively or positively) of being British-Iranian in the process of intercultural communication? *

17. 7- As a YPBI, what are/were your main criteria for marriage, such as religiosity, nationality, and ethnic background, or any other factors. Please explain if you don't mind. *

18. 8- Have you experienced any difficulty in performing your religious practices and rituals such as praying, fasting, and attending Muharram festival? Please explain your experiences. *

19. 9- What is your preferred identity? Do you like the hyphenated identity of * British – Iranian would be officially recognised, like British – Indian or British-Bangladeshi?

20. 10- By living in Britain we are involved in our daily affairs with the rest of the *society in social, legal, and economic domains. As a YPBI can you be culturally integrated with them as well? Please explain if you agree or not agree.

Thank you
message
and
additional
comments
you might
have !

I am fully grateful to you for spending your valuable time to complete this questionnaire which will be dealt with confidentially. I am sure your answers and comments will add to the quality of this research and hopefully will result to have a more respectful and successful community of British - Iranians in the United Kingdom, and elsewhere in the world. May Allah Ta'ala gives you, health, prosperity, success in your Donya and Akhira !

21. Additional message or comments that you might have!
