

**Understanding How Izzat Impacts  
The Lived Experiences of Young  
Muslim Pakistani Women in the UK:  
A Phenomenological Approach.**

CERISSE GUNASINGHE – U0824188

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*“For to be free is not merely to cast off one’s chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others”*

**- Nelson Mandela**

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# List of Abbreviations

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IPA – Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

NHS - National Health Service

UK – United Kingdom

# Abstract

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Literature has documented how cultural practices, (in particular izzat), impact the day-to-day lived experiences of South Asian women. It is evident that such beliefs and value-systems can affect the psychological well-being and experiences of distress of these individuals.

This study intended to explore how six young second generation Pakistani Muslim women understand izzat, what role if any, it has in their lives and whether there is an interplay between upholding the cultural codes and the participants' help-seeking strategies for psychological distress.

A qualitative research method was adopted whereby semi-structured interviews were conducted and transcribed. The data was collected and analysed through the use of an Interpretative Phenomenological Analytic framework. Analysis of the interview transcripts identified three main themes: - 1) Upholding the Rules of Izzat, 2) Speaking Out/Getting Help and 3) Negotiating Tensions.

In conclusion, the study findings highlighted the various ways in which izzat was interpreted by the participants and the implications these cultural codes have for strategies in managing or the silencing of psychological distress. Interviews with the study participants also illustrate the dilemmas and tensions that the participants experience when considering codes of izzat (personal and familial) and how these are negotiated to enable young Pakistani women to self-manage or seek help when experiencing psychological distress. The analysis also highlights possible life experiences that might lead to self-harm and attempted suicide in young Pakistani Muslim women. It was noted that cultural practices of izzat appear to vary over time



as individuals are exposed to alternative cultural practices or coping strategies, yet can also be mediated by and individual's country of birth or residence.

The findings were found to support and advance existing research, which suggests that codes of izzat mediate the resources and help-seeking strategies Pakistani Muslim women utilise to maintain and manage their psychological well-being. Suggestions for further research and implications for practice are discussed.

# Chapter 1: Introduction

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## **1.1 Introduction**

Cultural practices (and codes) are not only considered to impact the day-to-day lives of individuals but also the experience of psychological well-being and the experience of mental health difficulties. Furthermore, these codes often mediate the coping and help-seeking strategies utilised to manage such experiences. This chapter offers an introduction and critical appraisal of the existing literature in this area. Following on from a review of the literature, the researcher will identify a gap in our knowledge and a rationale for the study research questions in reference to the role of izzat and its interplay between help-seeking strategies for emotional distress in young Pakistani Muslim women living in the United Kingdom (UK).

## **1.2 Literature Review**

### **1.2.1 South Asian migration to the UK**

In the 2011 census of England and Wales, it was found that those from a South Asian country of origin were the second largest ethnic group living in the UK. This was identified as 7.5% of the total population an increase, from 4% since 2001. There is much ethnic religious and cultural diversity within this subgroup, but it is typically made up of individuals from Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri-Lanka, with a small percentage from other Asian origin (Office of National Statistics, 2011).

The fall of the British Raj and the subsequent creation of Pakistan in 1947 and Bangladesh in 1971 from India, resulted in millions of people travelling across the borders and many emigrating to the UK (Peach, 2006). Peach (2006) outlined in detail how migration to the UK occurred in the 50 years between 1951 and 2001.

Interestingly, the author reported that individuals from South Asian countries often preserve much of their cultural heritage and many of their practices even though they have moved away from their country of origin hence, leading to the formation of diaspora populations outside of South Asian countries (Peach, 2006). Research has suggested that allegiance to cultural practices of the country of origin is stronger in first generation immigrants and has a tendency to become diluted in subsequent generations (Dwyer, 2000). South Asian women were thought to arrive in the UK later than men (Peach, 2006). In particular Pakistani women migrated to Britain before Indian women, either to join their families or take up employment (Brah, 1996) and to “better themselves” through further education (Robinson & Carey, 2000). Studies have shown that young Asian girls perform well in their GCSEs (Connolly, 2006) and in further education (Department of Education, 2010). In addition, over the years many Asian women have had successful professional careers (Dhaliwal, 1998).

However, there is a significant amount of literature that suggests migration can impact the psychological well-being of individuals, in particular challenging their personal and ethnic identity (Preece, 2006) and the experience of psychological and social adjustment (Bhugra et al, 1999), to name but two. These processes can also be difficult, perhaps to a lesser degree, for individuals born in Britain, whose parents originated from South Asian countries (Faver, Narang & Bhadha, 2002). One of the key issues for second generation British Asians is the development of their cultural identity. Literature relevant to the scope of this research study are outlined and critiqued below.

### **1.2.2 The Self, Cultural identity and Collectivism**

According to Erikson (1959), a person's sense of identity, (the philosophical question being "Who am I?"), is developed through the negotiation and resolution of the "psychosocial crisis" of identity versus role confusion. During this life stage, Erikson theorised that an individual would experiment with various versions of their self in a number of contexts in order to ascertain one whole, integrated, reliable and secure identity. Some other self-reflections are "What values should I live by?" or "What do I believe in?" Erikson went on to suggest that this process may evolve at an increased pace for adolescents who take on the morals and belief systems of their parents (Erikson, 1968). This is often witnessed in more conventional or traditional cultures, where children are less likely to be given the freedom to explore and develop their own self-identity. An extension of self-identity is one's cultural identity or the extent to which a person feels connected to, and shaped by their cultural group.

It is well known that there is vast ethnic, cultural and religious diversity amongst the populations who fall under the umbrella term of "South Asian". However, literature has suggested that what is commonly seen in such areas is collectivism. Hence, individuals from South Asia are more likely to exhibit conventional gender characteristics, attributing importance to the wider family network, respect for older family members and interdependence within the family and the community (Faver, et al, 2002). Furthermore, the principles underlying the beliefs and behaviours of individuals within these populations are oriented towards what are in the best interests of the wider group (or community), above and beyond the personal interests of the individual (known as individualism) (Triandis, 1989). These practices are seen to

be preserved even when South Asian individuals reside away from their country of origin.

It appears that many South Asian women from collectivist cultures are positioned in roles where they are regarded as inferior to men. They face restrictions in their education and in taking up paid employment, an expectation to take responsibility for the home and the upbringing of their children. The social interactions and interpersonal relationships of South Asian women are constrained, in that the majority of women are married at a young age and dating before marriage is frowned upon by immediate family members, extended family and the wider community. Normative behaviours (that are regarded as right and acceptable, particularly with regards to social interaction), of those from an Indian ethnic background, are largely determined by the notion of *izzat*. *Izzat* is not only associated with an individual but with the family as a whole. The researcher does not suggest that the concept of *izzat* to be the only cultural or religious code/practice to impact the lives of South Asian women. Due to the scope of this project and as previous research (as outlined below) has indicated, a deeper and rich understanding of *izzat* is not available in clinical research literature.

### **1.2.3 Defining izzat**

There are various definitions of the term '*izzat*'. Takhar (2005) states that *izzat* translates as "honour", "self-respect" and "prestige" (Takhar, 2005, p. 186). In her observations of Indian culture, Takhar (2005) suggests that the behaviour of women is predominantly determined by *izzat*. For example, if a woman chooses to pursue her own needs over her family's wishes then she risks losing the support of her family. Therefore many South Asian women sacrifice their own desires for the sake of their family's *izzat*, "all measures are taken to preserve the *izzat* of the family...whatever the

cost” (Takhar, 2005, p. 187). Family dishonour can have an impact on immediate and extended members of the family and it is therefore crucial that women of South Asian origin behave “accordingly”. It can be seen here that *izzat* dictates the obligations of women in a social context. “On an everyday-level, social behaviour and practice are more prominent than the beliefs of a group.” (Takhar, 2005, pp173-187). Similarly, Gilbert, Gilbert & Sanghera (2004) documented how *izzat* originates from cultures in the Indian subcontinent and Pakistan. Although each language spoken within South Asian countries might offer different words for ‘respect’ ‘honour’ or ‘prestige’, the literature suggests that *izzat* (and the practices associated with the concept) translates across the diversity of cultures and religious practices amongst these individuals. Furthermore, the authors describe the concept to mean “family shame”. In their paper, Gilbert et al (2004) also indicated how these processes relate to men, whereby their experiences of shame and dishonour are related to their inability to take “control of women’s sexuality and her body.” (Gilbert et al, 2004, p. 110). Men are considered to be dishonourable if they are unable to “control” female family members or those in the community to the point of permitting murder in the name of ‘Honour’ (Honour killings) of female members of their family (Gilbert et al, 2004, p.110). In her book ‘Daughters of Shame’, Jasvinder Sanghera defined *izzat* as “the cornerstone of the Asian community and since the beginning of time it’s been the job of girls and women to keep it polished. And that’s really hard because so many things can tarnish it” (Sanghera, 2009, p. 25).

#### **1.2.4 Acculturation and Assimilation**

According to Bhugra et al (1999), acculturation is a change-process that can typically occur in individuals, when they are exposed to an alternative culture. This often takes place for those of the minority cultural group but can also prompt change in the

majority. Berry (1997) outlined a model of the acculturation process which suggested that those who immigrate can be categorised based on how they relate to both their cultural heritage and the new culture in which they reside. The first of these categories is that of an “integrated identity” whereby individuals are able to take on the beliefs and practices of both cultures. Secondly, if both sets of cultural practices are dismissed this results in a “marginalised identity”. Thirdly, if the newly encountered cultural practices are more favourable to the individual/s, they are considered to possess “assimilated identity”. The fourth identity is one of “traditionalism”, where the individual’s cultural practices of their country of origin are preferred over those where they currently reside (Berry, 1997, pp5-34).

Alternatively, prior to the literature of Bhugra et al (1999) and Berry (1997), Stopes-Roe & Cochrane (1987) investigated the multi-faceted process of assimilation and suggested that there are three types of these processes, e.g. cultural, structural and identificational. Similarly to acculturation, cultural assimilation has been defined as the way in which individuals in the ethnic minority take on the practices and belief systems of the majority (Stopes-Roe & Cochrane, 1987). What is interesting about this survey based study was that it extended the work of Gordan (1964) and found that there were generational, gender and ethnicity (defined as religious affiliation) differences in the extent to which an individual from a minority group feels assimilated with the majority. Hence, second generation as opposed to first generation, Hindu as opposed to Sikh (and Muslim), males as opposed to females, were more likely to feel assimilated than the comparative groups (Stopes-Roe & Cochrane, 1987). As can be seen from this study, there are notable differences in the experiences of individuals within this sub-group of the British population. These findings also challenge

stereotypes or assumptions made about the homogeneity of this ethnic group and individual experiences of those within it (Johnson & Nadirshaw, 1993).

A more recent qualitative study by Preece (2006) further highlights the diversity of experience of individuals who fall under the various South Asian ethnic groups readily used by numerous institutions and services in Britain. Furthermore, Siân Preece (2006) illustrated both the commonalities and variation of experience in a small number of British Asian undergraduate students in London, who completed in-depth interviews about the extent to which their multilingual interactions impacted their lived experiences and relationships with those around them. The participants in this study, whose parents originated from South Asian countries, labelled themselves as 'British Asian', yet it was suggested that they did not experience this similarly, i.e. one participant was considered to take on a 'transnational' identity/position (a sense of self in both London and Pakistan), one participant developed his 'sense of self' in London as opposed to Kenya and the other considered himself as "ambivalent" about his London and Pakistani identity (Preece, 2006).

#### **1.2.5 Cultural conflict.**

As discussed above, collectivist or traditionalist values and practices can be seen in second generation British Asians, which are typically learnt from previous generations, the community (diaspora) in which they live and from authoritarian figures (Faver, et al, 2002; Triandis, 1989). Alternatively, British Asians might choose to integrate or fully adopt customs of the dominant culture. For many establishing an identity is easily achieved, however for some this can be complex and more challenging.

Nazroo (1997) illustrated rates of common mental disorders in Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi women in the UK as 2.5% which was less when compared to Caucasian



women (4.8%). In addition, migrant women were found to have higher rates of depression than non-migrant women. However, interestingly, when separated out, Pakistani women had comparative rates of depression to their Caucasian counterparts (Nazroo, 1997). The author suggested that this was indicative of ethnic differences in the prevalence of depression within the sample studied. These findings also highlight that when South Asian women are grouped together as a population the incidence of common mental disorders appears to be less. However, the rates of depression in Pakistani women are just as high as for Caucasian women, perhaps suggesting that these individuals may be subjected to more adversity than those of Indian or Bangladeshi origin. Contrary to this more recent finding, it was previously identified that young South Asian women between 1988 and 1992 were 2-3 times more at risk of suicide and self-harm than the national average in England and Wales (Soni Raleigh, 1996). This could be indicative of processes of 'acculturative stress' as proposed by Berry (1997) and Bhugra (2003).

A series of studies co-authored by Dinesh Bhugra highlighted that "family pressure and abuse" (Hicks & Bhugra, 2003), "cultural conflict" as defined by the authors as the transition to and from cultural practices of the east and west (Bhugra, Baldwin, Desai, Jacob & Baldwin, 1999b) and the family expectations of women acquiring an education and professional career together with maintaining traditional gender specific roles were contributors of suicidal acts in British South Asian women, including second generation females, (Bhugra et al, 1999b; Bhugra, 2003; Hicks & Bhugra, 2003).

More recently, the American based study conducted by Inman (2006) used various questionnaire measures to assess the effect ethnic and racial identity had on cultural conflict within interpersonal relationships and gender specific roles of first (63

participants) and second (130 participants) generation South Asian women. The study concluded that for those in the second generation, the more religiously affiliated the participants in study were, the more likely they were to hold onto their ethnic culture which in turn impacted on the conflict in their relationships. It was also found within the same study sample that the more “dissonance” experienced in racial identity, the more likely that these individuals experienced conflict in taking up gender-role expectations. With regards to the first generation South Asian women, conflict within intimate relationships was found in those who were more aligned to their ethnic heritage. Whereas Nazroo (1997) found moderate rates of depression in Pakistani women, Inman (2006) research sample mainly consisted of Indian or Indian-American individuals and only a small proportion of individuals from Pakistan. Hence, issues around acculturation and cultural conflict are not specific to one nationality, yet a thorough understanding of the nature of the difficulties is sparse in the existing literature.

In his brief review of the literature investigating the impact of the “clash of cultures” on Asian females living in western countries, Paul S. Guman (2005) called for a fuller understanding of “culture conflict, acculturation and dual socialisation, formation of personal and social identities, self-image and coping strategies” (Guman, 2005, pp620-622). Although there has been development in theory and research, which explains the interplay of establishing (or not) self-identity versus cultural identity and psychological well-being, much of the literature fails to provide information about the subjective experience and its meaning for individuals that belong to this sub-group of the British population. A further limitation of the literature is that the authors, many of whom acknowledge the diversity within this ethnic group, often make generalisations which may not always apply to Pakistani Muslim women.

### **1.2.6 Providing psychological intervention for South Asian women**

One of the real concerns facing the National Health Service (NHS) in the UK was improving access to psychological therapies to those of Black and minority ethnic backgrounds (National Health Service, 2009) and attempting to meet the healthcare needs of these groups. It is suggested that factors which impact the well-being of these individuals, such as family tensions, acculturation, difficulties accessing healthcare, racism, or socio-economic status are not always assessed when considering the healthcare needs of ethnic minorities and how best to support these groups (McKenzie, 2008).

As outlined previously in this chapter, research has produced conflicting evidence in the prevalence of psychological distress in South Asian individuals. A possible reason for the inconsistency when identifying common mental disorders and the variation in rates of prevalence could be that western diagnostic measures may not capture the differences that might exist (McKenzie, 2008). Nazroo (1997) and Anand & Cochrane (2005), made the suggestion that the instruments used in western practice and research, to assess the presence and severity of mental illness, are not always appropriate for those in non-western cultures. They can illustrate a limited picture of the nature of an individual's experience of mental health difficulties particularly of those in South Asian groups. Nazroo (1997) also highlighted the challenge of translating concepts accurately in South Asian languages.

In addition, as highlighted by James & Prilleltensky (2000), there is significant stigma associated with engaging in psychotherapy and therefore a 'good person' chooses not to see a mental health professional for help or that 'good families' do not disclose family conflict to outsiders. Furthermore, James & Prilleltensky (2002) argue that we need to be critical about the way in which we apply theory to practice when working

with individuals from diverse ethnic backgrounds. The authors propose that our existing diagnostic categories and psychotherapy interventions are socially constructed and there are erroneous assumptions that symptom clusters and prognosis are universal. As a result, this reduces their validity across all cultures. James & Prilleltensky (2002) propose that 'the social course of illness is shaped by the local world of the afflicted'. Therefore the individual's context, which includes relationships, what is morally at risk, adverse life-events and social support, all affect the way symptoms are experienced and the extent to which they are problematic. In conclusion, it is apparent that researchers often neglect the cultural context of the individual in their work (Bhugra & Desai, 2002).

### **1.2.7 Identifying psychological well-being and distress**

For a number of years there has been debate about the extent of psychological distress or whether mental health difficulties exist in South Asian populations. Early research suggested that there are lower rates of mental illness in Asian people due to their 'cultural resilience' in dealing with adversity and South Asians have been reported to be psychologically healthier, in comparison to British groups (Cochrane & Stopes Roe, 1981; Anand & Cochrane, 2005; Nazroo, 1997). In their review of existing research, Hsu et al (2004) highlighted that it is possible that resilience and protective variables in South East Asian refugees, which may serve as barriers against developing mental health difficulties. Such protective variables include social, personal and familial resources and individual coping strategies (Hsu et al, 2004).

A further illustration of how resilience in South Asian individuals can be protective and help maintain psychological well-being was seen in a two-phase research study was

conducted by Lee (2003) in America. The author investigated whether ethnic identity<sup>1</sup> and other-group orientation<sup>2</sup> (as previously described by Phinney, (1992), impacted the negative psychological and social effects of “personal ethnic” and “minority group” discrimination in sixty-seven (study 2) Indian-American undergraduate students. This study showed that the more ethnic identity and other-group orientation the participants displayed the more likely they were to experience psychological well-being and the more resilient they were to discrimination (Lee, 2003).

However, there is a body of evidence that has examined whether a partial explanation for the lower prevalence of psychological distress can attributed to there being cultural differences in the conceptualisation of this experience. Malik (2000) interviewed 60 adult males and 60 adult females, who either migrated from Pakistan or were of Pakistani origin and born in the UK. This study intended to prompt discussions including how they would identify this experience as (name/label), the causes of distress, possible outcomes and what would elevate (“cure”) it. The participants generally related distress/depression to situations or relationships they had with others as opposed to being a subjective experience occurring within the self (Malik, 2000). It was also found in this study, and well documented elsewhere, that those from Asian cultural backgrounds are more likely to report somatic symptoms which they attribute to a non-organic cause (distress-related), (Anand & Cochrane, 2005; Karasz, 2005), therefore suggesting there are cultural variations in the content and interpretation of symptoms related to psychological and emotional distress.

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<sup>1</sup>The definition of ethnic identity referred to - “individual’s acquisition and retention of cultural characteristics that are incorporated into one’s self-concept and develops in the context of the individual belonging to a minority ethnic group within the larger society.” (Lee, 2003, p133)

<sup>2</sup> The definition of other-group orientation was “the extent to which Asian Americans identify with other ethnic groups” (Lee, 2002, p134).

### **1.2.8 Experience of psychological distress in South Asian women**

There have been studies which have measured psychological distress in Asian individuals as being equal to or even higher than Caucasians (Bhui, Bhugra, Goldberg, Dunn & Desai, 2001 & Weich et al, 2004) and thus provided an update to empirical evidence of the prevalence of common mental disorders in the Asian population in UK. Particularly, Bhui et al (2001) found higher rates of 'depressive ideas' (worthlessness, hopelessness and suicidal ideas) in Punjabis compared to English participants. Although both these studies are valuable in detecting psychological distress in the Asian population in the UK, they have to be considered with caution as the research failed to capture alternative/culture specific ways in which psychological distress may be reported. This is possibly due to the western standardised clinical interviews used to measure and classify common mental disorders being unsuitable when applied to the diversity of experience in various cultures (Bhui et al, 2001 and Weich et al, 2004).

Chew-Graham, Bahir, Chantler, Burman & Batsleer (2002) used qualitative methods where four focus groups were held with 31 women, aged between 17 and 50 years from Bangladesh, Pakistan and one participant from India. The researchers investigated the experiences of psychological distress in their South Asian female participants. The researchers identified that there was insufficient literature that explored the experiences of individuals. Analysis of their discussions suggested that there were a number of themes (*Izzat* – honour/respect, community grapevine, racism, English language problems and social, political and economic pressures) which contributed to psychological distress (depression, mood swings and anger) which were in line with previous research by Malik (2000) and Hussain & Cochrane (2004). These were identified by the researchers as 'external pressures' or 'systemic issues' and,

alongside social isolation, were considered to be associated with attempted suicide and self-harm in these participants.

Chew-Graham et al (2002), made attempts to understand the perceptions held by South Asian women towards psychological distress, self-harm and suicide in the context of their culture and experience, which previous literature had failed to do. However, the extent to which their findings are applicable to the sample and wider population is questionable. The researcher's use of an interpreter in the data collection process and using the notes they had made during the interviews to identify themes in their analyses may have resulted in the researchers excluding information disclosed by participants due to it being lost in translation. Therefore, this may have affected the conclusions drawn from the data collected. Also, the researchers identified one of their limitations as being that their research interests were biased towards experiences of their participants in regard to mental health difficulties and not mental wellness. Weich et al (2004), highlight that it is not certain whether there are 'protective' features of South Asian communities that contribute to 'good mental health' and the study by Chew-Graham et al (2002) does not offer any further contribution to this gap in knowledge.

A more recent qualitative study by Gilbert et al, (2004) investigated South Asian women's understanding of shame, subordination and entrapment. They also set out to identify whether these concepts related to mental health difficulties and strategies for seeking support. These researchers recruited women from both Indian and Pakistani ethnic backgrounds to participate in three focus groups, which were separated into three age groups. Each group was presented with vignettes which were used to facilitate discussions around the concept of izzat, shame, subordination and

entrapment. The researchers found that izzat, identified as “family shame” had a significant impact on the lives of South Asian women, in particular concerns about causing shame to their families or the community and least of all to themselves. The study also demonstrated that entrapment was also associated with izzat. Hence, in maintaining the izzat of the family and following cultural practices that have been handed down the family through older generations, Asian women might experience this as retaining a subordinate role. Furthermore, the South Asian women in this study regarded the experience of entrapment to be as a result of being abused and were not able to discuss this (in order to avoid family shame), felt subordinated and were not able to access support. Some participants reported that suicide was more favourable than to escape the abuse, jeopardising the izzat and being held responsible. Lastly, the research stated that izzat, shame, subordination and entrapment were all factors that mediated whether South Asian women could seek help. It was highlighted however, that there are variations within families and the extent to which they engage with the rules of izzat (Gilbert et al, 2004).

This study’s finding that suicide was regarded as a strategy for coping with abuse (Gilbert et al, 2004) was particularly interesting as literature has suggested that suicide is generally considered as either unlawful or as religiously or culturally unacceptable for South Asian individuals. For example, within Islam suicide is forbidden and it is considered that this is the reason why it is unlawful and socially unacceptable particularly for Muslims (Khan & Waheed, 2009). Christianity also considers suicide to be unlawful and sinful. Sikhs believe that ‘suicide in the face of misery and misfortune implies lack of faith in the goodness and righteousness of God’, (Bhatia, 2002). For Hindus, suicide is now considered unlawful. However, ancient texts permitted suicide



for religious reasons and death was considered 'the beginning of a new life' (Bhugra & Desai, 2002 & Khan & Waheed, 2009).

These studies by Chew-Graham et al (2002) and Gilbert et al (2004) are valuable in helping to develop an understanding of the way South Asian women might experience psychological distress and mental health difficulties. The authors were able to collect information about how culture mediates possible sources of distress, how it is experienced by individuals and their perceptions of seeking help and possible coping strategies. Both research groups highlighted the significance of izzat and the impact such cultural practices have on the experience of psychological distress, which previous research had not identified. Further merits of such research was their use of focus groups, which appeared to enable individuals to discuss issues of a sensitive nature in conditions that are closer to real-life than in quantitative studies. Also, as Kitzinger (1995) asserts, focus group discussions can also be useful in cross-cultural research, in that they allow for cultural codes and behaviours to be emphasized. However, the extent to which group discussions ascertain the depth and breadth of individual experience is questionable and a major limitation of such research methods (Morgan & Spanish, 1984). When reading both pieces of work by Chew-Graham et al (2002) and Gilbert et al (2004), it was apparent that the authors made significant contributions to research in their respective areas however; there was a sense that the felt experience of the individuals who took part in the studies was not captured or adequately reported. Particularly, Gilbert et al (2004) demonstrated that South Asian women take up subordinate roles in their attempts to not cause shame to themselves or others. However it was unclear as to whether the participants themselves experienced it as such or whether this was determined by the researchers. In addition, there was a quantitative feel to the work of Chew-Graham et al (2002) whereby they

appeared to take a rather reductionist approach to the collection and analysis of their data which may have resulted in the real-life experiences of their participants not being fully conveyed to the reader.

### **1.2.9 Implications for help-seeking and coping strategies**

Johnson & Nadirshaw (1993) asserted that there appeared to be limitations in existing psychological service provision for South Asian populations. The authors recommended that mental health professionals review whether their therapeutic theories and interventions were appropriate for individuals from South Asian ethnic backgrounds. The authors suggested “transcultural or transracial” models as ways of attending to the psychological needs of this population. A model of this approach was proposed by d’Ardenne & Mahtani (1999) and listed the following as being important components:

“Counsellors’ sensitivity to the cultural variations and the cultural bias of their approach;

Counsellors’ grasp of cultural knowledge of their clients;

Counsellors’ ability and commitment to develop an approach to counselling that reflects the cultural needs of their clients;

Counsellors’ ability to face increased complexity in working across cultures. This does not mean that such work entails more problems. On the contrary a properly developed transcultural approach will enrich the skills of all counsellors”

(d’Ardenne & Mahtani, 1999, p6)

Similarly to Johnson & Nadirshaw (1993) yet over a decade later, Williams, Turpin & Hardy (2006) identified that individuals with mental health difficulties from ethnic minority groups remained not equally represented in clinical psychology services.

However, it is not entirely clear what the real causes of the inequality in accessing these services are and that the reasons for this are complex. In their review, Williams et al (2006) suggested possible reasons as to why those from ethnic minorities are less likely to engage in psychological services. These were said to be due to the care pathways to these services not being attuned to the psychological needs of these individuals (e.g. suitable referrals, or client preferences in their therapist) and recommendations made for such interventions or uninformed judgements about these populations. The authors also found that ethnic minority groups who require psychological support might have concerns about whether “cultural religious and spiritual values” or experiences of racial discrimination will be taken into account in practitioner’s assessments and interventions. In addition, a significant issue for ethnic minority groups was that their experiences would be deemed as abnormal/disease-related and the stigma associated with this. McKenzie (2008) also highlights the debate about whether the failure to take up psychological services by ethnic minority groups is through choice or whether ethnic minorities have difficulty receiving treatment for common mental disorders, do not receive the same treatment or have negative experiences of mental health services. This is in line with Williams et al’s (2006) finding that there was a lack of trust in the profession which in turn is a barrier to seeking mental health services.

There is limited literature which has investigated the extent to which izzat impacts on young South Asian women’s choices to seek help or the coping strategies they draw upon in order to manage psychological distress. It is suggested that factors which impact the well-being of these individuals such as, family tensions, acculturation, difficulties accessing healthcare, racism, or socio-economic status are not always

assessed when considering the healthcare needs of ethnic minorities and how best to support these groups (McKenzie, 2008). However, as mentioned previously, James & Prilleltensky's asserts that stigma associated with psychotherapy and the interplay of cultural value-systems in disclosing personal or familial experiences (James & Prilleltensky, 2000) poses a challenge in meeting the healthcare needs of this population (Johnson & Nadirshaw, 1993).

It also appears that there are differences in the ways in which Asian people seek help and the coping strategies that they employ. Chew-Graham et al (2002) suggested that self-harm in those included in the study was viewed as a way of coping with mental distress. In addition, Anand & Cochrane (2005), provide a comprehensive presentation of research into the mental health status of South Asian women in Britain. They suggest there is insufficient knowledge and understanding of the role of alternative help seeking behaviours, coping strategies and the effect of traditional beliefs and cultural practices when individuals are experiencing mental health difficulties. The researchers also propose that a complete and broad understanding of distress, as experienced by South Asian women, is not available to practitioners.

In summary, this review of the literature has shown that although suicide is considered unlawful and/or culturally unacceptable, young South Asian women in the UK remain a group who are at risk of suicide (Bhugra & Desai, 2002; Raleigh & Polato, 2004, Anand & Cochrane, 2005, Hussain, & Cochrane, 2004; Khan & Waheed, 2009). Some of these studies have found Pakistani women at an increased risk of self-harm. Considering the low take up of services despite the risks of suicide or self-harm, it is important that healthcare professionals are aware of how best to facilitate the psychological well-being of these individuals.

There is very little literature that explores the experiences of young South Asian women in relation to the codes of izzat and how this in turn impacts their lives, with exception of the work of Chew-Graham et al (2002) and Gilbert et al (2004). In the absence of this we are not able to fully understand the role of izzat in the conceptualisation and lived experience of psychological distress and are therefore limited in our understanding of psychological distress in the context of culture. Hence the researcher endeavours to further develop this area of research and attending to the limitations previously identified. As seen in much of the existing literature, researchers have typically recruited multi-national, cultural and religious groups of participants and categorised them as South Asian. In turn, this gives rise to stereotypes and judgements being made and little attention is paid to the uniqueness and inter-subjectivity that exists within these ethnicities. Therefore the researcher has selected a methodology which warrants the exploration of lived experiences of a homogenous group in order to address such issues. Ultimately we are limited in the culturally sensitive approaches we develop and employ when working with young Pakistani Muslim women and it is hoped that this study can offer insights and understanding of this area. As a result the researcher poses the research questions below:

### **1.3 Research Questions**

- 1) How do young second generation Muslim Pakistani women understand the meaning of izzat and what role if any, does it have in their lives?
- 2) What is the interplay between upholding the codes of izzat and these participants' help-seeking strategies for emotional distress?

The first research question aims to understand and develop a set of meanings that the participants in this study have developed for the concept of izzat. This is with the aim of identifying this concept and demonstrating the extent to which these codes of practice, embedded in the ethnic culture are being used, modified and adapted in their current life and practices.

The second question aims to generate narratives that have direct implications for the counselling psychology profession. Previous literature looking at codes of practices such as izzat have shown that the participants' engagement with their culture has a direct impact in shaping their view of mental health services, their understanding of the usefulness of mental health services and the actual practice of accessing psychological support (Bhugra & Desai, 2002; Raleigh & Polato, 2004, Anand & Cochrane, 2005, Hussain, & Cochrane, 2004; Khan & Waheed, 2009). It appears that izzat is a concept that touches not only at heart of the individual, but also the family and the community. Through understanding how izzat impacts help-seeking strategies for psychological distress, we may be able to inform how counselling psychologists and other professionals in caring roles can appropriately support young Pakistani Muslim women.

#### **1.4 Relevance to Counselling Psychology**

As counselling psychologists we endeavour to facilitate health and well-being. Rather than restricting ourselves to treatment protocols, we aim to be flexible and focus on developing interventions that are best suited to the individual (Johnson & Nadirshaw, 1993). The data collected from this study will inform practitioners of the impact of cultural variations in mental health difficulties, specifically how psychological wellness and distress is experienced in the context of cultural codes/value systems (izzat).

Counselling psychologists may refer to this work in extending their understanding and use its findings to inform their own practice.

### **1.5 An Original/Distinctive Contribution to the Discipline**

This project may be of use in the development of a more culturally sensitive approach for working therapeutically with South Asian women, that can also be empathetic and accepting of the challenges they face. By exploring the meaning and lived experiences of izzat (honour) in young Pakistani Muslim women, it is hoped that this can deepen our understanding and inform practice. In addition, this study will attempt to gather information about whether such cultural practices mediate the strategies Pakistani Muslim women use to maintain psychological well-being and cope with psychological distress. Research has previously focussed on the cultural group as a whole. However, this research is an attempt to place value on the perspectives and experiences of the individual which is at the root of our work as counselling psychologists. In turn, we can look at ways in which to facilitate good therapeutic relationships with this client group. Such knowledge will also enable us to take a step towards reviewing whether existing assessments tools and therapeutic approaches are appropriate.

# Chapter 2: Methodology

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## 2.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the rationale for applying a qualitative methodology, specifically an Interpretative Phenomenological Analytic framework (IPA) to this research study. The research method is described including how participants were recruited, which participants were included in the study, the process of data collection and analysis and how the researcher addressed issues of reliability, validity and ethical considerations.

As previously outlined, there is limited research which has investigated the depth and breadth of the lived experiences of young South Asian women in relation to the codes of izzat and how this in turn impacts their lives. In absence of this we are not able to fully understand the role of izzat in the construct of psychological distress and are therefore limited in what informs our understanding of psychological distress in the context of culture. In an attempt to address this gap in the literature and in adherence to epistemological positioning, the researcher has provided a more comprehensive rationale for the implementation of the chosen methodological framework for this study below:

## 2.2 Research Paradigm

Morrow & Smith (2000) suggested that in order to produce good enough research, which is of quality, trustworthiness and credibility, the researcher should have awareness of their epistemological positioning, ground their research within this position and be mindful of it throughout the process (Morrow & Smith, 2000; Haverkamp & Young, 2007). Epistemology, or 'theory of knowledge' as it is sometimes referred to, is a division of philosophy that examines knowledge especially with



regards to its methods, validity and scope. It aims to answer questions like how can we know what we know (Lyons & Coyle, 2007). It also raises questions like, what is knowledge, how is knowledge acquired, how do we know what we know, what counts as knowledge? (Smith, 1983).

The area of counselling psychology research has continued to expand over time with the application of a wide range of methodologies. Traditionally, as with other disciplines of psychology, much of the research conducted was through a positivist or post positivist lens and was regarded as the 'received view' (Ponterotto, 2005). Positivist and post-positivist epistemologies are comparable in their aim to identify explanations that lead to prediction and control of a phenomenon. Both nomothetic/positivist frameworks are regarded as useful because of their focus on the cause-effect relationships of phenomena that can be examined, identified and generalised. A further advantage is that these approaches can lead to the development of theories and laws to explain objective phenomenon. Both suggest that the researcher takes an objective, detached role. Furthermore, these epistemologies serve as a primary basis for quantitative research methodology (Ponterotto, 2005). It has been suggested that if the focus of the research is to examine factors that affect or best predict outcome, the effectiveness of a psychological treatment or testing a theory, then a quantitative approach might be most appropriate (Creswell, 2003). However, due to the nature of the approach, the outcome of the research offers a limited acquisition of knowledge and development of understanding. It is difficult to obtain more detailed and in-depth knowledge (Lyons & Coyle, 2007).

Many researchers and scholars have criticised positivist approaches to acquiring knowledge. It could be argued that working within a positivist framework offers a narrow view of human experience as it reduces individuality and complexity to rather simplistic statistical scores (Allport, 1962). Also, normative data and statistical scores that individuals are compared against have often been devised a number of years ago. In addition, it is likely that white middle class men were recruited to these studies and the findings were generalised to the wider population. This resulted in gender, socio-economic and cultural differences not being accounted for (Willig, 2001). It could be argued that this view does not entirely fulfil the ethos of counselling psychology practice, which strives to embrace both phenomenological and scientific frameworks in developing knowledge and its application to practice (Division of Counselling Psychology, Professional Practice Guidelines, 2008). In fact, the discipline tries to pay particular attention to the uniqueness of each individual and how they experience the world.

Phenomenological approaches to research are not new practices. Case studies were conducted and published in the early 1900s as a means of knowledge development (Freud, 1909). However, they were less frequently subscribed to as appropriate research approaches. More recently, counselling psychologists have called for methodological diversity (Morrow, 2005) and has therefore led to the reuptake of, and keen interest in, phenomenology research. Morrow (2005), goes on to suggest that qualitative methods are appropriate to counselling psychology, as they are more closely linked to practice. These methods are also ideal for understanding psychotherapy process in depth (Roth & Fonargy, 1996)

Wertz (2005) highlights that phenomenological research has expanded over time and that there is much overlap between qualitative methods. So, where social constructionists may criticise phenomenology, Wertz (2005) suggests that the expression of language, 'taken-for-granted' realities and culture can be analysed, critiqued and deconstructed. Therefore, making it appropriate for counselling psychology research.

Literature suggests that the interpretative/constructivist epistemology arose from a resistance and opposition to positivism (Willig, 2008,). An alternative to the realist standpoint of positivism, the interpretative-constructivist epistemology moves more towards a relativist position which proposes that there are 'multiple, equally valid social realities' (Haverkamp & Young, 2007). Constructivists endeavour to understand 'lived experiences' from the perspective of the individual as it is constructed in their own mind rather than it being an 'externally singular entity'. In addition, this position advocates a hermeneutical approach – it is possible for the researcher to uncover deeper meaning through the process of deep reflection. Access to this could be achieved by means of researcher-participant dialogue over time (Ponterotto, 2005). Hence, there is more of a focus on the co-constructed and interpretative meaning rather than observing it directly and objectively (Haverkamp and Young, 2007) as considered in positivists. The researcher is mindful of how their own values and beliefs impact the co-construction of meaning. Fundamental to constructivist epistemology is that the objective reality cannot be separated from the person who is experiencing it. These epistemologies are thought to be the conceptual foundations for qualitative research methodology (Ponterotto, 2005; Haverkamp & Young, 2007). Therefore, it

was considered that an interpretative-constructivist position was more in-line with the researcher's own values and beliefs about the acquisition of knowledge.

Criticalists would suggest that 'injustice and subjugation shape the lived world' (Ponterotto, 2005). The main objectives of criticalists are to bring about change and empowerment, for those involved in the research, from restrictive social conditions challenging dominant social structures. The researcher takes on an interactive and proactive role in the research and their beliefs are an obvious and integrated component of the research process. The critical-ideological epistemology underpins qualitative multicultural, feminist and social justice research (Morrow, 2005, Ponterotto, 2005; Haverkamp & Young, 2007). For this reason it might have been considered as an appropriate approach to underpin this study. However, the critical/ideological approach might be criticised for making assumptions of its participants wanting freedom from oppression. Hence, it was considered an ill-fit between the researcher and the current research aims. Although counselling psychologists seek to empower their clients in bringing about change, it might be considered unethical if the practitioner/researcher enforces their own beliefs and values onto the client/participant. Some might deem this as taking advantage of individuals who are in vulnerable positions (Division of Counselling Psychology. Professional Practice Guidelines, 2008).

### **2.2.1 Research design framework**

Due to the nature of the research aims and researcher's epistemological positioning as an interpretative-constructivist, a qualitative research design was most appropriate. The researcher was interested in exploring broad descriptions of the participants' subjective experience, the meaning attributed to such experience and how they

interact with their social world (Silverman, 2005; Willig, 2008). It is hoped that through this process of enquiry, it would facilitate more in depth knowledge than through quantitative paradigms. This study does not seek to make generalisations about populations but to develop a better understanding of inter-subjectivity and create meanings produced by the participants in this study (Willig, 2008).

A possible methodology also underlying the interpretative-phenomenological umbrella is the grounded theory approach as it is concerned with the study of people's meanings, intentions and actions (Charmaz, 2003). However, it also overlaps with positivist principles, whereby it draws upon systematic strategies to explore phenomena. The methodology aims to describe how theoretical models which would then be used to create the codes/categories from individual cases and build towards more abstract conceptual categories or theory. Therefore, grounded theory did not seem congruent with the researcher's ideas of how research could be linked to practice. In addition, there is an existing literature base together with the researcher's personal experience that inevitably impacts the design and conduct of the research project, which is not in line with research adapted from a grounded theory approach.

IPA was considered as more suitable for this study as opposed to discourse analysis, which is another methodology consistent with the principles of qualitative psychology. Its focus would be the language individuals use to position themselves in rather than their cognitions and feelings connected with their experience. Therefore this would change the type of questions that might be asked and the way in which the data collected would be analysed. IPA does allow for attention to be paid to language, but it is not the focus of the process (Smith, 2003). The framework allows the researcher to understand the participant's felt experience and exploring the individual and

subjective experience of their world. The researcher used the types of interview questions and prompts with the intention to gather information about such experiences, for example *“What is it like for you to be living in the UK as part of an Asian family?”* Should the intention of the researcher have been to explore the how young Pakistani Muslim women construct their versions of reality or the discourses available within the culture, then the methodology of discourse analysis would have been more appropriate for the current study.

### **2.2.2 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis**

An IPA research approach to qualitative research as developed by Jonathan Smith (Smith, 2004), incorporates both a theoretical underpinning and sets out a framework as to how qualitative research might be carried out. Interpretative-phenomenological approaches to research take some of its principles from hermeneutics and are intended to gather knowledge of how individuals perceive certain phenomena together with interpretation from the researcher, in what is understood to be the ‘hermeneutic circle’ (Willig, 2008). Therefore, the researcher attempts to understand the meaning of the participant’s lived experience and how this affects their behaviours or choices. In turn, the aims are to describe and make sense of their internal and external world. As aptly written by Van Manen (1990),

“... “facts” of lived experience are always already meaningful (hermeneutically) experiences. Moreover, even the “facts” of lived experience need to be captured in language (the human science text) and this is inevitably an interpretive process.” (Van Manen, 1990, p.181)

IPA helps ascertain the interplay between meaning and lived experience which draws on the philosophy of phenomenology. This study intended to examine individual sense

making as well as collective sense making. IPA endeavours to highlight patterns of meanings that are common across the data (collective meanings) in addition to individual variations and the uniqueness of individual stories. Hence, attending to its roots in idiography. The methodology is especially relevant as it suggests that aspects of an individual's self-image can be illustrated through their narrative of their beliefs and how these are constructed (Smith, 2004). The researcher endeavours to maintain an interpretative connection with the participant's research data in order to develop knowledge of the intricacies of their internal and social world. This project intends to expand the work of Chew-Graham et al (2002) and Gilbert et al (2004) through gathering an in-depth knowledge and establish a pool of common knowledge which can aid the application of a culturally sensitive approach when working therapeutically with Pakistani women.

This research project has direct relevance to the knowledge that counselling psychologists need to have in order to provide a culturally sensitive practice (e.g. how to build trust, developing knowledge of the Pakistani Muslim culture), that is also important in meeting the needs of the clients in everyday practice.

### **2.2.3 Research tool: Semi-structured Interview**

The present study aimed to collate detailed, specific, individual narratives through conducting one-to-one interviews and different to those narratives seen in the previous research studies reviewed previously. It was considered that a semi-structured interview with open-ended questions was the most appropriate research tool for this study. Semi-structured interviews are considered to help facilitate participants' conversations and descriptions of the phenomenon under investigation and their experiences associated with it. However, it is important for the researcher to guide the direction of the interview to ensure that the research questions can be

answered with the data obtained from the interviews, yet allow the participant to share personal insights and new ideas (Willig, 2013, pp29). Seidman (2012) argued that interviews allow for individuals to “tell stories” and illustrative of how they make sense of their experiences, the “meaning-making process” (Seidman, 2013. pp7), which is congruent with the philosophy of phenomenology that underpins IPA (Smith, 2009; Willig, 2008).

#### **2.2.4 Role of the Researcher – A Reflective Note**

Reflexivity is a crucial part of the qualitative research process. This is a process whereby the researcher is transparent about the study, the role the researcher has played in conducting the research, how the data was analysed and motives underlying the application of its findings. There are two types of reflexivity, as outlined by Willig (2001). The first is identified as *personal reflexivity* where the researcher reflects on the possible impact their own experience and its entirety can have on shaping the research and how it is reported. The second form of reflexivity is *epistemological* which encourages the researcher to engage with the theoretical assumptions that are being formulated and the implications this has for the project and the research conclusions.

Establishing an epistemological position has been an evolving process for the researcher since undertaking this research project. Below is a reflective account of how the researcher’s theoretical and methodological position has evolved in the process on conducting this project.

*Spending most of my academic and working career amongst psychiatrists and geneticists, it is not surprising that I developed a rather positivist approach to research. However, during this time there was a sense of unease in my work, where the*



*participants' experiences would be coded, quantified and no attention was given to the felt meaning of the participants' lived experiences.*

*Therefore it seemed reasonable to me to initially propose a research study using a mixed methods research methodology to reconcile my reservations of quantitative methods. Such a research design implies a 'pragmatic' approach to the research question as it allows drawing on both qualitative and quantitative forms of data collection. On one hand the qualitative methods allows exploratory enquiry and richer detail to be gathered, which is crucial in understanding the phenomenon. The quantitative method enables a larger sample to be included so that the findings can be expanded and are more likely to be representative of the target population (Creswell, 2003).*

*On reflection I wondered whether my initial proposal was within the ethos of the discipline and my own position and experience as a trainee counselling psychologist. As a counselling psychologist our practice promotes the collaborative 'helping' relationship between the client and practitioner in the therapeutic encounter. Therefore, moving towards a more humanistic model of the professional-client relationship with less focus on sickness and pathologising people's experiences (Woolfe, Dryden & Strawbridge, 2003). As counselling psychologists, we strive to work effectively and appropriately with ethnic communities, resulting in a need for this profession and other disciplines to adopt a culturally sensitive approach to their work. To achieve this, it has been suggested that we should think critically about existing conceptualisations and social construction of mental health (James & Prilleltensky, 2002) whilst being mindful of 'subjectivity and inter-subjectivity, values and beliefs' (Division of Counselling Psychology, Professional Practice guidelines, 2008) and*

*validating individual experience. Often in my clinical work, a single theoretical model or hypothesis about the client's difficulties is not enough to inform working with a client- One model does not fit all. Therefore, moving towards the position of an interpretative-constructivist appeared a more fitting framework for undertaking my research project. After further thought I established that I was more interested in the subjective experience of individuals and that making generalisations about their experiences was not harmonious with my views and beliefs of the world and people's experiences.*

*In terms of my own, personal life experiences that I bring to this study, both my parents were born in Sri-Lanka but have spent many years living in the UK. My father was brought up in Essex and my mother has lived in East London since she was sixteen. They have both adopted many western cultural practices. However, they do still embrace parts of their Sri-Lankan cultural heritage and patriotism.*

*In hindsight, as a young Asian girl growing up in London I was at times faced with some internal conflict about my own cultural identity. As a woman and during the process of growing older I guess I have come to realise that my cultural identity does not have to be dichotomous. I have been able to negotiate between both Eastern and Western cultures and feel more comfortable as a British-Asian living in the UK. Friends and family have also told me of the difficulties they have faced whilst trying to establish their own cultural identity. It is without a doubt that my own experiences have also been what have motivated me in the conception of this study. It is hoped that in being transparent about these experiences and my attempt to bracket my pre-existing assumptions and judgements, I hope I will attend to the epistemological and*

*methodological principles underpinning this project and be more open to alternative descriptions of my participants lived experiences.*

*Due to the time constraints in which this project needed to be conducted and the sensitive nature of the topic under consideration, I was anxious that I would not recruit a sufficient number of participants for the completion of this study. Therefore I decided to keep my inclusion criteria broad and recruit volunteers whose family originated from South Asia. However, the initial participants who volunteered for this study were Muslim, British Asian women whose parents were born in Pakistan so I decided to homogenise the sample further and modify the inclusion criteria accordingly. I notified the Research Ethics Committee of the changes of title of the study and changes in methodology which were subsequently approved (see Appendix A for confirmation of ethical approval from the committee). It was possible that the concept of izzat was of importance and relevance to Pakistani Muslim women and could partially explain why these individuals responded to the recruitment adverts.*

## **2.3 Participants**

### **2.3.1 Recruitment**

*The first wave of recruitment resulted with five volunteers being recruited to this study.*

*These participants' families had all originated from Pakistan and they were all religiously affiliated to Islam. Although there was a period of a few months where I struggled to find volunteers, I was delighted when these five individuals all came along at once. At this point, I decided to narrow the inclusion criteria and not recruit participants whose families originated from other South Asian countries other than Pakistan. Also, those who did not identify themselves as Muslim' were not included in order to obtain homogeneity in this sample. However, it was considered that*

*interviewing a sixth participant would add to the richness of the data collected. The final participant was the eldest to be included in the study. I was concerned whether the age difference of this participant and her length of time living in England would make the sampling less defined than intended and the research question of less relevance to this individual (Smith, 2009). However, I realised that should this be a finding of this study it would be nonetheless interesting and significant.*

Following ethical approval from the Research Ethics Committee (University of East London) (Appendix B), this study relied on participants volunteering to take part in response to advertisements or invitations from the researcher (see Appendix C). The researcher sought permission from charitable or voluntary organisations to display posters on their premises. The researcher recognised that there may be limited accessibility to participants if solely relying on advertisements due to the sensitivity of the research interests and question. Therefore the researcher considered offering 'Meet and Greet' workshops to local community-based organisations to present this research, as a possible recruitment strategy. The researcher was transparent about the research process by informing potential participants of the research objectives in the information leaflet (Appendix D).

### **2.3.2 Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria**

A purposive homogenous sample was required for this research study. As indicated by Smith (2009), the reasoning behind the sampling method for IPA research studies, is that the research questions need to be of importance and relevant for those who take part. In addition, it would be of little benefit to recruit individuals who were not aware of the cultural codes of izzat and therefore the researcher only recruited individuals for whom this was appropriate. Lastly, the researcher does not intend to make generalisations (Smith, 2009), about all British, South Asian individuals, but explore the

experiences of a smaller sub-group of these populations more closely than has been previously documented. The initial inclusion criteria for this study were as follows: Each participant was required to be born in the UK and their parents born in Pakistan.

### 2.3.3 The sample

This study recruited six British Pakistani Muslim women born in the UK aged 25-40 whose first language was English, as it is the language spoken by the researcher. This was in accordance with Smith (2009). Furthermore literature has suggested that information can be lost in translation of language when using translators (Nazroo, 1997). Table 1 illustrates the demographic information of the study participants.

***Table 1: Demographic information using pseudonyms***

Pseudonym	Age	Marital status	Education level	Employment
Annie	27	Married (1 child)	University degree	Employed
Beth	33	Divorced (2 children)	University degree	Employed
Ellen	27	Married (2 children)	University degree	Employed
Dina	24	Single (0 children)	NVQ	Employed
Nisha	24	Single (0 children)	University degree	Student
Shamima	40	Divorced (2 children)	NVQ	Employed

This study was concerned with both the participants' understanding of izzat and the interplay these cultural practices have on their lived experience. Therefore, the sample required enough participants to generate a variety of meanings but not too many, where this may result in the unsatisfactory analysis of the information collected (Smith, 2009).

## **2.4 Ethical considerations**

### **2.4.1. Code of conduct-**

The researcher endeavoured to abide by the Code of Conduct for practice and research set out by the British Psychological Society, the Division of Counselling Psychology and the University of East London. It has been outlined in these guidelines that the researcher has a duty to conduct research in a way that demonstrates integrity, selflessness, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership (UEL Code of Good Practice in Research, 2008). Permission to place the study advertisement on notice boards at the University of East London, Kings College London and Newham Asian Women's Project was granted.

### **2.4.2 Informed consent-**

Participants were provided with an information sheet outlining the aims and objectives of the study, the reasoning behind the research, how the information they provide will be used and the implications for psychological theory and practice (see Appendix D). This was given alongside an appropriate consent form (see Appendix E), as approved by the Ethics Committee. If the individual was willing to take part, they were asked to sign two copies, one to be retained by the participant and an additional copy for the researcher's record. The research participants were not deceived at any point in this study as the researcher was transparent and honest about the rationale for conducting this piece of work.

### **2.4.3 Protection of participants-**

The researcher has a legal and moral responsibility to the participants and attempted to maintain the well-being and safety of all those involved in the study. Participants were assured that the information they disclosed would remain confidential and not affect their future healthcare. Each participant's digital recordings were made

anonymous and they were given a pseudonym in order to maintain confidentiality. Their data will be stored securely for a period of 10 years from the point of data collection. However, participants were informed that confidentiality will be breached (with the participant's permission) if there was a perceived risk to themselves or others. In the event that the researcher suspected a participant was experiencing distress during their interview, appropriate advice was provided (i.e. suggestion to seek help for their General Practitioner, emergency services or providing telephone numbers of crisis services – see Appendix x), in the event that the individual wishes to seek additional support. None of the participants informed the researcher of a need to seek further support following their participation in this study. The researcher also sought permission from the participant as to whether they were happy to continue part-taking in the research study. One participant became tearful during the interview. The researcher checked with the participant, who reported that they were happy to continue with the interview.

All participants were informed that they had the right to withdraw at any point in the research process and assured that their data will be excluded from the analysis and the data destroyed appropriately. None of the participants withdrew their consent or has withdrawn their consent since their participation in this study.

#### **2.4.4 Debriefing-**

Formal debriefing was not carried out. However, the researcher was aware of the sensitive nature of the research topic and that participation may cause distress or discomfort. The researcher endeavoured to ensure that advice was shared with those where appropriate. The researcher provided contact details of support services (see Appendix D) to all those participating in the study if they required further assistance. In addition, the study's findings were made available at the request of participants.

## **2.5 Data collection**

On receipt of a signed consent form the participant was requested to attend an interview with the researcher at a time and place convenient for both. This study involved conducting semi-structured interviews consisting of open-ended questions. A copy of the researcher's interview schedule is attached in the appendix (see Appendix F). This was aimed to facilitate conversations around the phenomenon of izzat and allow for a range of responses (Smith, 2003). The researcher used an interview schedule as a prompt. The researcher conducted interviews at the University of East London (UEL) or at the participant's home, for confidentiality purposes and privacy of both the researcher and participant. Each interview was digitally recorded using a dictaphone. Once the interview was complete, the researcher invited questions from the participant in reference to the interview and research study. The interviews were transcribed inclusive of non-linguistic elements of conversations as these can also affect the meaning, (Willig, 2001 pp93).

### **2.5.1 Process of Data Analysis**

The researcher began IPA analysis by an in-depth examination of each individual transcript through multiple readings. Comments were added along the right-hand margin of the text, to indicate what was insightful about what the participant had said. During the initial analysis the researcher was mindful of the individual's choice of language, parallels, variation in speech and the language used, repetition, exaggeration and incongruence in the individual's narrative. Ultimately, in the analysis of the transcript the researcher attends to what is being communicated about the individual's sense of self (Smith, 2009).

In further analysis of the transcript the researcher labelled the themes on the margins on the left. Annotations were turned into more accurate sentences trying to



encapsulate what was identified in the whole transcript. The intention here was to examine the text in-depth to be able to draw on psychological theory, yet basing this in what was said by the individual.

Once each theme was noted in order of when they present themselves, the researcher examined these to see if they were linked in any way before creating sub-themes and were then arranged into clusters (Smith, 2009) to form master themes. The researcher utilised their own interpretative processes to aid their understanding of what was being communicated by the participant. Yet, being aware of and transparent about the researcher's interpretation and what the participant's narratives were. This was understood as the double hermeneutic process. The next phase of analysis was to create lists of quotations from the participant's narrative that illustrated the themes and this was also identified within the transcript. Themes were disregarded if they were not strongly supported in the transcript or relevant to the research questions.

The analysis then continued with the other transcripts while distinguishing between prior analysis and looking out for fresh themes. The transcripts were re-examined jointly with a view of the sub-themes and these were then refined accordingly. This enabled the researcher to move the analysis to a superior level involving theoretical union and the attention to the uniqueness in which this presents itself. An extract of how an interview transcript was analysed and how the sub-themes were devised is attached in the appendix (see Appendix G and I).

### **2.5.2 Quality and Validity**

Earlier in this chapter, the researcher outlined the epistemological positioning on which this study was grounded to ensure quality, trustworthiness and credibility was achieved. In addition, Yardley (2000) offered guidelines that qualitative research

should also be evaluated. These include “sensitivity to context”, “commitment, rigor and transparency” and lastly “impact and importance” (Yardley, 2000). The researcher will discuss each standard of validity in the context of the current study.

### **2.5.3 Context and Location for this study**

Yardley (2000) suggested that researchers would need to be sensitive to the context that the research study is located. One way that this can be attended to is through the researcher demonstrating their awareness of the existing research around the area of interest and the theoretical and/or philosophical principles on which the research is grounded. The researcher has presented a literature review of the research relevant to the study in chapter 1 and the rationale for the methodological framework in the following chapter to ensure that the reader can understand the context in which this study was designed.

An additional way in which the validity and quality of qualitative research can be ascertained is to consider how social and cultural factors of where the study was conducted might impact the process in which it was carried out and data collected. The researcher was based in London and the participants who took part in this study mainly resided in London or London-borders. London is one of the most ethnically diverse cities in the UK. According to the Office of National Statistics London houses the largest South Asian population in the UK (Office of National Statistics, 2011). It was hoped that this would be advantageous for recruiting the participants required for this study. Also, it was noted that existing research in this topic was predominately conducted in the North of the England. Therefore, it was hoped that this study would develop the knowledge and understanding of how cultural practices impact the experiences of psychological distress and the coping strategies utilised by young South

Asian women, in particular Pakistani Muslim women living in the South East of England.

*I wondered whether the exposure and integration with individuals from various ethnic backgrounds while living in London would influence the extent to which familial cultural practices are upheld especially when being educated and socialising from an early age with individuals from various ethnic backgrounds. This might in turn mean that alternative social norms and resources become available to individuals. Therefore initially I wondered whether the participants in my study may not be able to identify with the cultural code of izzat which would impact recruitment and the outcome of this study. However, I realised that gathering information about the ways in which cultural practices are and are not engaged with are both crucial in understanding how to meet the psychological needs of the individuals in my study and those with similar experiences.*

The researcher's reflections on the interviews with the study participants, with particular attention to how the researcher perceived the researcher-participant relationships and the possible impact this may have had on the responses to the interview questions, are presented in chapter 3 following the analysis of the data. The researcher will also comment on how the process of data collection and whether the information gathered from the interviews would appropriately address the research questions posed by the researcher.

#### **2.5.4 Commitment, Transparency and Rigour**

Due to the researcher's prior experience in quantitative research methods, there was concern that commitment to theoretical principles and methods of qualitative psychology framework were satisfactorily adhered to. This was also facilitated by

regular research supervision with my supervisor who also had extensive knowledge and experience of qualitative research.

It is vital that qualitative research demonstrates transparency and rigor in the application of the research method. Although Smith (2003, 2009) has extensively documented the principles of the IPA, the researcher has provided detailed illustration of how these guidelines have been adapted in an attempt to address the research aims of this study. As seen above, the researcher has provided a rationale for the participant selection, how the interview questions were developed and outlined the process of data analysis.

#### **2.5.5 Impact and importance**

The purpose of this doctoral paper was to report on the research study that was conducted by the researcher. It was the intention of the researcher to gather information which builds on and elaborates our existing knowledge can be integral to psychological theory and clinical practice of counselling psychologists and other healthcare professionals. The impact and importance are outlined in the Discussion chapter.

#### **2.5.6 Independent audit**

In order to address the issue of an independent audit (Smith, 2003) as further evidence of quality and validity, the transcripts from the interviews conducted with the participants will be submitted on a disc accompanying this paper for the reader's reference.

### **2.6 Summary**

In summary, to appropriately address the proposed research questions this study employs a qualitative research methodology. A qualitative approach enables the

exploration of, and places its focus on, human experience in its entirety (Willig, 2001 pp.87-105). Furthermore, in accordance with the interpretive-constructivist perspective of the researcher and the proposed research aims of exploring how izzat is understood by young Pakistani Muslim women, the most appropriate methodology is IPA.

Principles of IPA provide a framework to examine how individuals understand their “personal and social world” (Smith, 2004 p.55). This phenomenological methodology explores the meaning individuals attribute to their personal experience and how they may identify an object or situations. IPA acknowledges the impact of the researcher in the research process and recognises the interplay between the participant’s perceptions and the researcher’s interpretations which is known as the double hermeneutic.

# Chapter 3: Reporting the Data

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## 3.1 Introduction

As stated in Chapter 1, the intention of this study was to explore how second generation young Muslim Pakistani women understand the meaning of izzat and its interplay with the strategies available to them to maintain emotional well-being. This chapter presents the themes with extracts from the participant interviews central to addressing the research questions:

Firstly, how do second generation young Muslim Pakistani women understand the meaning of izzat and what role if any, does it have in their lives? The second research question proposed was to what extent does upholding the codes of izzat mediate these participants' help-seeking strategies for emotional distress?

The women included in this study were all born in the UK. Each participant identified themselves as second generation Pakistani Muslim as a result of their parents' country of origin and their religious practices. The themes below were identified through IPA analysis of the interviews held with these individuals.

### 3.1.1 Introduction to the themes

Analysis of the transcripts from all six interviews generated three main themes and sub-themes within each of these to further illustrate the overarching main theme. Other themes identified were rejected if they were not directly relevant to the research questions. The first two main themes answer the first research question proposed by the researcher. The first main theme of '*Upholding the Rules of Izzat*' illustrated how the cultural codes and practices of izzat (as defined by these participants), together with the participants' lived experiences of upholding izzat have

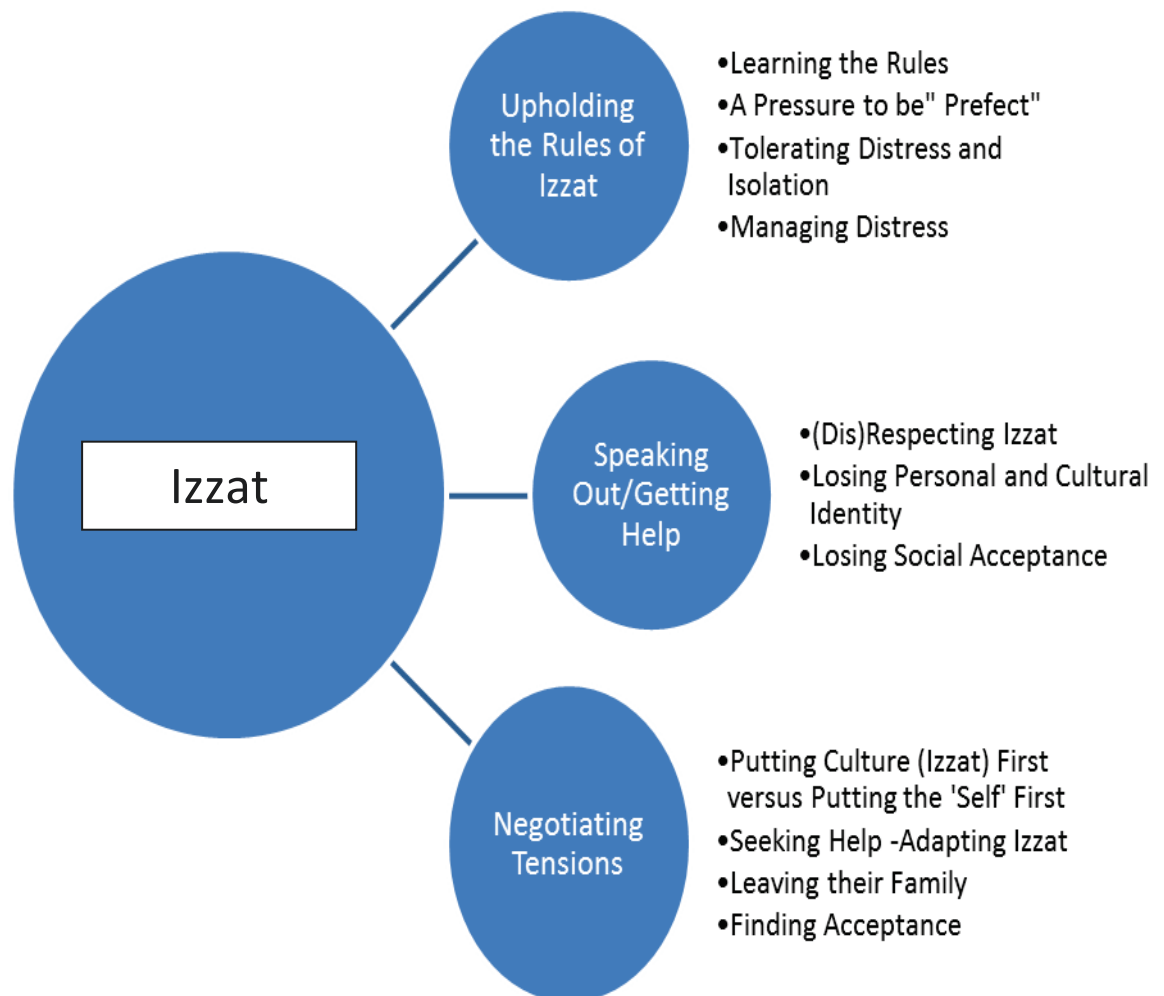
implications for strategies in managing psychological distress. The sub-themes *'Learning the Rules'*, *'A Pressure to be "Perfect"'*, *'Tolerating Distress and Isolation'* and *'Managing Distress'* are further illustrations of the main theme with extracts from the participants' responses to support the researcher's analysis.

The second main theme of *'Speaking Out/Getting Help'* demonstrated the possible obstacles the individuals in this study (or experiences of others they make reference to) are faced with when considering to seek support for psychological distress. *'(Dis)respecting Izzat'*, *'Losing Personal and Cultural Identity'* and *'Losing Social Acceptance'* were examples showing how mental health services or seeking help from supportive agencies are perceived and the possible consequences of accessing these resources. The sub-themes are exemplified with quotations from the interviews.

The final main theme of *'Negotiating tensions'*, encapsulates the dilemmas and tensions that the participants experience when considering codes of izzat (personal and familial) and accessing support in times of psychological distress and how these are negotiated. This theme was developed with the second research question in mind, which was to understand how the codes of izzat possibly mediate the help-seeking strategies that the participants perceived as available or inaccessible to them. The sub-themes, *'Putting Culture First (Izzat) Versus Putting the 'Self' First'*, *'Seeking Help – Adapting Izzat'*, *'Leaving the Family'* and *'Finding Acceptance'* appeared to be the most pertinent challenges for the participants in this study and individuals they spoke of. These are described in more detail below together with interviewee responses that might evidence this interpretation of the data.

Figure 1 below depicts a diagrammatic outline of how the main themes identified from the data analysis are interlinked with the sub-themes.

**Figure 1: Mind-map of theme analysis**





## 3.2 Master Theme One: Upholding the Rules of Izzat

### 3.2.1 Introduction

It was important to establish a frame of reference for the concept of izzat, with each participant. The participants identified *izzat* as “*Respect*”. Several of the participants were able to elaborate on this further. They described izzat as “*Honour*” and “*Dignity*”. Beth in particular reported that she considers there to be two definitions of izzat. One being a cultural meaning and the other definition described by Beth took a more religious position. For this participant these two meanings are regarded as separate entities. Beth talked about izzat in reference to cultural practices, as a way in which individuals conduct themselves and how women interact with men,

*Beth: “Izzat, is more erm,... You know,...covering, protecting, thinking about what you’re saying, speaking. Erm, when you speak to men outside, that you’re not, erm, familiar with, or you don’t know, lowering your gaze... er, er and things like this, you know.”*

*(Beth, Lines 268 –271).*

As can be seen here, Beth provides a definition of izzat which is relevant in particular to the behaviours of women. While these codes might be pertinent to women, this extract suggests that there are codes that determine how men and women interact. There is also a suggestion that women are preserving their honour and dignity together with placing men in positions of power and dominance. One of the participants initially found it difficult to translate izzat into English when prompted. This may be as a result of her infrequent use of the Urdu language in her adult life. It is also possible that talking about this topic outside the family and community elicits a sense of being disrespectful to the izzat of the self and the family. Therefore this individual might have been reluctant to talk openly with the researcher which may have been maintained by the codes of izzat itself.

Some participants in this study spoke of how maintaining their personal izzat, that of their family and their community, has an impact on how they feel about themselves and on their psychological well-being. The participants also spoke of how the codes of izzat have implications for developing their own coping strategies when experiencing emotional distress. These strategies are illustrated in the sub-themes of 'Tolerating Distress and Isolation' and 'Managing Distress' which are discussed below.

As demonstrated within this theme, participants developed their understanding and knowledge of izzat through their family and friends from early childhood. This was often facilitated and modelled by older members of the family. In most cases, it was the senior female members of a family who were central to ensuring that the izzat of the family and their daughters are protected by and for their children's future. This was in contrast to the researcher's prior understanding of these behaviours, which was that Pakistani Muslim men were the driving force behind upholding codes of izzat. It would appear that there is an expectation to maintain the izzat of the family and that this is made possible through the individual being aware of what is deemed as acceptable behaviour from their family, peers and community. Furthermore, these codes become integral in the lives of children, as they make their transition into adulthood predominantly when selecting their friendships groups, as well as the behaviours they engage in and when they marry into a new family. The first sub-theme under this main theme illustrates ways in which participants came to understand the concept of izzat. Each participant described their own experience of this. This provides the researcher and the reader with knowledge and understanding of the term izzat when considering the subsequent themes of analysis.

### 3.2.2 Learning the Rules

The participants spoke of how they learnt about the concept of izzat and how upholding izzat impacted their day-to-day lives. The participants appeared to have developed their understanding and knowledge of izzat through their family and friends from early childhood. It is possible that there were a number of ways that this developed. On one hand the codes of izzat may have been explained to young Pakistani Muslim women by older members of their family or community. Alternatively, these individuals may have challenged such codes which may have led to possible punishment or reprimand and witnessing this in other women's lives. One participant spoke of these codes as "*unwritten rules*" which are reaffirmed by the family and community and handed down to subsequent generations. This seemed to be the parent's attempt to protect their children from being perceived as a sexual object and for others, in particular, men to see their female children as a respectable woman and not "loose". Extracts from the interviews with that participants suggested that there is a need from male and female members of a Pakistani family and community to protect the sexuality of women. On the other hand, one might suggest that this enables these individuals to control the sexual behaviours women.

However, Beth disclosed that she does not "*care*" about izzat. It appears that this was not always her view and it was her desire to uphold her izzat, demonstrate respect to her parents and not have people negatively judge her. This was shown through her tolerance of, and "suffering" domestic violence. Beth retold her story of staying in both of her marriages following experiences of domestic violence because of her need to preserve her izzat. This is illustrated in the passage below:

*Beth: "You know, I'm just so grateful that I've got the understanding of Islam, you know. And, and, you know coming down to your subject izzat. I... I think I stayed there, the time that I did stay there. Was, not because my parents, told me to me to, they told me to leave the first time there was an incident. I stayed there, because of cultural reasons..."*

*Researcher: "Hmm."*

*Beth: "...Thinking, on, maybe the second time of getting married. Oh my God. You know. Not my family, what ARE the extended family going think. What are people going to think. Oh my God. And that was the reason why stayed there."*

*Researcher: "Hmm".*

*Beth: "Because I did, one and a half years." (Beth, Lines 142 – 152 ).*

It appeared that there are numerous factors which influence the behaviours of young Pakistani Muslim women which include religious, parental or familial and cultural teachings. These can exist within the individual as perceived expectations of others or the individual's own interpretations. Alternatively such determinants of behaviours can be explicitly conveyed by members of the individual's family or community.

Similarly, participants spoke of how Pakistani Muslim women are regarded as not having izzat if they are unable to maintain relationships and particularly if they are divorced. It appears that there was an expectation, from her mother, for Shamima to stay in her marriage, -

*Shamima: "... mum's only advice if you like she gave me was you have to stay there - your dead body will leave the house. That you stay there until you die."*

*(Shamima, Lines 120 – 122).*

It was interpreted that this was an example of Shamima's mother expressing disappointment that she chose to divorce her husband. Shamima reported that she thinks her mother wanted her izzat to be kept intact and this would be at risk by her divorcing her husband. This extract is a further example of how some of the participants in this study experienced family pressure to maintain their izzat even if it placed their own well-being at risk.

These extracts from interviews with Beth and Shamima suggest that upholding the codes of izzat were considered of importance to the individual's families and therefore they would hold these codes in mind when making life-style choices. However, this meant that they were either exposed to domestic abuse and in Shamima's case, expected to stay in her marriage despite distressing experiences, with a sense that seeking support would not be permitted. This extract from Dina's interview was a further example of how some Pakistani Muslim women would stay in abusive marriages in attempt to preserve their izzat.

*Dina: "And erm. I mean izzat is very important to our family and stuff."*

*Researcher: "Hmm."*

*Dina coughs*

*Researcher: "And, and do you find that, kind of upholding it? How (sp)..."*

*Dina: "Erm."*

*Researcher: "...How does that impact on YOU? "*

*Dina: "...Like whenever I've been taught. Erm, I'll try to, erm. Like when I get married I try to keep that, try to maintain it..."*

*Researcher: "Hmm."*

*Dina: "Like when I get married as well. I mean it, it is. Obviously it would be hard work, because, you have to go into a new family, and you have to adapt to, how they live and stuff. But erm, YEAH. I just have to try and kind of balance it. I know it's going to be hard work."*

*Researcher: "Hmmm"*

*Dina: "It's hard work. But erm, erm I, I just think that's the way. That's life" [smiles]*

*Researcher: "Hmm."*

*Dina: "If you like it or not, you just. Deal with it." (Dina, Lines 349 – 366).*

It would seem that, from this extract, some young Pakistani Muslim women become rather passive in the process of learning the codes of izzat and their adherence to them throughout their lives.

Interestingly, some participants made a distinction between the extents to which the codes of izzat are practiced by individuals from within different class systems.

*Nisha: "Yeah. So, how that, that, that society women, do seek help. People from lower class, they don't." (Nisha, Lines 502-503)*

As can be seen here, Nisha highlights her personal perceptions about those who are less traditional and higher up the class system, in that these individuals are more loosely tied to cultural practices and more inclined to *break the rules*. Also, this would mean that there would be less pressure or expectation to endure or *"put up"* with abuse.

Another participant (as seen below in an extract from Shamima's interview) also demonstrated in more detail her understanding of how the Pakistani class systems link to the cultural practice of izzat -

*Shamima: "Well, what, what I've been told, is that the people that came here, they went up north originally, you know, back in the 60s and 70s, to work in the mills... "*

*Researcher: "Oh ok".*

*Shamima: "So they, so they wouldn't have, back, you know they probably would have been unskilled workers whereas I think there's more of them up, up north, so you know, they're from, erm, their background, perhaps, not as erm... A bit more working class, I don't know, however you want to put it".*

*Researcher: "Yeah."*

*Shamima: "Erm, and they're more into, you know, they're much more cultural and more into, sort of, you know, the izzat things...But I do think it has been carried through the generations.*

*(Shamima, Lines 1014 – 1030)*

Here, Shamima illustrates her understanding of how cultural practices and traditions which were likely to have originated in Pakistan, have been maintained in Pakistani Muslim communities in the UK. Shamima makes particular reference to the working class and the extent to which they are bound to or take up, the codes for upholding izzat. This suggested to the researcher that these practices are more pertinent for these classes than those from middle or higher classes in Pakistani or British-Pakistani societies.

An additional significant motive for Pakistani Muslim women to stay in abusive marriages might be due to their perception that this was in the best interest of their

children, safe-guarding their future and preserving their children's izzat as seen in the extract below from Shamima's interview.

*Shamima: Erm, but I managed my older boy, he, he got into erm, he was very clever, so he got into erm, private school, so erm, I, I think that was one reason, I sta-maybe in a way I thought I had to keep in the marriage now because he's in private school and then this is a way out of his life, or get an education and can better himself, I have to stick it out for a few more years...*

*(Shamima, Lines458-45*

The analysis of this theme therefore suggested that it is possible there are no single set of rules for upholding izzat or the functionality which it serves. It appears that there is variability amongst families and even inter-changeable codes of practice as interpreted by individuals, families as a whole and within the wider community. It would appear that the ways in which izzat is upheld and the significance that it plays in each family is not universal and can change over time. For example, where one family may regard the breakdown of a marriage as not honouring izzat, another may deem it as acceptable.

### **3.2.3 A Pressure to be "Perfect"**

Some of the participants spoke of their view of how upholding a woman's izzat can at times be related to the sexual monogamy or promiscuity of the individual and how this is perceived by others. They discussed how the sexual prerogatives of women are restricted, and how these are more liberal for men. An example discussed by some participants was the issue around sex before marriage which would mean that a woman's izzat is "ruined". This would impact on the likelihood of a Pakistani Muslim woman being able to get married and leave her open to criticism by others.



Furthermore this would suggest that a woman's reputation becomes tainted. However, this is not a shared experience by all. In Nisha's view there are fewer restrictions within families in the UK.

*Nisha: "You basically have to take care of yourself, you don't have like, behave like, some sort of miss- you know. Some sort of like, erm...A bad image on others, basically you have to be good, that's what I think it is..."*

*Researcher: "So how do you think that's negotiated when Asian women, Pakistani, Muslim women are in the UK."*

*Nisha: "I think erm, some, in some families, they are allowed to sleep with other men, before marriage,"*

*Researcher: "Hmm"*

*Nisha: "But in some families they are not."*

*Researcher: "Hmm."*

*Nisha: "So erm, I have seen in other, people they are restricted, in doing such things, so when they come here, they basically do them..." (Nisha, Lines 131-134 & 169 – 177).*

This suggested to the researcher that the significance of being perceived as "good" and less promiscuous can also be dependent on the class systems (as spoken of by some of the participants in this study) and the extent to which upholding izzat is important to the individual, their family or the wider community. This may be in addition mediated by the individual wanting to be perceived as "good" by others and preserving their personal/social identity.

Nisha also spoke of being perceived as “good” by others in her family and community which in turn has a direct impact on her personal izzat and the izzat of her family.

*Researcher: “Hmm. Erm, and is that, does it kind of have a personal meaning for you, yourself?”*

*Nisha: “ For me, yeah, it does, actually (laughs) For me, it’s like I feel I have to behave good right, delib-it basically means like reputation, in, in this word, right. You basically have to take care of yourself, you don’t have like, behave like, some sort of miss- you know. Some sort of like, erm...A bad image on others, basically you have to be good, that’s what I think it is.”*

*(Nisha, Lines 127 – 134 ).*

In the extract above Nisha described what izzat means to her and how it affects her life and the choices she makes. Dina too described her own personal desires to be “perfect” which appeared to have taken on from her familial experiences.

*Dina: Yeah. (lp) So I just wanna be perfect. So, so that I don’t have problems when I go to in-laws, they don’t, don’t talk about me or, my family, so yeah.*

*(Dina, Lines 332-333)*

There is a sense here in Dina’s extract that she experiences an additional layer of expectation from those outside of her own family (in particular the family that she will marry into). This suggested that there are negative consequences to being perceived as ‘bad’ or ‘imperfect’, for herself and her family. Ellen too, spoke of how abiding by the codes of izzat has impacted her own life as she does not want to be judged negatively by others as she perceived she was as a child, therefore she tries to keep her izzat intact. It is likely that these practices are then carried forward as these women become mothers themselves.

Beth describes her experience of upholding her izzat as “*stressful*” and “*exhausting*”. She experienced it as her extended family “*controlling*” her life and being “*submissive*” to elders in the family. As a consequence, Beth developed what could be considered as psychosomatic symptoms and anxiety which was “*traumatic*” for her.

As can be seen within this sub-theme, some of the participants spoke of how portraying a “good” image and being regarded as “good” or “perfect”, which in large part is determined by the sexual practices of young Pakistani Muslim women, is crucial for many of these individuals. Some participants spoke of how restrictions (or the control) of women’s sexual behaviours can also vary within families who reside in Pakistan, to those who reside in the UK. This is further related to the societal class of the individual or their family. Participants also spoke of the impact not being (or being regarded by others as) “perfect”, on their personal lives and their social standing within their community. In addition, it would seem that *pressures to be “perfect”* are both held within the individual and external to them. Yet, in striving to be “perfect” or “good”, it in itself can cause emotional or psychological distress and impacts on the physical health of some young Pakistani Muslim women.

### **3.2.4 Tolerating Distress and Isolation**

A key sub-theme identified by some of the participants was that many young Pakistani Muslim women are expected to “put up” with and do demonstrate the capacity to ‘tolerate’ their emotional distress over long periods of time.

*Beth: “...And she was being hit and abused by her husband, and she comes from a modern educated family...”*

*Researcher: “Hmm.”*

*Beth: “And her Mum just did her Masters just a few years ago and she put up*

*with it."*

*Researcher: "Hmm."*

*Beth: "And she put up with the abuse. You know the financial abuse, the emotional abuse. Not so much physical abuse. Exactly the same..."*

*Researcher: "Hmm."*

*Beth: And she...She put up with it and now, she realised, that oh my God, I need to leave now. Because he was having someone else on the side. She had two still births. She works with breast-cancer, breast operation cancer and he's been doing all this on the side. So, she's now finally realised, I've had enough."*

*Researcher: "Hmm."*

*Beth: "But it's taken her six years. Well. Eventually six years later she's walked out. And she's you know, a teacher, for many years now, a teacher, and they're meant to understand everything and she's put up with it."* (Beth, Lines 484 – 494 ).

This story retold by Beth illustrates how a Pakistani Muslim woman endured, what Beth perceived as a distressing experience, for a number of years. This extract from Beth's interview suggests that she makes a distinction between those who are educated or have professional careers and the extent to which these individuals "put up" with domestic abuse. It would appear that Beth regards those who are educated to be less restricted by the codes of izzat or that through education they develop an awareness of alternatives available to them. However, Beth's example might be illustrative of how those who are "educated" might remain hesitant about breaking the codes.

Through listening to the participants descriptions of their experience it is possible that in adhering to the *“unwritten rules”* of upholding the izzat of the individual and their family, it means that Pakistani Muslim women soldier on in times of adversity, therefore demonstrating tolerance and strength of character in maintaining their own well-being. This was illustrated in Beth’s dialogue above and by Dina with her particular reference to *“If you like it or not, you just. Deal with it.”* As previously illustrated in the theme *‘Learning the Rules’*.

Hence this might explain why ‘tolerating distress’ becomes a strategy employed by these individuals. This can be seen in both of the extracts below from Shamima and Ellen’s responses.

*Shamima: “I think that was one reason, I sta-maybe in a way I thought I had to keep in the marriage now because he’s in private school and then this is a way out of his life, or get an education and can better himself, I have to stick it out for a few more years...”*

*Researcher: “Hmm”*

*Shamima: “Erm (lp )Yeah. And I was, scared, I was scared to be on my own, scared to live, how will I manage financially, where will I go..”*

*(Shamima, Lines 454 – 461).*

*Ellen: “And erm, and especially when you have kids, they come first. And really your happiness is out the window. And I don’t know. What is life really, it’s just about getting on with it. And doing, I don’t know. Me and X, we’re not up and down, we’re just middle of the road people. Just go to work, that’s life, that’s it really.”*

*Researcher: “Hmm”*

*(Ellen, Lines 581 – 586).*

These extracts offer further examples of how young Pakistani Muslim women might cope by putting up with difficulties. Ellen emphasised the personal resources required to be able to manage difficult experiences, it would appear that she considers that endurance is seen as a strength. In addition, showing distress and needing support, are possibly viewed by Ellen as a weakness. Furthermore, Shamima explained that despite her experiences of fear, she made a decision to tolerate such distress. This suggested to the researcher that both Ellen and Shamima choice to tolerate unpleasant experiences was also motivated by their own desires to protect the izzat and future prospects of their children.

*Researcher: "And, and what do you think might be a hindrance then or things that are not so helpful for, for women who find themselves distressed or, or in distress?"*

*Ellen: "Erm (lp) I think it's all to do with will, will-power and just how strong you are emotionally. Pills and people, nothing's, nothing's going to help you unless you help yourself."*

*Researcher: "Hmm."*

*(Ellen, Lines 597 – 603)*

There was a sense that speaking out about difficult emotional experiences, specifically domestic violence, was not permitted in Pakistani families. Also, voicing abusive experiences would be negatively perceived by others and tarnish one's izzat and that of the family. This might also influence and add a layer of 'silencing' of Pakistani Muslim women about their own experiences of abuse.

For many of the participants in this study, upholding one's personal izzat and that of the family means that disclosure of psychological distress is understood to be uncommon amongst other young Pakistani Muslim women.

*Beth: "... I'll give you an example, my cousin who's abused all the time. If her son's having trouble getting the right grades. Or they're not, erm, doing well generally around, then she will get hit..."*

*Researcher: "Hmm"*

*Beth: "For that. You know and there's no, there's no, she's not allowed to make excuses. She wouldn't complain to family, I don't think her family even know that anything, they only found out twenty years later..."*

*Researcher: "Hmm"*

*Beth: "Erm. In Birmingham, two years ago. A woman was locked up in the garage for I think a month. Starved. She didn't die. And then the husband and her mother-in-law and sister-in-law, then erm, found her in the bath tub. And she was a beautiful girl came from Pakistan. Her family never spoke to her, wouldn't, couldn't try to get in touch with her. The parents, the in-laws, would say she's fine, she's busy, she's fine. And in the end they found out she was dead..."*

*Researcher: "Hmm".*

*Beth: "... It's happening in this country. Because they're so bad. They don't, they don't have any other means..." (Beth, Lines 363–375 & 440–450 ).*

Here, Beth provided examples of two young Pakistani Muslim women who experienced abuse and neglect for a number of years. In the first example, Beth suggested that the young woman would be seen to be complaining, or in speaking out, about the abuse she experienced, she would be viewed negatively. This suggested to

the researcher that the family would possibly consider the abuse as justified because her son was not successful at school. In the second example, Beth spoke of a woman being neglected by her family and possibly later committed suicide. Beth's perception was that the family which the young woman married into, did not disclose such maltreatment. Both of these examples appear to illustrate situations where women experienced isolation and silencing of their distress and abuse.

Dina regarded upholding izzat as something she might experience in the future and does not talk about this experience in the present because she is unmarried. As seen earlier in the theme '*Learning the Rules*', she describes it as being "hard work" but it appears that Dina is in acceptance of this, yet there is a sense that she is powerless in this position "*If you like it or not, you just. Deal with it...*" (Dina, Lines 364). This might be further illustration of how some young Pakistani women are unable to voice their discontent about the circumstances in which they live and the challenges they face. She later suggests that there are consequences to not abiding by the family rules and upholding izzat. It is possible that this induces fear and therefore the individual remains passive in response to this process. Dina reported that she thinks upholding izzat has influenced the type of person she has become and she seems to have formed a strong allegiance to these practices. Dina said that these practices are shared amongst friends who have similar parental experiences.

Similarly, the participants spoke of being forced into positions and felt they were unable to free themselves from experiences that affect their emotional well-being and cause them distress. This in turn appears to result in feeling trapped without options



available to them to manage or reduce their distress. Shamima uses a powerful metaphor of “being in a prison” as seen below:

*Shamima: “But things like a bad marriage, which I think does cause a lot of, depression, and I mean, you know, there’s an easy way out but you just don’t feel that there is. That’s what I felt like, to me, divorce was not an option, because he you know, I’ll kill you, I’ll kill your family, I’ll take you children...And erm, I’ll get this gun, I’ve got this gun and I’ll shoot and I used to believe it all. (sighs) That meant, now I know, that you know... A bit like being in prison in a way. (Shamima, Lines 623 – 680 ).*

As seen here, Pakistani Muslim women possibly consider themselves bound to their marriage despite whether it causes distress and places their own well-being at risk. To some extent this could be mediated in some individuals by the operation of izzat and how it serves to place women in disempowered or submissive roles by significant others, as can be seen in Beth’s response,

*Beth: “It’s very stressful, exhausting. It was not my life, it’s the aunties and the uncles around me. It’s, it’s like, they’re controlling my life. It’s like that...”*

*Researcher: “Hmm”*

*Beth: “That’s the best way to describe it, really. It’s like someone else’s life, not mine. My family’s, not mine...”*

*Researcher: “Hmm (sp). And you say it was stressful. How did it make you feel? Or...”*

*Beth: “I got acidity in my stomach, you know, so much stress you know, anxiety*

*attacks, erm... Weight. Drastic weight loss. Erm, you know, just erm... crying all the time. Just, sometimes you just want to scream, you know."*

*(Beth, Lines 311 – 319 ).*

As seen above, Beth spoke of being controlled by family members and the adverse effect it had on her, in particular emotional and psychological distress. It would appear that Beth internalises her distress rather than expressing (what sounds like) frustration which in turn manifests in physical reactions and ill-health. Furthermore, it appears that the act of upholding izzat can leave individuals feeling somewhat isolated which can also be seen in an extract from Ellen's interview. In addition, while there might be a degree to which some individuals regard their behaviour and the choices available to them being informed by the practices of izzat. There is also the shared expectation from others (family, friends and the wider community) that these are adhered to. An example of this is illustrated in an extract from Ellen's transcript,

*Ellen: "So, yeah. Erm, what did I say to her. I always try and tell my friends to just stick in their marriages erm, yeah. I always, I always try and erm, see things be worse. So, ok, well, he doesn't give you money and oh, oh you're living on twenty pound a week, oh, but at least he doesn't beat you...{laughs} I kind of a bit like that. And you, I remember it, one of my, I was going to say, the name, can I say, the name, yeah I was going to say X, I remember she used to get so pissed off with me, she'd be like, oh, you know, you just think, it's alright for men to have affairs and I remember all this, I remember all this with her sister used to go on. And I'd be like, well, it's not alright, but you know, well, how do you know the next one might have affairs and he might beat you."...*

*Ellen: "... So, I think it is, just get on with it..."*

*(Ellen, Lines 530 –540 /574 ).*

The researcher conceptualised that there appeared to be a decision-making process that was occurring for these individuals to demonstrate tolerance of their own distress in order to uphold the codes of izzat. Whereas, there was a sense that some of the participants and the women they spoke of were ushered into silence (of their distress) and somewhat coerced into adhering to the codes of izzat. Therefore tolerating distress and suffering in silence would be motivated by an individual's desire to uphold izzat or the expectation of others to do so.

### **3.2.5 Managing distress**

In contrast to the themes identified above, some of the participants were able to access support or thought that other Pakistani Muslim women were able to find ways to manage their distress which did not conflict with maintaining their izzat. Though other participants also spoke of young Pakistani Muslim women who may not have been able to manage their distress and may have attempted suicide or self-harm.

*Dina: "Even though they're, they're there to help, but, but erm, ... most Asian, in Asian community, we wouldn't, we mostly seek advice from other elders, elder people..."*

*Researcher: "OK"*

*Dina: "From erm, from the family."*

*Cerisse: "From the family?"*

*Dina: "Yeah."*

*Researcher: "And would that include elders in the mosque too?"*

*Dina: "Yeah. Yeah. Anybody that's erm, like the priest at the mosque you, erm, like Imam. And if there's like your Aunty, Uncle, Grandmum, Grandparents, erm like yeah, people who have like experiences as well."*

*Researcher: "Hmm."*

*Dina: "Yeah."*

*Researcher: "That's like a source of support?"*

*Dina: "Yeah."* (Dina, Lines 562 – 575 ).

As can be seen here, Dina speaks of circumstances where younger generations within the "Asian community" are able to disclose their experiences of distress to older members of the family and community. Therefore, not breaching the codes of izzat and disrespecting themselves or their family.

Additionally, the way in which izzat is understood and practiced amongst some of the participants in this study means that there are limitations to who they would deem as being appropriate sources of support as evidenced here by Annie below. However, there is a sense here that Annie may have some reservations as to how helpful this strategy can be for individuals who are experiencing difficulties whether it be emotional difficulties or struggles in their personal circumstances.

*Researcher: "Er, yeah. I guess, what sources of help are available to you if you're..."*

*Annie: "Yeah."*

*Researcher: "...Thinking this and kind of cultural practice?"*

*Annie: Yeah. I think erm... You.... It would be a question. That's why a lot of people would probably turn to a very close knit group of people, group of friends, or friend even. Erm...it's highly unlikely, sadly to say, that they would go to the point of telling their GP for instance."* (Annie, Lines 713 – 719 ).

Participants also gave the impression that self-harm and suicide were strategies that Pakistani women would consider when “stress” becomes unmanageable rather than contravening the codes of izzat. As can be seen here in Nisha’s response, she considers that these strategies exist but are not common for all Pakistani Muslim women.

*Nisha: “Erm, most, some women, they can’t cope with any stress, right. So, they think of, they think of like ending their lives...They can’t cope with the stress and you know what else and in psychological distress...people who can’t also get into a profession, they want to do like, medical, medicine and they can’t get in to any good Universities, so I’ve, I’ve heard, the people, they like erm, think of ending their lives.”*

*(Nisha, Lines 529– 537 ).*

According to Nisha’s (in the above extract) and Dina’s experience, self-harm and possibly suicide could result from an inability to manage the external “pressures” placed on Pakistan women which in part, could be attributed to their desire to uphold their izzat. Interestingly, Dina suggested that the presence of a serious physical illness would be intolerable and cause her to consider taking her own life.

*Dina: “ Erm... Can, it’s probably down to like stress.”*

*Researcher: “ Hmm.”*

*Dina: “Like erm, family life, work life, erm pressures, erm... yeah. (sp) It’s like some people, some people think there’s nothing here to live for.”*

*Researcher: “Yeah.”*

*Dina: “Yeah. They’ve had enough, fed up, and they would do that. That would lead then to do that.”*

*Researcher: “Hmm.”*

*Dina: "If, they think that way."*

*Researcher: "Hmm."*

*Dina: " Or maybe it could be like a medical condition."*

*Researcher: "Hmm."*

*Dina: "Like an example could be like if a patient had H, if someone had HIV or cancer, you'd think erm, I'd rather die than having this... This illness."*

*Researcher: "Hmm."*

*Dina: "I think it's all down to these factors."*

*Researcher: "Yeah."*

*Dina: "Why people want to do that." (Dina, Lines 579 – 596).*

Dina expressed a view here similar to some of the other participants in this study that when family and work life becomes distressing and unmanageable ("pressures") some might attempt suicide and self-harm. Alternatively Dina suggested that the experience of a terminal illness would leave an individual with "nothing to live for" which demonstrated that not all reasons for self-harm or suicide are related to culture-specific interpersonal difficulties or personal circumstances which are also exacerbated by their efforts to uphold cultural practices (the rules as depicted in the first theme and sub theme of 'Pressures to be "Perfect"').

Many of the participants spoke about what experiences might lead young Pakistani Muslim to self-harm or commit suicide in others but did not own this as a problem for them. It was thought by the researcher that a possible reason for why the majority of the participants spoke of other people's distress and self-harming behaviours was that it may have been perceived by them to be tarnishing their izzat to disclose such

experiences and felt this was not a risk if they presented these as the experiences of others. However, Shamima disclosed her own understanding of what caused her personal experience of having a suicidal thought, yet not acting upon it. This is illustrated in the extract below-

*Shamima: "And I don't remember thinking of suicide. Really, ...the only one thought that came to me, in all that time, I think I had had panic attack on the motorway and I stopped the car, on the hard-shoulder, it was just me I think, not the children, I don't remember actually, yeah, it might have been just me. And I just felt like running across the road and ending it and I thought, no, my children need me..."*

*Shamima: "...I had all the problem s going on with my ex, I also, I had the children and I sort of wanted to be, make up, for what he was doing..."*

*Researcher: Hmm-hmm.*

*Shamima: ... And trying, you know, I felt pressurised to you know, try to sort of give them the best I could despite what he was doing, and erm... It was difficult, I wanted to be a perfect Mum, I wanted them to be perfect..." (Shamima, Lines 736 – 758 ).*

Furthermore, what was most striking about one of the participant's responses was that even though this woman endeavoured to meet the expectations of others, particularly her family's, this in itself may have led to her developing suicidal ideation. On the other hand, young Pakistani Muslim women may attempt suicide following their perception that such codes have been contravened. This possibly suggests that suicidality in young Pakistani Muslim women is multifaceted, in that suicide may be regarded as a way out or put an end to being "pressurised". Alternatively, the view might be that suicide was considered in the individual's perception that they have failed to be "perfect".

*Shamima: "...She was young, maybe in her late twenties and erm, speaking to a friend, I remember, they thought that she, you know, she wanted a boy, there was pressure, she had three or four girls and there was a pressure on her to have a boy, and she knew that she was expecting boy, you know this time round. But erm... Didn't stop her from, killing herself..." (Shamima, Lines 712 – 716 ).*

In the example that Shamima refers to, there is a sense that some young Pakistani Muslim women might become self-blaming or over critical of themselves because of their perceived failure to produce male children to carry the family name onto the next generation which then is regarded as justification for self-harm or attempting suicide.

As seen earlier, support from the family, friends or community can help to maintain emotional well-being. However, it was understood through what some participants reported that young Pakistani Muslim women experience isolation and could resort to harming themselves in the absence of such types of support. It would appear that self-harm would be as a consequence of what has been discussed in the sub-theme of 'Tolerating distress' whereby the distress becomes intolerable and such strategies prove ineffective.

*Annie: " ...Erm...But I think, I can imagine them feeling awful and feeling really, really hurt. Especially, if you haven't got anyone to turn to that can, that can help you...*

*Researcher: "Hmm"*

*Annie: "Then I think you would, feel a bit lost. Erm...Some people might go into self-harm, some people might go into, erm, doing things, they might just think, oh my God,*



*is this really worth it for instance. Especially for some people, that just got the cultural thing going on in their head....”*

*Annie: “... I think, it’s a horrible thing to be going through and they probably would be feeling really lost...”* (Annie, Lines 449 – 480 ).

Annie illustrated here, that young Pakistani Muslim women may self-harm or attempt suicide in the absence of support from others. In addition, the perception that their personal or social circumstances will not change, together with becoming increasingly hopeless may also place these individuals at risk.

### **3.2.6 Summary**

The theme illustrates some of the tensions participants experienced, or witnessed others experiencing, in upholding izzat and tolerating what could be perceived as restrictive rules. In particular, it provides examples of how the aim of respecting family and culture can mean the abuse and distress of individual women is in effect ignored or seemingly sanctioned as a necessary condition of maintaining the rules of izzat. Hence, female qualities of endurance, passivity may be highly valued leaving Pakistani women in a no-win situation requiring them to put up with unacceptable treatment rather than be shunned for contravening cultural norms of appropriate female behaviour. Participants were able to identify how upholding izzat impacted the types of strategies that they would implement when they experienced emotional distress. The excerpts illustrate participants’ understanding that self-harm and attempted suicide was a strategy that other Pakistani Muslim women would consider if emotional distress became unmanageable and they were unable to access family support and experienced isolation from others. Although managing distress and not disclosing personal experiences of distress enabled some of the participants (and the individuals

they referred to) to follow the teachings of their family and community, there are possible adverse effects of this. These individuals may experience pressure and a sense of obligation to adhere to such cultural codes which as a consequence may exacerbate their distress which is concealed and continues. Hence, suicide or self-harm might seem the only option available or an act of desperation.

### **3.3 Master Theme Two: Speaking Out/Getting Help**

#### **3.3.1 Introduction**

The focus in this theme was on the experience or awareness that there are obstacles that get in the way of the participants, and the Pakistani Muslim women they spoke of, seeking help or support from outside the family or community. One of the significant challenges might be a fear of not upholding izzat and the consequences that this might have on them or their family. The sub-themes that set out the main aspects of this master theme, *'(Dis)respecting Izzat'*, *'Losing Personal and Cultural Identity'* and *'Losing Social Acceptance'* are discussed below.

#### **3.3.2 (Dis) respecting Izzat**

The participants in this study described izzat as *"Respect"* and it appears to be a multidimensional concept. Izzat, in the context of the participants included in this study, could be one's self-respect or that which belongs to the family as a whole. Respect is also demonstrated towards the family, friends and their community. Izzat could also be perceived or judged by others, in particular friends, family and local Pakistani Muslim community. An example of how Dina described this cultural concept is shown here,

*Dina: "...izzat means like respect. Like self-respect... "*

*Researcher: "Ok"*

*Dina: "Your family respect. Respect for your religion, respect for elders. So it's all got to do with respect, yeah."* ( Dina, Lines 276 – 279 ).

As can be seen below, one of the participants, Beth, illustrated how women may be judged as being disrespectful to their family if they were to make the decision to leave an unhappy marriage,

*Beth: "When it comes to izzat. One thing why women do stay in certain situations, marriages, because they think about the RESPECT for, for the parents..."*

*Researcher: "Hmm"*

*Beth: "...And how their respect will be affected by their friends, families, neighbours and their aunties and uncles. So, that's another reason why women stay"...*

*Beth "...They're desperate just to make that work, no matter what happens. Till you know, it, it err, that specific case led to her death"(Beth, Lines 248 – 252 & 452 –453).*

It is arguable that for some young Pakistani Muslim women, their attempts to maintain their izzat places them at risk of experiences that cause them emotional or psychological distress (for example the abuse of power or control within a marital relationship), whereas maintaining these relationships helps keep the izzat and respect of the individual and the family intact. In addition, Dina illustrates how the upholding of izzat mediates between whether individuals are able to access support from outside the family and how this reflects the extent to which they are regarded as respectful or being respectful of others.

*Dina: "Like talking to like a Counsellor or Social Services or, any form of, erm, that kind of, that's like again, it's like down to izzat"*

*Researcher: "Ok."*

*Dina: "So out of respect, we wouldn't go and talk to some, some stranger, or..."*

*Researcher: Hmm.*

*Dina: Even though they're, they're there to help, but, but erm, most Asian, in Asian community, we wouldn't, we mostly seek advice from other elders, elder people.*

*( Dina, Lines 557 – 563).*

Listening to Dina describe her perceptions of Counsellors and Social services, it provides insight into why these types of support might not be accessed. This extract from Dina's interview illustrates how seeking help from "some stranger" (Counsellor of Social services) is regarded as disrespectful which in turn goes against the codes of izzat. Dina also highlights that seeking advice/help from elders is within the codes of upholding izzat.

As seen earlier under the sub theme of 'Tolerating distress', there appeared to be distinctions between those who are educated and those without this experience. Additional to this two of the participants differentiated the experiences of Pakistani Muslim women who were from "rich society" or the "working class". There seemingly was a distinction between those who are from "rich societies" who are thought to be able to seek help more "freely" from healthcare professionals. However, those perceived to be from "working classes" are seen to be more closely tied to cultural practices particularly maintaining their izzat and that of their family which might be held through generations in families who have lived in the UK since the 1960 and 1970s. Therefore these individuals are mindful of how seeking help from others impacts on their izzat, how they are "judged" and whether this is disrespecting of their family, friends and the Pakistani Muslim community. In addition, it would appear that there is more rigidity in the conceptualisation of what is deemed as respectful amongst those who are in working classes, where maintaining cultural identity may

take precedence. The functionality of cultural identity is further illustrated under the following subtheme.

### **3.3.3 Losing Personal and Cultural Identity**

This sub-theme demonstrates the barriers some Pakistani Muslim women, as illustrated by some of the participants in study, might encounter when they consider accessing help in maintaining their emotional well-being. It was the researcher's impression that this decision could result in a loss of their personal and cultural identity. The extract from Nisha's interview encapsulates how a Pakistani Muslim woman who seeks help from medical practitioners, in particular male doctors, may be perceived by others as less "pure" which is in contrast to the way in which these individuals wish to be regarded. Therefore impacting negative judgements of their izzat (respect of themselves and their family).

*Nisha: "...Actually in our culture women are not allowed to seek medical help from any doctor as well right. So in our, cul-culture there are more male doctors practicing right... So, when erm, erm, one is tol-told to er, go, seek er, to seek, erm, help from a doctor, you don't go, because, erm, their husbands are like, fathers are like, it's going to be a male..."*

*Researcher: "Hmm"*

*Nisha: "And you're not allowed to go and see, se him. So yeah"*

*Researcher: Hmm. And then does that impact, well I suppose how does the izzat then impact..."*

*Nisha: "Yeah it does."*

*Researcher: "On seeking help from..."*

*Nisha: "...Because if I go, from, basically from the village, if one was to go and seek help from a male doctor, right, and when she comes back, people criticise her..."*

*Researcher: "Oh, ok"*

*Nisha: "They say yeah, you went to see a male doctor, yeah you're not er, biased, you're not pure, er, and, things like that."*

*(Nisha, Lines 463 – 482 ).*

As seen under the sub-theme of 'Learning the Rules' Shamima spoke of how Pakistani Muslim women are regarded as not having izzat if they are unable to maintain relationships and particularly if they are divorced. Shamima said that she thinks her mother wanted their izzat to be kept intact. It could therefore be suggested apparent that there was a barrier for Shamima to seek help because it would lead to the loss of her izzat and personal identity.

*Shamima: "...The pressure came from my mum and I suppose in her head that would have been you have to have a husband. If there is no husband there is no izzat*

*Researcher: You have kind of spoken about it already, what does it mean to you the term or concept?*

*Shamima: People look down at you there is no respect in the community that you yourself don't have respect..."*

*(Shamima, lines 104-110)*

As seen in these passages from interview transcripts, it was the expressed view of some of the participants that seeking support from those outside of their community places them at a personal disadvantage which may impact on how they are perceived in their community.

In addition, seeking help for emotional distress through external agencies, for some of the participants in this study and the Pakistani Muslim women they spoke of, could be possibly perceived as conflicting with cultural traditions held in Pakistani communities.

*Beth: ...But then again, you've got people like my cousin that wouldn't take that, the support of what the government offers to women in this situation.*

*Researcher: Hmm.*

*Beth: They wouldn't take it, they would just think, they know the...Their cultural aspect and what their family would think, would over-ride the whole, what the advantages the country would give them. What the Government would give them.*

*(Beth, lines 389-395)*

*Ellen: "...I think the only difficulty is they have sometimes, what they have within their own community. And just because of this, pressures of what you're kind of expected to be like, live like and you know. Erm. But I don't think anything more can really help you with that." (Ellen, Lines 658 –661 ).*

As can be seen above, one of the participants, Ellen also described there being an expectation from others for an individual to uphold certain practices during their life which has been explored in earlier themes within this theme analysis. It is possible that Ellen was conveying her perception that some young Pakistani Muslim women are in positions where they are unable to challenge the way in their communities function and in seeking support to help manage the adversity they experience as a result of the "pressures" of meeting the expectations of others.

### 3.3.4 Losing Social Acceptance

A sub-theme which further exemplifies the master theme of 'Speaking Out/Getting Help' which could be the strategy of seeking help from health care professionals or other support agencies, is that this could impact a Pakistani Muslim woman's 'place in the community'. In addition, this interplays with izzat as it places the individual in a position where they experience shame and are not regarded as acceptable by their community. This is captured in this passage from Ellen's interview:

*Researcher: "Ok. And do you think izzat has an impact or has some bearing on, On women's choices, the choices that are available to them, to, get help or, Or support, or how they might cope with their problems?"*

*Ellen: "Erm. Yeah. Yeah definitely. Yeah. You know that whole thing I said to you that about erm, not having people from outside come and know your business. That's the whole, that's whole izzat thing as well. You know, to, not, to not air your dirty laundry in public"*

*Researcher: "Hmm."*

*Ellen: "...So that's the whole, that's the whole izzat thing as well. To, kind of erm, yeah that's the whole izzat thing as well. To kind of deal with your deal with your problems yourself and erm... Yeah and within your own home.*

*Erm. Also like, with like, well, with men in general, erm, I don't know about.*

*Well I know about south Asian men, they don't like people to be up in their business."*

*(Ellen, Lines 664 – 678 )*

Ellen appeared to conceptualise the experience of psychological and emotional distress as "dirty laundry" which suggested she perceived that such experiences would also be viewed negatively by those outside of the family. There was a sense of secrecy



and privacy which needed to be maintained to avoid being judged negatively by others and therefore tarnishing the honour of the individual and the family. It may be that such conceptualisations of emotional or psychological distress, as seen in this extract from Ellen's interview, are established from male opinions and interpretations of these experiences. There was a sense that Pakistani Muslim women were forced to adopt such male opinions in order to maintain their place in the community and social acceptance of others.

The sub-theme was also evidenced later in Nisha's interview. As seen previously Nisha spoke of how seeking help is not regarded as "good" which has been illustrated under the sub-theme of 'Pressures to be "Perfect"', Nisha went on to then reflect how seeking help could possibly impact an individual's positioning or standing in their community.

*Nisha: "Because in our culture, people, if they are not psychologically, if they're not well psychologically, right. They don't go to the, they don't seek the medical help, right."*

*Researcher: "Ok."*

*Nisha: "They, like that all the time. They don't, they feel shy actually, they think that it's not er, a good thing to go to, go to er Psychiatrist right..." (Nisha, Lines 394 – 400 ).*

It appears from this extract that Nisha has observed that some young Pakistani Muslim women might experience embarrassment and shame in seeking help from healthcare professionals and be regarded as a bad person by those in their community.

### **3.3.6 Summary**

In summary, this second master theme highlights how Pakistani women's efforts to uphold the cultural codes of izzat might consequently create barriers to 'Speaking Out/Getting Help' as in doing so this might be regarded as disrespectful of their cultural heritage. Furthermore, revealing their distress or interpersonal difficulties to those outside the family and culture could have unfavourable consequences for their reputation. It seemed that fear of being criticised and losing social acceptance through seeking help from external agencies could leave some women without support that might be inherently available from their family member, peers and wider community.

## **3.4 Master Theme Three: Negotiating tensions**

### **3.4.1 Introduction**

Most participants spoke of experiencing the upholding of izzat as challenging. This theme illustrates a process of 'negotiating tensions' that may arise during various stages in their lives. It appeared that this was a shared experience for many of the participants. The main dilemmas/tensions that might exist for these participants are explained within the sub-themes below:

### **3.4.2 Putting Culture (Izzat) First Versus Putting the 'Self' First**

Many of the participants described their own, or spoke of Pakistani Muslim women they knew of, who would consider that upholding their cultural practices and being highly regarded by those around them takes precedence over securing their own safety and well-being.

*Beth: Erm, the family, family pressure. Erm... If it's you know, she been divorced, second time round under the most circumstances, even domestic violence.*

*Researcher: Hmm, yeah.*

*Beth: Erm, because she doesn't really see an exit. She doesn't and she won't really get the support, she got the first time.*

*Researcher: Hmm.*

*Beth: In most cases that happens and then again it depends on what kind of family they are, and how much they take culture into perspective...*

*(Beth, Lines 351-360)*

As seen here from this extract taken from Beth's interview, she described the experience of the 'pressure' placed on another young Pakistani Muslim woman to stay in an abusive marriage by her family who appeared to place significance on upholding cultural practices. It was Beth's impression that the woman perceived that she was unable to access support or even permitted to leave this relationship. It suggested to the researcher that should cultural practices be of less importance in Pakistani families or the community, individuals are more able to access support from their family or external support services. However, it is possible that when a Pakistani Muslim family place significance in the upholding of cultural code, this may lead to a young Pakistani Muslim woman's experiences of distress being minimalized or even ignored.

An extract from the interview with Annie offers insight into what she considers to be possible strategies that she or others may have available to them for seeking help, which might also be mediated by the extent to which cultural practices and family values play a role in their lives.

*Annie: "Erm...But yeah, the honour does play a part in it because you don't want such and such person to find out that this is what's going on in your household."*

*Researcher: "Yeah."*

*Annie: " Or, quite often families. It becomes Chinese whispers, oh they've just had family problem, oh it's a divorce, you know those kind of things."*

*Researcher: "Hmm."*

*Annie: "...Those type of things. So you do have that, you know the family respect does play a part in it."*

*Researcher: "Hmm."*

*Annie: " Definitely."*

*Researcher: " Hmm."*

*Annie: " It's very much a sort of family unit. Rather than, it's my own life only."*

*(Annie, Lines 731 – 742 ).*

Listening to the responses of Annie and Beth (as seen above), the researcher considered the tension for these individuals to be that while choosing to uphold the codes of izzat this may mean that they sacrifice their own needs for the good of wider family.

Alternatively, participants in this study also discussed ways in which they negotiated how to prioritise their own needs and well-being over the expectations and pressures of their families and wider community. An example of this was seen in Shamima's experience of taking advice from a friend and seeking help from her doctor.

*Shamima: "I went to the doctors for depression because one of my friends kept nagging, well go and have some, pills, it'll help it, it will help, it will help and I went once and I didn't take it for very long and I don't think it helped and the doctor said to me that he believes while you're in that situation, like that, you know, pills are not going to help you."*

*(Shamima, Lines 498 – 502 ).*

Shamima appeared to be able to find a way to attend to her personal well-being despite her awareness of the codes of izzat and the responsibilities she had to her family and community.

Annie provided a powerful description of how a Pakistani Muslim woman might be able to negotiate putting herself first and what the consequences are if a woman perceives herself as unable to “get away”.

*Annie: “Cos quite often that’s What we do, not the wider family, we get the whole family, but the parents involved and if you think, ok, this is it, I’m not standing for it anymore. Then, they would get out of the situation and they’d think, stuff it, I’ve had enough, I can’t deal with this... Erm. However, some people might be too weak and they might think, no, I’ve made this decision especially if it was a love-marriage something...”*

*Researcher: “Hmm”*

*Annie: “Like thing giving the marriage scenario. I can’t get away from this. Erm, I don’t know what to do and they just sort of spiral, spiral, spiral and quite often live quite unhappy lives. So it will vary from person to person naturally. Erm, increasingly, like I said as time is going on, I think a lot of people are coming out of the shells. And they’re coming, to realise that no, they do have more options” (Annie, Lines 627 – 638 ).*

Annie reflects on what she considers to be a process of change, or finding independence, that some Pakistani Muslim women may be experiencing in their families or within the Pakistani Muslim community. In addition, there appeared to be situations which can facilitate an individual’s negotiation in putting their own needs and well-being before that of family honour. As seen above, Annie spoke of women having awareness of alternative strategies to manage difficulties in their marriage.

Nisha also explained that if an individual is able to make a self-assured decision (or negotiate the tension of putting their 'self' first) together with support of their immediate family, this can also aid some women to find resources within themselves to help them manage their emotional distress.

*Nisha: "Erm, yeah. Basically, if they don't go and seek medical help, right. They can help themselves, if they think, basically it depends oneself, if they think, they have to do this and, and they have to be satisfied in doing that. So I think when they have this point in their mind, so then they can be emotionally, physically and psychologically, content with themselves. So, plus if their family encourage, if their family advise them, give them good advice and tell them, that you are freely allowed to do anything you like, you wish to do. So, I think that would help them." (Nisha, Lines 517 – 525 ).*

It would appear from the above extracts from the interviews with Annie and Nisha, that freedom of choice and preserving their own well-being is enabled by this being supported by the individual's family. Additionally, both Annie and Nisha expressed their view that this process is also determined by the individual (young Pakistani Muslim woman) possibly demonstrating personal characteristic, for example asserting their own needs, showing confidence, strength of character and positive self-esteem.

### **3.4.3 Seeking Help – Adapting Izzat**

As illustrated in Theme 1, Pakistani women might seek help within their family in order to uphold izzat. However, other participants spoke about needing help from other sources too, and whilst for some this could bring them into conflict with izzat, for

others this offered the possibility of much needed additional support. Some of the participants were able to consider seeking help outside of health professionals (conflicting with izzat) or as well as those “close” to them (upholding izzat). Examples of participant extracts follow below, of the types of appropriate interventions.

*Shamima: “Really, you would have to seek help, I mean I would try and take them to a doctor or, or erm, phone the Samaritans. But, wha-what I realise, you can only do so much... Erm, but I think that, you know, you can’t always get that help, but using the practical day-to-day, getting through the day, you need help with, someone to talk to, someone to, help you see that there is light at the end of the tunnel. I feel that otherwise you just feel that, you know, there’s no, getting out of it.”*

*(Shamima, Lines 790 – 811 ).*

When reflecting on what she would advise a friend to do if they experienced emotional distress, it appeared that engaging with medical treatment or support services was not out of Shamima’s frame of reference and a strategy she considered to be of some benefit. However, this was considered to have its limitations as a useful alternative strategy and was seen to be found in a number of social interventions.

The importance of Islam was highlighted by many of the participants not only as a strategy to help maintain emotional well-being but was also seen to help facilitate the negotiation of *putting the ‘self’ first*. This extract from Beth’s interview clearly identified the sources of support that were available to her and enabled her to protect herself and her children from abuse.

*Beth: “I really, I really erm, from my own personal experience, two things that have*

*made it easy for me, is number one a very supportive family. Number two, knowing that Islam won't allow me to oppress myself, nor others. And number three actually, a third point is this country actually gives you all the advantages and all the exits erm, to actually escape from this and know that you're not alone. If you walk out of that door, you've got support and you haven't got that in any other country that I am aware of. It makes a HUGE difference when you know you got back-up. Without the back-up then you have to stay there. "*

*(Beth, Lines 382 – 389 ).*

Islamic teachings were perceived as guiding some of the participants in this study to empowerment and standing up for their human rights which, also parallel British legislation.

*Annie: "Committing suicide, because... God's given you this life at the end of the day, [Annie speech quickens] - and he will take it when he chooses, so you know, know those kind of things wouldn't go through practicing Muslims' head as such Erm, but, yeah, for some people that don't have that, erm they probably would consider it, if, if, things are really that bad obviously."*

*(Annie, Lines 462 – 466 ).*

It was also a part of Annie's lived experience, that Islamic teachings could be a protective factor for Pakistani Muslim women against attempting suicide.

#### **3.4.4 Leaving their Family**

A further tension that some of the participants spoke of was what it meant to seek help, which had many conceptual layers. The idea of leaving their family was spoken about as a way of escaping abuse by some of the participants. As theme 1, sub-theme '*Tolerating their distress*' showed, this was not an option for many of the participants



because of preserving their own and their family's izzat. Ellen's extract below further illustrates how there are some women who choose to stay in abusive marriages because the alternative results in them becoming *family-less*, which in turn impacts on their izzat and how this is perceived by others,

*Ellen: "That is a REALLY, REALLY big thing. Like, erm... Now days divorces are*

*quite common and it's, it's ok to get married again and stuff like that, erm.*

*But I've, don't really hear of a lot of where people wanna marry that's all,*

*already got married with children. And I think that's one of the clinching*

*points of, about keeping the marriages together because, we know, it's very*

*hard to then find another man that would take on family..."*

*(Ellen, Lines 714 – 719 ).*

It seems that Ellen possibly draws comparison between western culture and where divorce and getting remarried is regarded as more acceptable than in some Pakistani Muslim communities. Therefore this might be an additional factor which explains why these individuals stay in abusive marriages.

Equally leaving a marriage, for Shamima, was so far out of her repertoire of strategies to manage the consequences this was having on her and her children, that when this was suggested by a friend, Shamima appeared to be rejecting of this advice. It is possible that this was regarded as not a viable option for her at the time.

*Shamima: "I remember, there was, there was one, person I told, you was saying you*

*know, how they, you're husband's treating you like this, you need to get out of this*

*marriage, end it, it's no good for you, come to me, I'll help you and I was so shocked that she said that and I ran a mile..."* (Shamima, Lines 666 – 670 ).

Furthermore, it might also be the case that if a Pakistani Muslim woman, for example with Beth's cousin, chooses to leave her abusive marriage she might be faced with the dilemma of being abandoned by her family of origin and without any form of financial or social support, which can be far more threatening than staying in the marriage.

*Beth: "She stays in it because the children are much older. And her Dad, would say. No way am I taking you back."* (Beth, Lines 545 – 546 ).

However, there were examples given by the participants of families who supported and encouraged abused women to leave an abusive marriage and to return home, as Beth witnessed in her own family, *"they told me to leave the first time there was an incident"* (Beth, Lines 145 – 146 ).

### **3.4.5 Finding Acceptance**

The final tension that some of the participants spoke about was a need to find acceptance as individual Pakistani women in a western society, and being less restricted by the rules of izzat. This sub-theme emerged from a sense that there is a shift in not only the perceptions held by some of the study participants but also of those whose life experiences they drew upon when interviewed. There was a suggestion that some Pakistani Muslim women (some of the study participants and individuals they referred to) are less accepting of situations that cause them emotional distress and more accepting of finding alternative ways as set out by cultural codes of conduct, to manage and even alleviate their distress. The participants in this study

were all born in the UK (second generation) and were aged between 24 and 40 years old. It is possible that what is regarded here as a process of change could be attributed to the participants being of a younger generation to that of their parents, grandparents and elders in their community. As illustrated in Shamima's example, as the woman she talked about gets older she is somewhat less bound by cultural practices like upholding izzat and is able to act with more independence.

*Shamima: "She does, and carries on and this is her life. I mean she probably doesn't, she doesn't need to be re-moved from the situation but, you, you can see she's, you know she's stressed out, she loves her cats excessively, because maybe she doesn't get it from anywhere else, I don't know, but you can see it sometimes. Erm, but I think people are putting up with it less and less, apparently divorce is growing in the over 50s...Hmm. And people not really prepared to, to put up with what they used to. Or when it come to retirement sometimes, you know you get people, yeah, you know, you develop different interests and you want to do different things and you know, you haven't got the children to keep you together anymore..."*

*(Shamima, Lines 827 - 838 ).*

It is possible that what Shamima is alluding to is that older Pakistani women find ways to put their needs before upholding the codes of izzat and being perceived as 'perfect' becomes less significant. This suggested to the researcher that the factors which once motivated these individuals to tolerate their distress appear to be of less importance.

In addition, Nisha also highlighted that there are changes in how younger generations, both in Pakistan and in the UK, are informed about the cultural practices of their elders which is possibly less "oppressive" and more freeing for women,

*Nisha: "When it is like erm, these things have been, going on, from generations and generations right, so people from the city, they go to the villages and they try to persuade and convince people that they're, that it's not right to do these things. Because in the world, one has to go out and see and basically enjoy, one can not live inside one four walls always, all your life. One has to go out and enjoy and everything and people from the cities are going to the villages and they are very convincing and encouraging people to do so. So I think things are changing there."*

*(Nisha, Lines 565 –577 ).*

This extract from Nisha's interview suggests to the researcher that those from less traditional families/communities are sharing their experience and educating those who are closely tied to cultural practices about alternative ways of coping with distress and accessing help. This also suggests that immigration to other countries or moving away from isolated communities might help young Pakistani Muslim women to develop independence and embrace freedom of choice.

### **3.4.6 Summary**

In summary, this last master theme of 'negotiating tensions' encapsulates the various dilemmas and challenges that the participants in this study have experienced or potentially encounter when considering what strategies are available to them or whether they are able to seek help for emotional distress and maintain their well-being. It suggests that there may be more flexibility in the way in which codes of izzat are being interpreted and practised over time and as the generation gap increases between those who immigrated to the UK from Pakistan and those who are born and reside in the UK (and subsequent generations). In addition, it is possible that through

exposure to, or awareness of alternative strategies to manage psychological distress, these individuals have a wider range of resources available to them.

### **3.5 Summary of Analysis**

The researcher applied an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis framework in order to review the data collected from interviews with six young Pakistani Muslim women living in the UK in attempt to answer the research questions outlined. Three master themes were identified, the first being '*Upholding the Rules of Izzat*' which offers insight and understanding of the participants' lived experiences of upholding the cultural codes and practices of izzat. This theme also encapsulates how upholding the codes of izzat has implications for strategies (both personal coping resources and seeking help from others) in managing psychological distress. Some participants allude to the cultural code of izzat determining whether a young Pakistani Muslim woman can disclose their experience of psychological distress or be attended to by others. More significantly, the master theme demonstrated some possible life experiences that might lead to self-harm and attempted suicide, for example when experiencing unmanageable psychological distress and isolation, in the absence of family support or might be an act of desperation. The second main theme '*Speaking out/getting help*' was conceptualised to illustrate possible obstacles that arise for young Pakistani Muslim women prior to disclosing their experiences of psychological distress or seeking help from others. This theme also shows what disclosure means and the implications for the individual, family or community. The final main theme of '*Negotiating tensions*', encapsulates the dilemmas and tensions that the participants experience when considering codes of izzat (personal and familial) and accessing support in times of psychological distress and how these are negotiated. This theme

answers the second research question, which was to understand how the codes of izzat possibly mediate the help-seeking strategies that the participants perceived as available or inaccessible to them. It illustrates the various dilemmas and how these might be negotiated to enable young Pakistani women to self-manage or seek help when experiencing psychological distress. Interestingly, this theme exemplifies how the practice of izzat varies over time and whether the individual is exposed to alternative cultural practices or coping strategies, yet can also be mediated by and individual's country of birth or residence.

# Chapter 4: Discussion

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## 4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the analysis of the data collected in this study in relation to the overall research aims and more specifically the research questions outlined by the researcher. Where applicable these results will be linked with existing literature identified in the introductory chapter of this paper. Lastly, the limitations and critical reflection of the research project will be discussed.

Following a review of the existing literature, the general aims of this research project were in response to concerns by researchers and practitioners that studies have shown that there is risk of suicide and self-harm in young South Asian women in the UK (Bhugra & Desai, 2002, Raleigh & Polato, 2004, Anand & Cochrane, 2005, Husain et al, 2006 & Khan & Waheed, 2009). This evidence prompted the NHS and academics to review the lowered use of psychological services and how best to facilitate the psychological well-being of these individuals (Johnson & Nadirshaw, 1993; James & Prilleltensky, 2000; McKenzie, 2008). The limited scope of the previous research, was also of interest to the researcher. Therefore the research questions in this study were two-fold. The first was to develop an in-depth understanding of how second generation young Muslim Pakistani women, who participated in this project, understand the meaning of izzat and what role if any, does it have in their lives. The second research aim was to explore whether there was interplay, between upholding the codes of izzat and the participants' management and help-seeking strategies for psychological distress.

#### **4.1.1 Reflections on the interview and data analysis process**

*Interviewing the women who participated in this study generated insights for me both as a researcher and as a counselling psychologist in training. It was crucial for me to bracket my personal experiences and ensure that I held a boundary between myself as a practitioner and interviewer. Reflecting on the interviews conducted with the participants in the study, I wondered what it might have been like for these individuals to take part. Bearing in mind one of the main themes identified was 'Upholding distress means tolerating distress' I questioned to what extent some of the participants experienced taking part in this study as conflicting with this cultural code, which could be stress-inducing. In addition, some might have experienced a sense of restriction in what they thought as permitted to disclose in relation to their own lived experiences. On the other hand, it is possible that for some of the interviewees, they may have interpreted the interview experience as a space to voice their distress as opposed to remaining silent. When listening to the narratives of the participants, some of the information they shared may have caused them to feel distressed. In the specific case of interviewing Ellen, she became tearful while in the interview. It was important for me to attend to her distress yet I was mindful to not shift into a therapeutic role, which was challenging at the time. I checked if Ellen wanted to continue the interview and reassured her that there was no obligation for her to continue the interview. Ellen told me she wanted to progress with the interview after a short break and I chose to respect her wishes. However, I wondered whether she would find the interview process as an opportunity to 'speak out' or whether it was perceived as contravening the codes of izzat. At the end of the interview I offered Ellen the list of services if she needed further support after the interview.*



*The latter may have been particularly an issue for one of the participants (Beth), where there was a sense that she wanted to tell her story of how the cultural practices and codes of upholding izzat caused her to experience somatic symptoms and left her with, what seemed to be, feelings of resentment about what she had endured. Whereas with another participant, (Nisha) it was my impression that she wanted to convey her positive engagement and allegiance to upholding izzat and the cultural codes she shared with her family and community. It appeared that Nisha located discontent and restrictions in other Pakistani Muslim women who typically lived in Pakistan and not in the UK.*

*It was also possible that the participants may have experienced me as an 'outsider' to their community and that in talking to me this may be in conflict with the codes of izzat and in doing so they are disrespecting or shaming their own and their family honour. This may have been relevant for Ellen and Dina, who in particular perceived speaking to counsellors in this way or possibly as interfering in their 'business'. Therefore, as a trainee counselling psychologist I may have also been regarded as an 'intruder'. Conversely, being a British Asian woman myself, this may have enabled some of the participants to speak openly about their experiences whereby speaking to another researcher from another ethnic background may have constrained the narratives of these participants. At times I felt fortunate that the participants shared their experiences and were open with me. In these interviews I found myself at more ease and able to use the interview prompts to facilitate a more in-depth exploration. In two of the interviews I was unsure whether a trusting relationship had been established between myself and the interviewee and therefore I found it more difficult to access the internal subjective experiences of these individuals. I felt more anxious about*

*prompting for further information or elaboration from the participants which may have impacted on the data collected.*

## **4.2 Summary of the Main Findings**

Data analysis has demonstrated the relevance of upholding izzat in some Pakistani Muslim women and their families. The findings suggest that upholding izzat may be essential if they are to receive support from within the family and culture, but that it could also be a source of emotional or psychological distress. It was also illustrated how codes of izzat mediated the types of strategies/resources that the interviewees would implement to cope with and manage distressing experiences.

*As can be seen here, the concept of izzat somewhat translates into English language and western culture. Whilst it is less extreme, it is possible to see the same themes or processes are there in many individuals from other ethnic backgrounds. I have often seen in clinical practice that clients feel the need to identify themselves in terms of constraints they feel society places around them, and this differs from person to person as a function of not just culture, but also early childhood experience, parenting, education and, in an interactional sense, our heredity.*

An additional finding was that some participants perceived that self-harm or attempted suicide was a strategy that other Pakistani Muslim women would consider if emotional distress became unmanageable or if they experienced isolation from others, although it was not an experience they acknowledged themselves. Although self-management of psychological distress and ‘*Tolerating Distress and Isolation*’ enabled some of the participants and other Pakistani Muslim women, to follow the cultural teachings of their family and community, there are possible adverse effects of this.

Hence, suicide or self-harm might seem the only option available or an act of desperation for those most vulnerable, isolated and unable to seek help.

The findings illustrated how attempts to uphold the cultural codes of izzat might, as a result, generate obstacles for Pakistani Muslim women, who might need to seek help from outside the family or community. This in turn might be difficult to overcome even if it is to be of benefit to them.

The theme of '*Negotiating Tensions*' was identified which also suggested that there may be a shift in the way in which codes of izzat are being interpreted and practiced over time. In addition, it is possible that through exposure to, or awareness of alternative strategies to manage psychological distress, these are becoming more available to them.

#### **4.3 Izzat and its role in day-to-day living of Pakistani Muslim women**

The researcher found there to be limited literature that describes the nature of young South Asian women's experiences of the codes of izzat and how this in turn impacts their lives. This study focussed on uncovering a detailed and in-depth set of meanings that the Pakistani Muslim women in this study had developed for the concept of izzat, for example "respect" or "honour" of the self and their family. It was evident that all the participants in this study were able to reflect upon their own personal definitions of izzat, ("unwritten rules"), how these were established and their experience of how this impacted various stages in their lives. The participants' narratives align with previous scholars and existing research (Takhar, 2005; Chew-Graham et al, 2002; Gilbert, et al, 2004) on this cultural value-system and the practices associated with it.

Although Takhar, (2005) discussed codes of izzat and its practice, in the context of Punjabi Sikh culture, this study has shown this concept to be applicable for the Pakistani Muslim women included in this study. However, the data collected in this study offers additional information about the differences that exist in the extent to which izzat is engaged with. It was also seen that there were variations in the way it was interpreted and put into practice for the individual (self), within families and how it is perceived or judged by others. This was specifically illustrated by one of the participants (*Beth*) who distinguished the difference between an Islamic and cultural definition of izzat. This study showed that there was no universal meaning of izzat for the participants within this study or across previous research or literature and therefore it is not of benefit to make generalisations about the experiences of individuals from South Asian populations.

Through listening to the discussions of the study participants it has been possible to further our understanding of how cultural codes and practices are carried through generations. This study provided evidence for the work of Erikson (1980) who suggested that “People all over the world seem convinced that to make the right (meaning *their*) kind of human being, one must consistently introduce the sense of shame, doubt, guilt, and fear into a child’s life... Only the patterns vary. Some cultures begin to restrict early in life, some late, some abruptly, other more gradually” (Erikson, 1980 pp74). The cultural practices of the women in this study and the individuals they spoke of, together with the extent to which these practices are engaged with seemed to be maintained, just as Erikson (1980) described in his writings on the development of identity in conventional cultures. This transference of the values and belief systems appear to serve a dual purpose. On one hand, when cultural traditions or practices are carried through the family or community, this enables those to stay connected to their

country of origin. It is also seems that the codes of izzat also serve to guide the behaviours in order to earn respect from others and not cause shame.

As previously reviewed, individuals from collectivist cultures in South Asia and diasporas outside these countries tend to adhere to belief systems and practices which emphasise the significance of preserving immediate and extended family relationships and putting the needs of others before the self. These behaviours are more readily witnessed as opposed to individualism (Triandis, 1989; Faver, Narang & Bhadha, 2000). The participants in this study spoke of similar experiences observed by these authors in that it would appear that in an individual's effort to uphold their own izzat and the izzat of the family, they are often mindful of how their behaviours are perceived of judged by others and are usually oriented towards the interests of their families and those around them. This was also a process or issue which had been identified by Gilbert et al, 2004).

Literature has also suggested that gender-specific roles and attitudes exist in collectivist cultures, where women are not given equal opportunities to men, particularly with education or having a professional career. It was also noted that South Asian women are expected to possess much of the responsibility for care-taking of the home and their children and there appeared to be restrictions in their social interactions and interpersonal relationships (Faver, et al, 2002; Triandis, 1989). The interviews with some participants in this study showed the relevance of these observations personally for the Pakistani Muslim women who participated, as well as for the Pakistani Muslim women they spoke of. *Beth* described her experiences with her wider family as "controlling" and having to be "submissive" to their expectations.

Therefore, it appears that underlying meaning of izzat is that it defines what is right or permitted to the culture, the community, the entire family and for the self.

Furthermore, in an attempt to develop an understanding of izzat *Shamima* was also able to express her perceptions of how these cultural practices have crossed the shores of South Asia with those who migrated to the UK in the 1960s and 1970s. Yet, she drew particular attention to the differences that exist between middle and working classes in the extent to which these codes are upheld. It was considered that those from working (or “lower”) classes have stronger allegiances to upholding izzat than those from the middle class. Also, some of the participants also explained how these differences exist between those born in Pakistan and those born in the UK. A possible explanation for the differences in the engagement and adherence to izzat found between individuals may be in partial owing to assimilation (Stopes-Roe & Cochrane, 1987) or asserting autonomy within these participants or other Pakistani Muslim women. Stopes-Roe & Cochrane (1987) suggested that assimilation was more likely to occur with second generation rather than in previous generations. Hence, those who took part in this study were born in the UK to parents who originated in Pakistan and therefore their attachment to their parents’ country of origin or culture may be to a lesser degree than their parents. This process of assimilation is potentially illustrated in *Beth’s* change of attitude towards upholding izzat in a cultural context, although not in its religious context. *Beth* reported that her regard for izzat had diminished over time. Alternatively, the shift in *Beth’s* cultural identity could be indicative of what Erikson described as the development of fidelity.

Although the participants included in this study were all second generation Pakistani Muslim women, some of these individuals appeared more accepting of adopting a cultural identity, in particular upholding izzat, which was more in line with their parents, grandparents, friends or their local community ('Traditionalism' as described by Berry in 1997). It appeared that in efforts to uphold their own and their family's izzat and cultural practices handed down the family through older generations, some Pakistani Muslim women might experience this as retaining a subordinate role. Interestingly the two participants whose behaviours and belief systems appeared to more attune to the codes of izzat were the youngest participants to be included in the research sample. For these individuals, it is possible that they are yet to face situations or engage in relationships where their cultural values are challenged. Unlike *Beth* and *Shamima*, *Dina* and *Nisha* are unmarried and reside with their immediate families and therefore may experience less pressure or restrictions related to having to "put up" with domestic violence or meeting the expectations of their family, which *Shamima* and *Beth* had disclosed. However, *Dina* and *Nisha* may too experience abiding by the codes of izzat as taking on a submissive role meaning perhaps that they were unable to speak openly to the researcher.

It is with these findings in mind, that it is possible to develop a better understanding of whether the cultural concept of izzat plays a role in how psychological distress is experienced in Pakistani Muslim women.

#### **4.4 What role do the codes of izzat play in the experience and management of psychological distress**

A finding of this study was that maintaining izzat ("Respect" and "Honour") often meant to some of the participants, that they demonstrate an ability to "deal" or "put

up” with adversity. This could be indicative of what previous researchers (Cochrane & Stopes Roe, 1981; Anand & Cochrane, 2005; Nazroo, 1997 and Hsu et al, 2004) called *cultural resilience*. In comparison, Lee (2002) had also demonstrated how individuals who possessed greater ethnic identity were more likely to exhibit psychological well-being. Although it might be the case that some Pakistani Muslim women are able to safeguard themselves from disrespecting or dishonouring their selves and their families together with maintaining their psychological well-being, this may not be the experience of all Pakistani Muslim women. As seen in some of the individuals who were interviewed, it is possible that in their efforts to uphold izzat and the perceived pressure or obligation can in itself cause psychological distress. Hence, leaving individuals feeling despair or isolated and resulting in thoughts of self-harm or suicide. This finding parallels with Paul Gilbert’s previous research on the link between depression, suicide and self-harm and experience of shame, guilt and low self-worth (Gilbert et al, 2004).

Within the sub-theme of ‘Tolerating Distress and Isolation’ it was suggested that it was important for many of the participants and for the other Pakistani Muslim women they spoke of, to protect their own izzat and that of their families. This in turn meant that there are lived experiences which are not spoken of, particularly to those outside of their family, friends or the community. What was more surprising was that these participants were aware of other Pakistani Muslim women not disclosing experiences of abuse in order to avoid disrespecting their self or their family. Ultimately they would be regarded as challenging their cultural identity and risking their place in their community. It was noted that this might place these individuals in situations where they are not able to escape distressing and abusive experiences. The sense that some individuals might feel trapped could also cause or exacerbate psychological distress to



the extent that some individuals may even commit suicide or self-harm. This finding is comparable to the discoveries of Gilbert et al (2004) who showed that the South Asian women in their study regarded the experience of entrapment to be as a result of being abused. Furthermore, the women in their study felt they were unable to discuss this without bringing shame on the family, and described feeling subordinated and unable to access support.

In contrast to research evidence which has suggested that individuals of South Asian origin are psychologically healthier than the populations they were compared to (Cochrane & Stopes Roe, 1981; Anand & Cochrane, 2005 and Nazroo, 1997), this study showed that some Pakistani Muslim women not only experience depressive or anxious symptomatology but that they are also able to recognise these in themselves and in the other Pakistani Muslim women they spoke of. However, this study illustrated that those who reported personal experiences of psychological distress or witnessed these experiences in other Pakistani Muslim women, perceived this as consequence of marital difficulties or abusive relationships rather than any other factors or internal processes. These findings are therefore in line with studies which have revealed that in participants from South Asian backgrounds, psychological distress is attributed to relationships or external factors/pressures (Malik 2000; Hussain & Cochrane, 2004), family pressures and abuse or gender-role expectations (Hicks & Bhugra, 2003). In addition, they identified that participants perceived that self-harm and suicide attempts were strategies Pakistani Muslim women would consider if emotional distress became intolerable, or as a way of coping with distress. This finding aligns with the study conducted by Chew-Graham et al (2002) into the causes of self-harm and suicide of South Asian women in Manchester (UK).

Some of the participants spoke of their experiences of physiological symptoms (e.g. *"IBS syndromes"* or *"bloated"*) which they seemingly related to their personal experiences of psychological distress. This links with existing literature (Anand & Cochrane, 2005; Karasz, 2005), however, the remarkable difference reported here, is that acts of self-harm or suicide may occur as a result of being diagnosed with a terminal physical illness.

#### **4.5 Do the codes of upholding izzat mediate the help-seeking strategies for psychological distress?**

As discussed above, in order to uphold their own and their family's izzat, some Pakistani Muslim women might experience this as retaining a subordinate role (Gilbert et al, 2004). Furthermore, this study was able to offer an additional dimension to existing literature in that it provides evidence of a process of change that might be unfolding as younger generations distance themselves from such practices. Analysis of the interview data suggested that many of the participants lived experiences were of 'negotiating tensions'. This finding bears some similarities to previous literature which has identified that cultural codes practiced by individuals from South Asian countries of origin, in this instance Pakistan, have a direct impact on what strategies or resources are available to them to alleviate their distress (Gilbert et al, 2004).

As asserted by James & Prilleltensky (2000), a 'good person' or 'good families' are expected to not speak about their difficulties to those outside of their family and community. This was echoed by one of the participants who reported that it was important for her to be perceived as 'Good' by others. Another participant spoke of how disclosing personal or family difficulties to a *"stranger"* (who she also associated as being a *"Counsellor or Social services"*) as being disrespectful or contravening the

codes of izzat. Hence, many of the participants considered that it was acceptable to them and their families if they discussed such experiences with close or older family members, friends or individuals in their community. A key finding was that one of the participants did not consider these resources as permitted. She reported that she would not speak about her personal distress or family conflict to those “*outside*” the family and that she (and other Pakistani Muslim women) would need to engage in self-help strategies or personal resources (for example “*will-power*” or “*getting on with it*”). It is plausible that for these individuals great importance is placed on preserving their ethnic or cultural identity and their choices and behaviours reflect traditionalist and collectivist ideals as previously reported by Bhugra et al, (1999) and Faver, Narang & Bhadha, (2000) respectively. Alternatively, some of the participants interviews explained that they were able to negotiate between putting their own needs before their cultural practices. This enabled them to seek help from healthcare professionals or access legal support in instances where there was domestic abuse. This could be indicative of these women making a transition or a shift in both their cultural-identity and self-identity (Guman, 2005). Hence, undergoing a process of acculturation (Bhugra, 1999) or assimilation (Gordan, 1964; Stopes-Roe & Cochrane, 1987), whereby they have been exposed to, or can take up alternative ways of coping with psychological distress and adapting the codes of izzat. The information gathered here may offer further understanding of the subjective experiences of “dual-socialisation” and the “clash of cultures” as called for by Guman (2005). Furthermore, these individuals appear to have overcome experiences of being silenced or trapped in distressing situations which could also be facilitated by these individuals being unlike their parent’s generation and living in the UK from birth which in turn having an impact

on the way psychological distress is managed and the strategies for seeking help that are available or regarded as permitted to these individuals.

‘Cultural conflict’ as highlighted by existing research (Inman, 2006) has been proposed as one of the processes that can contribute to the experience of distress. The current study may offer some explanation of what the nature of this conflict might be. It is suggested that if a Pakistani Muslim woman is able to *negotiate the tension* of putting her *self* before her *culture*, she might be able to consider accessing help from outside of her family, friends or community. Yet, this process may in itself increase feelings distress to the individual and affect whether or not they take up psychological support or interventions. Consequently, *putting culture first* might allow for the individual to hold her place in the community or not lose her cultural identity by drawing on her own resources and seeking support from elders in the family and community. However, should her distress become intolerable or unmanageable she may be faced with conflict or dilemma as to where she can turn to for help and therefore engage in self-harming or suicide attempts.

In addition, practicing Islam and awareness of Islamic teachings was seen to be empowering for one of the participants and was also thought to guide the decisions of another. In the case where one of the participants experienced domestic violence for a number of years, she reported that she was enabled to leave these relationships due to her awareness of what she has learnt through her affiliation to Islam. In addition, another participant illustrated how Islam does not permit followers to take their own life (commit suicide) and therefore this would prevent individuals from carrying out such behaviours. These examples illustrate how being a practising Muslim women might protect some Pakistani Muslim women helping them to remain in distressing

situations, as well as how it can perform as a possible “protective” variable as proposed by Hsu et al (2004).

An interesting finding of this study was some of the interviewee’s perceptions as to what services and strategies have been useful in their experience or how interventions might be tailored to meet their own needs and the needs of other Pakistani Muslim women. Aside from psychological interventions, one of the participants indicated that the police service was a source of support that aided her whilst in an abusive marriage. However, at times she did feel she was treated unfairly. It was also reported that some Pakistani Muslim women would benefit from being made aware of how they may be able to access “*practical*” support as it is often concerns about being homeless, financially disadvantaged or without family support that make it difficult for them to leave abusive marriages or families.

#### **4.6 Limitations of this research**

As can be seen from the discussion of the study findings, this project has gathered in-depth knowledge and a better understanding as to how the participants make sense of their lived experiences that is both congruent and further develops existing literature. However, on reflection, there are areas of this research project which might be considered as limitations or indicative of how the research may be developed further.

Due to the scope of the research project, the researcher’s main research aim was to explore the meaning the research participants ascribed to the concept of izzat; how this impacted on their experience of psychological distress and the help-seeking strategies these Pakistani Muslim women might utilise to manage such experiences. However, it is acknowledged that this is only one element of Pakistani culture and that there may be other relevant and even more pertinent features that impact the lived

experiences of the individuals involved in this study. It is also likely that there are aspects of the Islamic religion and the way in which it is interpreted that may also have implications for the practices and lived experiences of these participants and other Pakistani Muslim women which were not fully investigated in the current study. This may have been achieved if it had have been possible to recruit a larger sample, yet this may also have generated a broad set of meanings and inadequately answered the research questions posed by the researcher (Smith, 2003). Therefore establishing a more detailed and subjective experience of izzat was central to this study. It is further noted that owing to the size of the research sample, it is difficult to draw generalisations about the wider population of Pakistani Muslim women. In addition, it was not the intention of the researcher to apply the study findings to Pakistani Muslim women in general as this was criticism of previous research and clinical practitioners who would not attend to the inter-subjectivity; make assumptions and even stereotype the experiences of these individuals.

In addition, it is acknowledged that exploring how cultural practices (izzat) impact the attitudes, behaviours and distress of men of South Asian ethnic origin is absent in this current research study. As previously noted, the shaming and dishonour of men has been noted to be as a result of how the behaviours of their sisters or wives reflect on them and their ability to 'control' them (Gilbert et al, 2004). Therefore, it would have been equally interesting to investigate the present research questions with participants who were Pakistani Muslim men. However, if the codes of izzat pertain to Pakistani culture and not solely Pakistani women, facilitating discussions with men as a female researcher may have been more of a challenge.

Another criticism of this research might be attributed to the use of semi-structured interviews (with prompts) as a research tool within the framework of IPA. This method was successful in facilitating the collection of in-depth narratives to improve the understanding of the subjective meaning of izzat and its interplay with the lived experiences of the respondents. However, as highlighted by Silverman (2001), if a researcher is being true to 'emotionalism' then an unstructured interview is the recommended approach in which to engage with their inner world. The researcher may have chosen to pose one single open-ended question which allowed for the participants to describe the experiences that were pertinent to them. As a consequence, the data collected was co-constructed between the researcher and the interviewee, and the interviewer's views will have influenced the process. Nevertheless, the researcher endeavoured to adhere to the framework of IPA and the epistemological positioning of an interpretive-constructivist in conducting this study. Furthermore, it is hoped that through the use of a reflective journal, the researcher has been transparent about any preconceived assumptions that may have been present prior and during the research process.

# Chapter 5: Conclusion

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In this chapter, the researcher will consider the implications of the findings for theory and practice, and with particular reference to counselling psychology together with recommendations. The researcher will also make suggestions for possible areas of further interest and research in order to develop this area of research and evidence-based practice. This study has shown the possible ways in which the codes and practices of upholding the izzat of the self and the family might impact on the lives and psychological well-being of Pakistani women. The information gathered also offers insights as to how these cultural beliefs and value-systems can have bearing on the resources and help-seeking strategies these women utilise for maintaining psychological well-being.

## **5.1 Areas of further interest and research**

It is hoped that the current study will prompt interest in other researchers to conduct further research in this area. The researcher recruited a small sample of Pakistani Muslim women for the purpose of this study. It is crucial that equal attention is given to the subjective experiences of individuals from different South Asian ethnic origins. Although it was highlighted as a study limitation, it would be useful that other cultural practices of all ethnicities be further investigated with similar research questions that were proposed here.

In addition, the narratives of the participants showed that some women may find themselves positioned in “submissive” roles to “controlling” husbands or families. Further research into the cultural and other discourses these individuals might draw on



as to how these roles are negotiated might produce deeper insights into the experiences of these women.

The serious issues of 'Honour' killings which were touched upon by some of the participants as well as the experiences of entering into forced marriages (both of which have been extensively documented in the media), certainly warrant further research as there was not enough scope for an in-depth exploration of these issues in this current study.

## **5.2 Implications for existing theory and recommendations for practice**

These research findings develop our understanding of the inter-subjective experiences of a small sample of participants who belong to a sub-group of the British population. As outlined in chapter 1, the practice of counselling psychologists includes the development and provision of interventions that facilitate a collaborative 'helping' relationship between clients and practitioners, and which is grounded in the humanistic model (Woolfe, Dryden & Strawbridge, 2003). Counselling psychologists and other disciplines are also mindful as to how best they can deliver a culturally sensitive approach, or as Johnson & Nadirshaw (1993) asserted, a 'transcultural' approach to their work. Existing research has made significant efforts to inform clinical practice yet there appeared to be sparse literature which documents the personal meanings or individual narratives of lived experiences. A further limitation of the literature is that the authors, many of whom acknowledge the diversity within this ethnic group, often make generalisations which can lead to an inadequate knowledge-base and misrepresentation.

As James & Prilleltensky (2002) pointed out, healthcare professionals need to be aware of what is morally at risk for the person who is experiencing psychological distress. The study findings contribute to our understanding of such individual and idiosyncratic experiences which is the relevant to the work of Counselling Psychologists, but offers information about cultural practices that may bring clients to therapy and pose barriers to seeking help. This in turn would help to equip practitioners with awareness and the sensitivity required in order to address such issues as well as encouraging discussions around how best to engage with Pakistani Muslim women.

The findings suggest that healthcare professionals and those in other supporting roles need to be mindful of the impact of izzat on Pakistani Women's ability to engage with the help offered. It may also raise awareness of the struggle some Pakistani women may experience with negotiating the tensions between speaking out/getting out in light of the difficulties or consequences that they may endure as a result of this action.

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## **Appendices**

**Appendix A: Notification of Amendment to Original Ethical Approval**

**Appendix B: Original Letter of Ethical Approval from Research Ethics Committee**

**Appendix C: Research Study Advertisement**

**Appendix D: Participant Information Sheet**

**Appendix E: Participant Consent Form**

**Appendix F: Example of Interview Schedule**

**Appendix G: Example of Interview Transcript Analysis**

**Appendix H: Example of Theme Development**

## Appendix A: Notification of Amendment to Original Ethical Approval

Cerisse Marie Gunasinghe  
13 Shorwell Court  
Oakhill Road  
Purfleet  
Essex RM19 1TZ

5 February 2013



Student number: 0824188

Dear Cerisse

### **Notification of a Change of Thesis Title:**

I am pleased to inform you that the School Research Degree Sub-Committee has approved the change of thesis title. Both the old and new thesis titles are set out below:

**Old thesis title:** Understanding Discourses: Constructs of Izzat in Young South Asian Women in the UK.

**New thesis title:** Understanding how Izzat impacts the lived experiences of Young Muslim Pakistan Women in the UK: A Phenomenological Approach.

Your registration period remains unchanged. Please contact me if you have any further queries with regards to this matter.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'James J. Walsh.' The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr James J Walsh  
School Research Degrees Leader  
Direct line: 020 8223 4471  
Email: j.j.walsh@uel.ac.uk

cc. Jane Lawrence

## Appendix B: Original Letter of Ethical Approval from Research Ethics Committee

Dr Megan Arroll  
School of Psychology  
Startford



ETH/13/63

30 March 2015

Dear Dr Arroll,

**Application to the Research Ethics Committee: An interpretative phenomenological analysis of the experiences that South Asian women believe place them at risk and, conversely, offer protection against psychological distress (C Gunasinghe)**

I advise that Members of the Research Ethics Committee have now approved the above application on the terms previously advised to you. The Research Ethics Committee should be informed of any significant changes that take place after approval has been given. Examples of such changes include any change to the scope, methodology or composition of investigative team. These examples are not exclusive and the person responsible for the programme must exercise proper judgement in determining what should be brought to the attention of the Committee.

In accepting the terms previously advised to you I would be grateful if you could return the declaration form below, duly signed and dated, confirming that you will inform the committee of any changes to your approved programme.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Debbie Dada', is positioned above the printed name.

Debbie Dada  
Admissions and Ethics Officer  
Direct Line: 0208 223 2976  
Email: d.dada@uel.ac.uk

---

### Research Ethics Committee: ETH/13/63

I hereby agree to inform the Research Ethics Committee of any changes to be made to the above approved programme and any adverse incidents that arise during the conduct of the programme.

Signed:.....Date: .....

Please Print Name:

## Appendix C: Research Study Advertisement

# *Working Towards Culturally Sensitive Approaches to Health Care*

Our various heritages with their customs and beliefs systems offer a rich background to our understandings of well being. Our professional approach to health and health care provision in the UK can benefit from better knowledge of this.

**Are you between 18-30 years of age?**

**Are you a Pakistani Muslim woman?**

**Would you be willing to share your views about izzat?**

If YES, you are invited to participate in a 45 – 60 min one to one **confidential** interview with me Cerisse Gunasinghe – a student of counselling psychology at the University of East London. The aim of my study is to explore the interplay between cultural customs of Pakistani Muslims, well being and support systems.

**There are no right or wrong answers  
Your views matter!**

Tel:0207 848 5381/0933 Email: <a href="mailto:cerisse0112@gmail.com">cerisse0112@gmail.com</a>	Tel:0207 848 5381/0933 Email: <a href="mailto:cerisse0112@gmail.com">cerisse0112@gmail.com</a>	Tel:0207 848 5381/0933 Email: <a href="mailto:cerisse0112@gmail.com">cerisse0112@gmail.com</a>	Tel: 0207 848 5381/0933 Email: <a href="mailto:cerisse0112@gmail.com">cerisse0112@gmail.com</a>	Tel: 0207 848 5381/0933 Email: <a href="mailto:cerisse0112@gmail.com">cerisse0112@gmail.com</a>	Tel:0207 848 5381/0933 Email: <a href="mailto:cerisse0112@gmail.com">cerisse0112@gmail.com</a>
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## **Appendix D: Participant Information Sheet**

### **Research Participant Information Sheet**

#### **University of East London**

Stratford Campus

Water Lane, London

E15 4LZ

#### **University Research Ethics Committee**

If you have any queries regarding the conduct of the programme in which you are being asked to participate, please contact the Secretary of the University Research Ethics Committee, Ms Debbie Dada, Admissions and Ethics Officer, Graduate School, University of East London, Docklands Campus, London E16 2RD (Tel 020 8223 2976, Email: [d.dada@uel.ac.uk](mailto:d.dada@uel.ac.uk))

**This study has been approved by the University of East London Research Ethics Committee (No. ETH/13/63).**

#### **The Principal Investigator(s)**

Cerisse Gunasinghe

Supervised by Dr Aneta Tunariu

Contact Address: Stratford Campus, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ

Telephone: 07983800086 including out-of-hours

Email: [cerisse0112@gmail.com](mailto:cerisse0112@gmail.com)

#### **Consent to Participate in a Research Study**

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with the information that you need to consider in deciding whether to participate in this study.

#### **Project Title**

**A qualitative exploration of Second generation UK based Young Muslim Asian Women's accounts of Izzat and its place in their everyday lives.**

#### **Project Description**

It is widely recognised that young South Asian women are at a high risk of suicide and self-harm. However, health service provision still remains limited in its cultural sensitivity. As a result, there is a lower up-take of mental health services by South Asian women. It is hoped that the information gathered from this study will add valuable information to the existing literature on the impact of cultural variations in mental health difficulties, specifically how psychological wellness and distress is experienced and whether it is mediated by cultural codes/value systems, in particular 'izzat'(honour/respect).

It is anticipated that practitioners will consult the findings of this study in their work with clients from the cultural group studied. It may be of particular use in devising culturally appropriate interventions and the re-assessment and developing of service provision.

Your involvement in this research study will require you to meet with the researcher, Cerisse Gunasinghe, for a one off interview at the University of East London (Stratford Campus). This should not take longer than one hour. The questions you will be asked are designed to collect information about the experiences of young south Asian women.

It is unlikely that you will experience any problems or difficulties by participating in study. However, you may feel uncomfortable answering some of the questions. In the event that you feel uncomfortable answering any of the questions in the study then you are free to only respond to those parts of the questions you are comfortable with. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any point. However, once the final results have been written up and submitted to the University of East London's Academic department, the information you have provided can no longer be withdrawn. The researcher will provide you with a list of contacts, should you wish to contact external services for additional support.

The information collected will remain confidential and not affect your present or future healthcare.

#### **Confidentiality of the Data**

Responses will be made anonymous in order to maintain confidentiality and stored securely for a period of 5 years. No identifying information will be used in any of the findings.

In concordance with the Data Protection Act, the data collected from this study will be stored for a period of 5 years securely in a fire-proof, lockable cupboard. Following the 5-year period, the research data will be destroyed (shredded or incinerated).

#### **Feedback to participants**

If participants wish to find out the results of the study, please provide your address details. A summary of the study and its results will then be sent to you once the researcher has completed the research.

#### **Location**

This research study is being conducted at the University of East London.

Stratford Campus. Water Lane, London. E15 4LZ

#### **Remuneration**

A maximum of £20 will be offered to you as reimbursement of your travel expenses.

#### **Disclaimer**

You are not obliged to take part in this study, and are free to withdraw at any time during tests. Should you choose to withdraw from the programme you may do so without disadvantage to yourself and without any obligation to give a reason.

**Thank you for the time you have taken to read this information sheet**

## **Appendix E: Participant Consent Form**

### **UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON**

#### **Consent to Participate in an Experimental Programme Involving the Use of Human Participants**

#### **A qualitative exploration of Second generation UK based Young Muslim Asian Women's accounts of Izzat and its place in their everyday lives.**

I have read the information leaflet relating to the above programme of research in which I have been asked to participate and have been given a copy to keep. The nature and purposes of the research have been explained to me, and I have had the opportunity to discuss the details and ask questions about this information. I understand what is being proposed and the procedures in which I will be involved have been explained to me.

I understand that my involvement in this study, and particular data from this research, will remain strictly confidential. Only the researchers involved in the study will have access to the data. It has been explained to me what will happen once the experimental programme has been completed.

I hereby freely and fully consent to participate in the study which has been fully explained to me.

Having given this consent I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the programme at any time without disadvantage to myself and without being obliged to give any reason.

Participant's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

.....

Participant's Signature

.....

Investigator's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

.....

Investigator's Signature

.....

Date: .....

## **Appendix F: Example of Interview Schedule**

Example of questions to be included in the interview schedule.

### **Background and demographic information.**

- How would you describe your ethnicity?  
Prompts –  
Place of birth, place of parents' origin, religion, language/s

### **Perceived culture**

- What is it like for you to be living in the UK as part of an Asian family?
- What has it been like for you growing up in your family?
- Does maintaining the honour of your family impact the choices you make in life?

If so, what is this like for you?

### **Perceptions of experiences of psychological distress**

- Do you think south Asian women experience psychological distress?
- What do you think it is like for them?
- What do you believe protects young Asian women from psychological distress?
- Imagine a relative/friend was having suicidal thoughts, what would you think was causing this?
- What would you advise that relative/friend to do?  
Prompts –  
Do you think they are more likely to seek help/support –  
professional/social/family, speak to family/friends?  
Or  
Is self-harm or suicide a way of release/coping strategy for managing their distress?



## Appendix G: Example of Interview Transcript Analysis

<p>What others say, judgements from other people</p>	<p>Ellen: Yeah.</p> <p>Cerisse: And are you a practicing Muslim or...</p> <p>Ellen: Well. I don't cover and I'm not very great with my prayers and stuff like that (smiles). But, I mean. I think so, in a, in, there's, there's things that I wouldn't do and stuff. I. I. I, don't, don't drink. I don't eat pork or things that aren't halal, and we do fasting. So, I, I, guess, yeah...</p> <p>Cerisse: Hmm.</p> <p>Ellen: We do observe Islam, but I wouldn't say I'm erm, strong, practicing (sp) I don't know, it's really difficult to describe that.</p> <p>Cerisse: Hmm.</p> <p>Ellen: It's really difficult to describe it. Erm, like my kids go to a Church of England school with, they're the, the only Muslims in the school.</p> <p>Cerisse: Ok.</p> <p>Ellen: Erm, and they're, and everyone was quite, you know how everyone taken a back. Oh, how comes you're sending them there and then oh my God, every weekend, I drive down to East London, so that they go to like Islamic school.</p> <p>Cerisse: Hmm.</p> <p>Ellen: And if I compare their knowledge with children that have grown up in Asian areas they're, touch wood, they know so much more...</p> <p>Cerisse: Ok.</p> <p>Ellen: ...Kind of thing. It's really funny because the same people that were like</p>	<p>Regards difference in religious practices, not wearing a hijab, commitment to prayers Things that make Ellen religious – not drinking, not eating pork/non-halal, fasting</p> <p>Not strong practicing yet observe Islam</p> <p>--Difficulty describing her religious practices</p> <p>Wanting children to have links to Islam although they attend a CoE school</p> <p>Enhanced knowledge of Islam</p>
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## Appendix H: Example of Theme Development

Participants' descriptions and experiences of izzat

Theme

	<p><b>Defined - Honour Respect</b></p>	<p>Annie: Erm... For me it would probably be... erm... The literal meaning for me will be honour and respect.</p> <p>Dina: Erm, izzat means like respect. Like self-respect...Your family respect. Respect for you religion, respect for elders. So it's all got to do with respect, yeah.</p> <p>Dina: It's like erm, if my mum's told me erm do this or do that or don't do this or don't do that. It's just for our family respect, that's why she's doing it.</p> <p>Cerisse: Hmm.</p> <p>Dina: So, it's for our own benefit, erm, if they tell us to do, to not do certain things, it's to do with our family izzat.</p> <p>Erm (lp) But I</p> <p>guess in the terms that your using it, it's not about respect. It's not like oh, respecting other people, but it's more like erm (sp) self-respect.-</p> <p>Ellen: Well, well, I. I. It's like honour and dignity and to keep erm... So when people look at you they're not kind of looking, down, on you, or talking about you, and if anything they talk you in high esteem.</p> <p>(see Nisha's narrative of reputation)</p>
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	<p><b>Submissive</b></p>	<p>Beth: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. I do believe that. Yeah and you know, respect. And elders and like submissive to elders you know.</p> <p>Cerisse: Hmm.</p> <p>Beth: That kind of thing. I don't, it would have been. And I think, you, you, you do have a certain extent of that in your nature, you know, that because you've grown up, born etcetera, with the characteristics but I don't think to a certain extent, that I DO have it (sp)</p>
	<p><b>Impact on social behaviour, informing choices</b>  <b>Late teens, early adulthood</b></p> <p><b>What is permitted, accepted by [people –family, peers and community] Held in mind and informing choice?</b>  <b>Shaming or guilt if going against rules/codes</b></p>	<p>Annie... I think it probably has, well it comes to a couple of things. Firstly, would be... in the social arena. I think, considering where I'm going, what I'm doing, how I'm doing it, when I'm doing it. And with who. Yes. Certainly, that's, that's definitely onething. Obviously.</p> <p>Annie: Erm, cos, certain things for us are, you, you just don't do. Obviously pubbing and clubbing and stuff, for us, it won't because, it won't involve in any of it...</p> <p>Cerisse: Hmm.</p> <p>Annie: Like I said. Drinking, drugs</p> <p>Cerisse: Hmm.</p> <p>Annie: ...Any, any, of that kind of stuff. So,... Erm...That has, it has been at the back of my mind. Yeah. To think, ok. I'm not supposed to do that. Brought up to know I'm not supposed to do that. Better stay away from it, or, if, if, I have fallen into it briefly, better move myself out of it very quickly.</p>

	<p><b>Unwritten rules</b></p>	<p>Ellen: (sighs, sp) I guess it's like erm, oh (sp) I guess it's like these erm, unwritten rules isn't it. About how to lead your life. So it's like, I don't know, on a Friday night, you'd, you'd have girls going out and I don't know, wearing maybe a belt for a skirt, right, that kind of thing. And then, you have people that wouldn't dress like that. Ermmm. So you know how, how you might say they are of an, they're not. They're kind of a loose character or you make judgements. So it kind of stems, from, that. Erm, it's about maintaining your (sp) Kind of maintaining, your aura and dignity, I can't, I can't explain it very well (sp, laughs)</p>
	<p><b>Frequently used in Pakistani culture – has a lot of significance</b>  <b>Example of sister being divorced on 2 occasions</b></p> <p><b>What people will say</b>  <b>Izzat of the family [respect and honour of the family]</b></p> <p><b>Relevance to Islamic religion</b></p>	<p>Annie: Yes. For izzat, Erm... Again, like, like we were saying, the term is used quite a lot in Pakistan culture where it's like, oh but, but it's the respect of the family, but it's the izzat of the family. Or, you know, if, if, for instance, if for instance in my family, we had erm, my sister got divorced she got remarried. She got divorced again...</p> <p>So, if it is a case, oh my God, what will peo people going to say, because it's the izzat of the family, it's the respect of the family. So, as a definition it probably will be, yes the honour. It does mean a lot, definitely...</p> <p>By all means in our, in our family as well as in our culture. And Islamically, it does mean a lot. Erm... yeah.</p> <p>Beth: ...Erm, and Islamically, izzat, you know, it's kind of erm,... It's, it's has a different meaning, a differ-a whole different form.</p> <p>Cerisse: Hmm.</p>

	<p><b>Impact on next life stage – marriage Reflection on family –family izzat/respect and honour</b></p> <p><b>Experiences of upbringing conflict or clash with new experiences with in-laws</b></p> <p><b>Conforming to family expectations, roles – submissive to avoid conflict Family respect –reflected Practices of own family carried through to new family</b></p>	<p>Beth: Izzat, is more erm,... You know, covering, protecting, thinking about what you're saying, speaking. Erm, when you speak to men outside, that you're not, erm, familiar with, or you don't know, lowering your gaze, er, er and things like this, you know. This, the term has taken a whole different , kind if, it's taken on a whole different form, completely. In my mind it's culturally and religiously, it's a different word.</p> <p>Annie: And the next phase, once the social sort of phase went past, being uni days and all those kind of things. After that, going into marriage. Then it plays another big part.</p> <p>Cerisse: Hmm.</p> <p>Annie: Because... Especially living in a family... How your upbringing and how you are comes down on how your family's brought you up.</p> <p>Cerisse: Hmm.</p> <p>Cerisse: Ok.</p> <p>Annie: ...Which is the case. Then myself and my family. It has been the case, of ok, err, erm, yeah it becomes my family's respect, and cer-and certain things I wouldn't have done previously, you just sort of have to go with them, just to keep things... Erm, happy. Just to keep things peaceful.</p> <p>Cerisse: Yeah.</p> <p>Annie: Just to keep things going. Erm... because, yeah, it is a question of your family's</p>
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	<p><b>Perceived as different to Western culture</b>  <b>Perceived as Pakistani and Islamic</b></p>	<p>{Annie lowers her voice}-respect.</p> <p>Cerisse: Hmm.</p> <p>Annie: And erm, equally now, once I am married, the, the, the, being the cultural side of things. You really do have honour and respect your in laws...</p> <p>Cerisse: Mmm.</p> <p>Annie: Perhaps, not as much as the Western culture would, or, certain other cultures. So, but that's yeah. That's definitely a more a Pakistani, than a...Islamic thing really...</p> <p>Cerisse: Hmm.</p> <p>Annie: Or erm, Western thing. So, yeah. It's probably played a part in the social arena And then, now the marriage side of things.</p> <p>Cerisse: Ok.</p> <p>Dina: So, erm. I mean if, if I don't know how to cook, that's erm, that's gonna be like baisty, what do you call baisty in English? It's like erm, like erm, if my in-laws found out that I can't cook then it's gonna look, kind of like erm, fails down onto my mum.</p> <p>Cerisse: Hmm.</p> <p>Dina: Cos that's, that's how, how they think. That oh, oh your mum didn't teach you how to cook or you didn't know how to cook.</p> <p>Cerisse: Hmm. And if that was, if, if, so when you say...</p> <p>Dina: That's like an example.</p> <p>Cerisse: Yeah. So when you say it fails down on your mum, what would that... Because you kind of, you brought up this word Baisty?</p> <p>Dina: Yeah.</p>
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		<p>Cerisse: So kind of, what, what would the impact be for your mum or your family?</p> <p>Dina: Erm... I mean. They would probably think, oh, they haven't taught you manners or they haven't taught you this or how to respect your elders or how to live with your in-laws. So...</p> <p>Cerisse: Hmm.</p> <p>Dina: ...It all kind of comes down to that, cos then they think erm... It makes you look silly then, if you don't know all these things and erm, yeah.</p> <p>Cerisse: Hmm.</p> <p>Dina: That's, it's kind of like that [smiles]</p> <p>Ellen: Rather than, that's the, that's the way I see it. So, like when, we talk in Urdu, we say erm, you talk about izzat and you say someone's not got it or she doesn't keep the izzat, it's basically, ye-yeah, that you're talking down about them and that they're leading their life in a way that people around them don't approve of, and stuff like that.</p> <p>People look down at you there is no respect in the community that you yourself don't have respect, they would think you was a loose woman of loose character back in the day no one would want to stay with you that's where it came from, back in the day back home if people were divorced they had no means of an income they would have been relying on their husband before but if they were divorced they would be relying on other family members to look after them out of the goodness of their heart.</p> <p>Beth: I don't actually care about it (laughs). You know. Erm, coming culturally?</p> <p>Cerisse: Hmm.</p> <p>Beth: I don't care what people think. I actually blatantly say. I don't care what</p>
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	<p><b>What the experience has been like – Suffering</b></p> <p><b>Stressful, exhausting</b></p> <p><b>Controlling</b></p> <p><b>Interdependence not individualism</b></p> <p><b>Physically manifests</b></p>	<p>you think. I don't care. I'm in this situation, second time round. I don't care.</p> <p>Because I KNOW how I lived those two years. To, to, you know (sighs). Just to keep people's mouths SHUT.</p> <p>Cerisse: Hmm.</p> <p>Beth: You know. For, for that time, I know what I've had to adm-, I've had to see my child go through. That one and a half years. So NOW. Ultimately, I don't care what you think anymore because I've suffered enough, you know.</p> <p>Beth: Yeah. Yeah I do. It's like I don't care what people think you know, because I've suffered enough. Culturally, I suffered enough.</p> <p>Cerisse: Hmm.</p> <p>Beth: Seen enough. It's, it's just not fair anymore, so. Erm. I'm just more carefree about it now.</p> <p>Cerisse: And before, what was it like for you to uphold...?</p> <p>Beth: It's very stressful, exhausting. It was not my life, it's the aunties and the uncles around me. It's, it's like, they're controlling my life. It's like that.</p> <p>Cerisse: Hmm.</p> <p>Beth: That's the best way to describe it, really. It's like someone else's life, not mine. My family's, not mine.</p> <p>Cerisse: Hmm (sp). And you say it was stressful. How did it make you feel? Or...</p>
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	<p><b>Traumatic</b></p> <p><b>Learning</b></p> <p><b>Described as practices and customs</b></p> <p><b>Witnessed in others through childhood</b> <b>Being told, taking on values and beliefs of the family</b></p> <p><b>Hierarchy or respect -elders</b> <b>Responsibility of teaching values of the family/caretaking/setting example</b></p> <p><b>Taught and illustrated through others</b> <b>Maintained through the family and friends - exposure</b></p>	<p>Beth: I got acidity in my stomach, you know, so much stress you know, anxiety attacks, erm... Weight. Drastic weight loss. Erm, you know, just erm... crying all the time. Just, sometimes you just want to scream, you know. Shouting at like, my child and you know, and terrible, it's so traumatic.</p> <p>Annie: Respect. Honour and izzat.</p> <p>Annie: Practices, customs and all...</p> <p>Cerisse: Yeah...</p> <p>Annie: Ermm, it's... partly through my, partly through, I think a lot of it is just seeing it...</p> <p>Cerisse: Ok.</p> <p>Annie: A lot it is just seeing it, seeing how your families interact and when you're growing up, and, some of it with, literally just saying to you, you need to respect your elders...</p> <p>Cerisse: Hmm.</p> <p>Annie: ...Erm... And then... You'd... And that, the other thing was that my, erm, older sister was given a lot of respect in the household...</p> <p>Cerisse: Hmm.</p> <p>Annie: ...And it was like, she's a bujee, she's the older sister...She's gonna get that respect.</p> <p>Cerisse: Hmm.</p> <p>Annie: So, again, you're taught it, and she would teach you it. She will tell you...</p> <p>Cerisse: Hmm.</p> <p>Annie: ...You need to do this, you need to, no, I don't think so. My Mum and Dad are out for instance, no, I'm telling you what you're doing what you're not...</p>
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		<p>Cerisse: Hmm, hmm.</p> <p>Annie: ...Because she was considerably older than myself. Erm, so yeah. Some of it you're taught.</p> <p>Cerisse: Hmm.</p> <p>Annie: Some of it you see and just pick up. Erm, and if you're, for instance, because we've got a lot Pakistani relatives, and family and friends, you see it, you, it's, you're exposed to it enough. It's not like you're Pakistani community living in the middle of some odd, odd land, you know. Some, foreign land. Erm, yeah, you see it.</p> <p>Dina: I became familiar from a very young age because I was very close to my nan.</p> <p>Cerisse: Ok.</p> <p>Dina: And she used to tell me you know, this is wrong, this is right. If you do this then this could lead to this. And it's wrong.</p> <p>Cerisse: Hmm.</p> <p>Dina: And that could erm, that could, that's what, what she meant by it could disrespect our izzat and stuff.</p> <p>Cerisse: Hmm. So, maybe she, do-do you feel that maybe that you were taught my her, you kind of picked these things up from her teachings?</p> <p>Dina: Erm... Yeah I was taught by her and then erm, my mum, she erm, she talks about izzat as well and erm, like about this practice and stuff.</p> <p>Cerisse: Hmm. So, maybe carried through the...</p> <p>Dina: Though the generations.</p>
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		<p>Nisha: Ermm... I don't know actually, I erm, basically from, through my friends and family, other families. So, that's how it came to my mind.</p> <p>Cerisse: Hmm.</p> <p>Beth: It's kind of, in-built in you, as you're growing up.</p> <p>Cerisse: Ok.</p> <p>Beth: Yeah. It's not, something that you just randomly, just think, ok. You know.</p> <p>I think. If I was over here, I would be as aware, of it, you know. It culturally, of izzat. Not as much.</p>
	<p><b>Significance in the Quran</b></p> <p><b>Defined as – Respecting other people, being a better person [good]</b></p>	<p>And then, in terms of, as I've been growing older and learning about it from an Islamic viewpoint...</p> <p>Cerisse: Yeah.</p> <p>Annie: ...we're taught a lot about it being a question, in the Quran, and the stuff, we're told, you know, obviously respect your parents', parents', parents', it comes up again, again and again.</p> <p>Cerisse: Hmm.</p> <p>Annie: Erm... And in general, it's respecting other people and trying to be a better person...</p> <p>Cerisse: Hmm.</p> <p>Annie: ...It's just considered to sort of go hand-in-hand. So, it's self-taught as well as, seeing it through others.</p> <p>Cerisse: Hmm.</p>

	<p><b>Wanting to be perfect [good] – how perceived by others</b></p>	<p>Annie: And being told it by others.</p> <p>Cerisse: Hmm.</p> <p>Annie: So, hmm.</p> <p>Cerisse: So, kind of erm... Upholding your izzat, is, is kind of having, an impact on you now because of you thinking, of wanting to get married?</p> <p>Dina: Yeah. (lp) So I just wanna be perfect. So, so that I don't have problems when I go to in-laws, they don't, don't talk about me or, my family, so yeah.</p>
	<p><b>Tolerated domestic violence because of izzat –cultural reasons</b></p> <p><b>Despite family's support</b></p> <p><b>Faith in Islam empowered</b></p>	<p>Beth: You know, I'm just so grateful that I've got the understanding of Islam, you know. And, and, you know coming down to your subject izzat. I... I think I stayed there, the time that I did stay there. Was, not because my parents, told me to me to, they told me to leave the first time there was an incident. I stayed there, because of cultural reasons...</p> <p>Cerisse: Hmm.</p> <p>Beth: ...Thinking, on, maybe the second time of getting married. Oh my God. You know. Not my family, what ARE the extended family going to think. What are people going to think. Oh my God. And that was the reason why stayed there.</p> <p>Cerisse: Hmm.</p> <p>Beth: Because I did, one and a half years. And when I actually thought about Islam</p>

	<b>Beth and helped her to escape domestic violence</b>	<p>and started really, kind of my, you know, my, erm, FAITH increased. Is when I left.</p> <p>I needed faith to actually leave, yeah.</p> <p>Cerisse: Hmm.</p> <p>Beth: I just really prayed thinking I need to get out of here one day. And I actually had to jump of the window. And I was like, God. How on earth can I live with someone, where I actually out of fear, I have to jump out of this window.</p> <p>Cerisse: Hmm.</p> <p>Beth: And it was that downstairs, ground floor window. But it's like, this is not a life is it, where you know. So, I just left that day. And that was the last of it, really (sp)</p> <p>Cerisse: Ok. Thank you.</p> <p>Beth: It's alright.</p>
	<b>Significance to the self, mediated by significance it has for the family</b>	<p>Cerisse: Hmm. So, so how does that, kind of what's that like for you to...</p> <p>Dina: Ermm...</p> <p>Cerisse: ...To think about, upholding your izzat?</p> <p>Dina: Ermm...</p> <p>Cerisse: With you and your family, I guess?</p> <p>Dina: I mean that is really important to me.</p>

	<p><b>Wanting to be perceived as 'decent' – [good]</b></p> <p><b>Carried through life-stages and into new family</b></p> <p><b>Being 'adaptable' – not objecting to new family values, beliefs is reflected on the family izzat of immediate family</b></p>	<p>Cerisse: Huh-humm</p> <p>Dina: Because erm, obviously I love my family and stuff. And erm, I want to keep that respect like, on-going.</p> <p>Cerisse: Hmm.</p> <p>Dina: I want people to know that we're, where we'd, that we come from a decent family and stuff.</p> <p>Cerisse: Hmm</p> <p>Dina: And erm. I mean izzat is very important to our family and stuff.</p> <p>Cerisse: Hmm.</p> <p>Dina coughs</p> <p>Cerisse: And, and do you find that, kind of upholding it? How (sp)...</p> <p>Dina: Ermm.</p> <p>Cerisse: ...How does that impact on YOU?</p> <p>Dina: Like whenever I've been taught. Erm, I'll try to, erm. Like when I get married I try to keep that, try to maintain it.</p> <p>Cerisse: Hmm.</p> <p>Dina: Like when I get married as well. I mean it, it is. Obviously it would be hard work, because, you have to go into a new family, and you have to adapt to, how they live and stuff.</p> <p>But erm, YEAH. I just have to try and kind of balance it. I know it's going to be hard work.</p> <p>Cerisse: Hmmm</p>
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	<p><b>Described at 'hard work' – yet tolerant or without choice/ independence</b></p>	<p>Dina: It's hard work. But erm, erm I, I just think that's the way. That's life [smiles]</p> <p>Cerisse: Hmm.</p> <p>Dina: If you like it or not, you just. Deal with it.</p>
	<p><b>Importance for women – personal responsibility</b></p> <p><b>Protecting innocence/virtue</b></p> <p><b>Preservation of self-respect</b></p> <p><b>Defined as reputation – behaving good, not reflecting a 'bad image'</b></p>	<p>It means that, erm basically women, have to take care of their izzat.</p> <p>Cerisse: Yeah.</p> <p>Nisha: It's basically their own self, right. They can't roam around, they have to take care, care of themselves, they have to protect themselves, they have to cover, cover themselves properly and erm, basically that's, the thing</p> <p>Cerisse: Hmm. Erm, and is that, does it kind of have a personal meaning for you, yourself?</p> <p>Nisha: For me, yeah, it does, actually (laughs) For me, it's like I fell I have to behave good right, delib-it basically means like reputation, in, in this word, right. You basically have to take care if yourself, you don't have like, behave like, some sort of miss- you know. Some sort of like, erm...A bad image on others, basically you have to be good, that's what I think it is.</p> <p>Cerisse: And when you say bad image, if someone was to have a bad image, what would they...</p> <p>[speak together]</p> <p>Nisha: Basically, yeah...</p> <p>Cerisse: How would they be behaving?</p> <p>Nisha: Basically like erm, like wearing revealing clothes.</p>

	<p><b>How they portray themselves.</b></p> <p><b>A part of culture... sexual promiscuity or constraints on relationships</b></p> <p><b>Ruin of izzat</b></p> <p><b>Impact on status – shaming of the self</b></p>	<p>Cerisse: Hmm.</p> <p>Nisha: As in, if you're going some-place, you know, that people don't wear bad clothes, revealing clothes there, so I won't wear any revealing clothes over there. I'll be like covered or anything, something like that. But erm, won't be, behave like weird, in front of other people. That's like, basically.</p> <p>Cerisse: Hmm (sp) and are there any others areas, in, in, women's lives, or even in your own, where, apart from the way you dress, or behaving weird. Are there any other ways, which izzat has an impact on your life?</p> <p>Nisha: Basically, in our culture, women are not allowed to sleep with other men before marriage.</p> <p>Cerisse: Ok.</p> <p>Nisha: So basically that's where izzat comes.</p> <p>Cerisse: Ok.</p> <p>Nisha: So yeah.</p> <p>Cerisse: So if that was to happen...?</p> <p>Nisha: So, if that was to happen, people in our culture would say that, that she's ruined, ruined her izzat.</p> <p>Cerisse: Ok.</p> <p>Nisha: And she won't get married and she'll would get criticised and things like that.</p> <p>Cerisse: Hmm, so the kind of reputation of that woman is then...</p>
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	<p><b>Traditionalism</b></p> <p>Nisha: Basically destroyed,</p> <p>Cerisse: Destroyed. Ok. That must be quite difficult, for, for women, because I suppose in the UK, the pract-the sexual practices of women are different.</p> <p>Nisha: Yeah.</p> <p>Cerisse: So how do you think that's negotiated when Asian women, Pakistani, Muslim women are in the UK.</p> <p>Nisha: I think erm, some, in some families, they are allowed to sleep with other men, before marriage,</p> <p>Cerisse: Hmm</p> <p>Nisha: But in some families they are not.</p> <p>Cerisse: Hmm.</p> <p>Nisha: So erm, I have seen in other, people they are restricted, in doing such things, so when they come here, they basically do them...</p> <p>Cerisse: Hmm</p> <p>Nisha: You know, yeah?</p> <p>Cerisse: Hmm</p> <p>Nisha: Basically the thing that were not allowed to that in our country, but we can do it here, so they do it.</p> <p>Annie: ...Basically. And even though sometimes you're a different person to your parents. For instance. And my char- my case, my parents have been quite relaxed. But marrying into a family that's a lot more traditional...</p> <p>Cerisse: So, it's kind of like holding it in place so to divorce would be that you</p>
	<p><b>Tradtionalism vs Modernism</b></p>

	<p>wouldn't have izzat, or, you would...</p> <p>Shamima: Yeah.</p> <p>Cerisse: Or, you'd be erm... I guess yeah, what, what kind of would it mean if you were to...</p> <p>Shamima: Yeah, I suppose.</p> <p>Cerisse: To get a divorce?</p> <p>Shamima: Yeah I guess you wouldn't have izzat I suppose.</p> <p>Ellen: Yeah. Because one of the big things about the whole izzat thing, is your virginity (laughs). And with women it's quite easy to tell...</p> <p>Cerisse: Yes, of course.</p> <p>Ellen: ...Whereas with men, it isn't. I think that's the biggest thing isn't it really. Erm. With women they're described a lot like, basically you're scared a lot like, in erm, into thinking things, but I don't think it's the wrong thing to be scared, so, I remember like, my Mum, how she explained it to me, and about sweets, and she said, I don't know if you've heard this one before. She said, oh, if someone offered you, a sweet, erm, and there was a unwrapped one, and there was one in it's covers, which one will you go for? So this was what she was explaining, about erm, where you, as you grow up, it might be all nice to be, you know, dressed up in tight clothes, der, der, der. Men will look at you, but when it come down to being with you in the long-term, what they go for is all the wrapped up, sweet.</p> <p>Ellen: And unfortunately, that is, that is the case. You know. Erm. As nice, well, not as nice,</p>
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		<p>not as nice as it sounds, but that is the case so.</p> <p>Ellen: And so, it was like oooh. This girl's gonna kinda get a bit way-ward because she hasn't got the man around to kind of whip her in shape. And it's true as well, when you seeing my boys and what I'm like with them. I'm the one who does all the, the you know, teaching, and stuff like that. But if they get into, start getting rowdy, my Husband only needs to raise his voice a little bit and it's like (takes a deep breath) Oh my God, don't do that. So... Yeah.</p> <p>Cerisse: So there's quite a different dynamic?</p> <p>Ellen: Yeah there is.</p> <p>Cerisse: Yeah. Is that, it sounds like that might be similar across Pakistani families?</p> <p>Ellen: Yeah, I think so. I think, it's just erm, yeah. I think it's Mums that do all the. You know like, all the, they say, there's a saying in our thing, in that erm, if your child turns out good, it's because, it's, they say, it's because of the Mum. And if they turn out bad, it's because of the Mum.</p> <p>Cerisse: Hmm.</p> <p>Ellen: So I think, that's one of the main, erm... Responsibilities, of children and upbringing, Mum. So when, if you look at a fam-ily and they're not doing well or they haven't got a house, or whatever, then it's oh, Dad, he's not providing. And when you look at children, and how they've turned put, that's about the Mum. Or the Mum did a good job, or your Mum didn't do a good job.</p> <p>Cerisse: Hmm.</p> <p>Ellen: That's what it come down to, that's what it is. So it is the Mum really, I think. Hmm. (sp)</p> <p>Cerisse: Hmm. Have you found that izzat has impacted on how you've lived you life, or how</p>
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	<p><b>Impact</b></p> <p><b>Abiding by what is right and wrong</b></p> <p><b>Not universal</b></p>	<p>you have...</p> <p>Ellen: Yeah. Yeah. Because, you know with the whole, with my Mum's situation. I used to feel like, because I did feel like people were looking down on us, it was for me, when I move on to have my life and I grow UP. I'm not gonna have that, I was people to look at me and be like, oh wow, she did well for herself. Well not well, but you know, I don't, I didn't want to have that looking down thing. Erm (sp) Yeah.</p> <p>Cerisse: Hmm. Ok. Erm, what's it like for you, for you to uphold your izzat?</p> <p>Nisha: For me? For me it's like ermm, I know what my boundaries are right. I know what erm, for me, what's right and what's wrong. So I wouldn't what I think is right for me right.</p> <p>Cerisse: Hmm. Ok. Erm, what do you think it's like for, if you were to think about what it's like for others, other Asian women, or, Pakistani women. Do you think they have a similar experiences with it?</p> <p>Nisha: Ermm, izzat?</p> <p>Cerisse: Hmm</p> <p>Nisha: Or are you...</p> <p>Cerisse: Upholding their izzat?</p> <p>Nisha: Erm, Yeah, yeah. Basically different people, have different experiences...</p> <p>Cerisse: Hmm.</p> <p>Nisha: Right. Ermm, I don't know, I have never encountered</p>
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	<b>A gift</b>	<p>anything, erm, like this, so I don't know my feelings about that, but if people, they experience, they experience this thing, so they might have a different view.</p> <p>Cerisse: Hmm. And how does it make you feel? To uphold it?</p> <p>Nisha: Uphold my, ok, hmm, it's basically, you know, erm, it's a gift.</p> <p>You know, people think that if we uphold our izzat, it's a gift, it's a blessing. So that's what my view is, yeah.</p>
	<p>Struggles to define the concept, needs prompting –is this a demonstrative of difficulty translating or is there (shame) in discussing this</p> <p><b>Subconscious learning</b></p>	<p>Ellen: It's really difficult (sp) Erm (sp) It's really hard because it's different, it's an Urdu, it's like an Urdu word, it's really hard, I'm trying to, trying to translate, things get lost in translation as well. Some, I'm just, I'm trying to think what would be the best equivalent of the English word for it. Erm (lp)</p> <p>It's, it's actually, it's res- it's actually respect really, yeah. Erm (lp) But I guess in the terms that your using it, it's not about respect. It's not like oh, respecting other people, but it's more like erm (sp) self-respect.</p> <p>Cerisse: Hmm.</p> <p>Ellen: Erm, erm how would, sorry, you have to repeat the question for me as well?</p> <p>Cerisse: Just how, how you would define it really and maybe what it means to you?</p> <p>Ellen: Ok. Erm (sp) – [Blank expression on her face]</p> <p>Cerisse: There's no right or wrong answer.</p> <p>Cerisse: Ok. So, where did you, where did you learn about it? Where did you come to</p>

	<p><b>process – not an active recipient</b></p> <p><b>Role of mothers (females) in teaching</b></p>	<p>understand about the concept, these unwritten rules maybe?</p> <p>Ellen: Erm, I don't know, I think everyone knows it and I don't know how. It's just, it's just like a subconscious thing, I guess. That you've grow up with. I think girls as well as guys really. (sp) Yeah.</p> <p>Cerisse: Hmm.</p> <p>Ellen: Erm. Yeah (sp)</p> <p>Cerisse: So, so it sounds like some of it came from your Mum, some of the teachings or...</p> <p>Ellen: Erm yeah. But I think it all comes from, Mums really.</p> <p>Cerisse: Hmm.</p> <p>(sp)</p> <p>Cerisse: Is it different between Mums and Dads?</p> <p>Ellen: I can't really talk too much about the Dads side of it because I don't know what it's like in other households, but from what, the impression I get from, my friends and stuff as well. I think, most of your teachings come from your Mum. Like your Dad's the-ree as erm, (sp) Income earner and stuff and Mum and Dad might have this conversation, but it's normally Mum that, actually does all the talking...</p> <p>Cerisse: Hmm.</p> <p>Shamima: The pressure came from my mum and I suppose in her head that would have been you have to have a husband. If there is no husband there is no izzat</p> <p>I know that divorce was a big no no. Even a year or two ago my parents even said I should never have divorced my husband you should not have left leave your husband. You shouldn't have divorced him. I remember when I got married and my mums only advice if you like she gave me was you have to stay there - your dead body will leave the house. That you stay there until you die.</p>
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	<p><b>Mother's carrying the izzat</b></p>	<p>And er, I, I, I didn't, I didn't feel it was that much, I don't think, but I felt the pressure from my mum... Rather than the actual izzat was thing which, that she felt, the izzat.</p> <p>Shamima: I'd say, it was from my... Mum, then when I got married, my ex was a bit into that as well.</p> <p>Cerisse: Ok.</p> <p>Shamima: Erm, because he had come over from Pakistan and he was looking to get married,... they thought I was out of control, and I wasn't at all, I was stroppy when my Dad was being, rude to my Mum, you know I would tell him to shut up and...</p> <p>Cerisse: Hmm.</p> <p>Shamima: And leave Mum alone, and they thought this was, you know, the worst possible thing anyone could do and erm, so I, so she thought I was off her hands, that it would be easier for her to cope, maybe...</p> <p><b>Fathers discipline</b></p> <p>Ellen: ...Dads are there to keep you in check maybe. I think that's why one of the reasons why, people look down a bit, well my friends Mum's used to, because O didn't have the Dad there.</p> <p>Cerisse: Hmm.</p> <p>Cerisse: Even the religion?</p> <p>Beth: Growing up. Just growing up when I was in Pakistan. It was like, my Dad</p>
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		<p>would say. You know, you're older now, you're going to the market, cover up a bit more, because the men will kind of, they just a little bit perverted. Just look at you like that, that kind of thing. Don't wear your jeans and stuff when you're going out. Just wear loose clothing. Take a shawl over yourself. That kind of thing.</p>
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