Barriers to career progression for British Pakistani women

Barriers to Career Progression for British Pakistani Women

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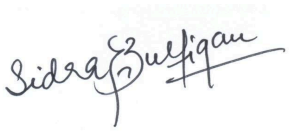
Abstract

This research examines the perceived barriers to career progression for British Pakistani women especially in reaching managerial, leadership and decision-making roles in British workplaces. The sociocultural and institutional barriers to career progression are critically examined using primary data collected through open-ended interviews with 30 second-generation British Pakistani women who shared lived experiences of their careers journeys. This research specifically highlights the institutional and structural barriers that restrict the career progression of these women due to their intersectional identity markers like gender, race, ethnicity and religion. Using the theoretical lens of Critical Race Theory and intersectionality, this research points out the role of overlapping intersectional identities of these women, in simultaneity with broader systemic barriers, and moves away from considering singular identity markers in isolation. During the interviews, the participants were asked about how they dealt with the identified challenges, which are presented as their coping strategies for enhanced career progression. The primary data collected for this research is analysed using thematic analysis as introduced by Braun and Clarke (2006) and organised in codes and themes using NVivo-14 software. The findings of this research depict huge implications of the intersectional identities of second-generation Pakistani women on their career progression that can be useful for British employers and DEI practitioners. The limitations of this research along with recommendations are discussed along with directions for future research.

Declaration

I declare that the work in this thesis is entirely my own and all the information derived from other sources is acknowledged. This work has not been submitted elsewhere to any other Higher Education Institution or for any other academic award.



Signed:

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Nomenclature and List of Abbreviations

CRT	Critical Race Theory
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
DEI	Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
Muslimness	The visible Muslim identity of a person
Hijab	Urdu for head scarf
Hijabi	Woman who wears head scarf because of her Muslim identity
Halal	Food that is lawful to be consumed according to Islamic teachings
Desi	Urdu slang for a local person from Pakistan
Gora	Urdu for White man
Gori	Urdu for White woman

Chapter I - Introduction

1.1. Introduction

This chapter presents an introduction to the research with a brief background of the problem and rationale, while explaining why it is needed and its timeliness. The research overview is presented and major gaps from the existing literature are highlighted, while shedding light on its relevance and contribution. The aims and objectives along with research outcomes are elaborated as well. The overall structure of the thesis is presented at the end of this chapter.

Pakistani women are mostly under-represented in decision making positions in the British workplaces (Dixon-Fyle et al., 2023). Most of the positions of influence like managerial and leadership roles in British organisations are occupied by White men, and to a lesser extent White women (Gyimah et al., 2022; Howells et al., 2018; Li, 2012; 2018; Kele et al., 2022; Otaye‐Ebede and Shaffakat, 2024; Woodhead et al., 2022; Walton, 2024). Literature reveals that ethnic minorities are less likely to secure professional and managerial roles and are more likely to be paid less as compared to White people (Li, 2012; 2018; Gyimah et al., 2022; Howells et al., 2018; Woodhead et al., 2022). As highlighted by Bowyer and Henderson (2020) the report published by OBV and the Guardian reveals that ethnic minority employees occupied only 3 percent of the 1024 top leadership roles in 28 sectors of national importance in the UK (including politics, public sector, publishing, media, law, and accountancy) and less than 1 percent of these leadership positions were occupied by ethnic minority women.

The study conducted by McKinsey and Company found that in comparison with any other ethnicity and gender, Black, Bangladeshi and Pakistani women are faced with the greatest disadvantage in workplace equality measures such as pay discrepancies and labour force

participation (Dixon-Fyle et al., 2023) and the same is confirmed in the literature (Dale et at., 2002; Ahmad and Lissenburgh, 2007; Ghaffar and Stevenson, 2018; Mayne, 2023). A recent report 'Broken Ladders' by The Fawcett Society and Runnymede Trust narrating the experiences of 3000 women of colour working in British organisations made shocking revelations regarding the current status of Pakistani women's working experiences in British organisations (Gyimah et al., 2022). The report reveals that women from Pakistani and Bangladeshi heritage are being paid on average a third less an hour as compared to White British men which is 28.4 percent. Similarly, Pakistani and Bangladeshi women suffer from a striking ethnicity pay gap from White British women at 14.7 percent. This report has identified bias and discrimination as the main reasons behind such employment inequalities in the UK and the same is shown in the work of Woodhead et al. (2022).

The Fawcett Society report has revealed that 75 percent women of colour have experienced racism at work and 27 percent have experienced racial slurs. Also, this report narrates that 50 percent of women from Pakistani or Bangladeshi heritage have reported that they were criticised for behaviours that *other* colleagues would easily get away with (Gyimah et al., 2022). The statistics in this report indicate the existence of anti-Muslim racism that is experienced by women from Muslim backgrounds, where the disadvantage of being an ethnic minority woman is further amplified due to their Muslim identity. Such alarming situations strongly indicate the need to conduct a thorough investigation regarding the barriers to career progression for Pakistani women in today's Britain.

The intersectionality of gender, race, religion and other aspects of identity poses unique challenges for Pakistani women in the British workplaces (Arifeen and Syed, 2020; Gyimah et al., 2022; Tariq and Syed, 2017). As individuals who navigate these multiple layers of

disadvantage, like Black, Asian and minority ethnic women, Pakistani women are likely to encounter additional bias and discrimination in the British workplaces due to their multiple identity markers (Gyimah et al., 2022). Gendered stereotypes (Dwyer, 2000) and cultural expectations (Dwyer and Shah, 2009) intersect with racial and ethnic prejudices and their religious identity (Arifeen and Gatrell, 2013) shaping perceptions about their competence and suitability for certain roles. Due to their intersectional identities, these women are likely to have huge disadvantages in the labour market, for instance, limited access to career opportunities, differential treatment in hiring and promotion processes, and a hostile work environment (Fearfull and Kamenou, 2006; Gyimah et al., 2022). Addressing these complex dynamics requires a deeper understanding of how intersectional identities come into play and influence the workplace experiences of Pakistani women, especially amidst the prevalent diversity, equality and inclusion agendas in the British workplaces.

1.2. Context of This Research

The British Pakistani community is the largest Pakistani community in Europe, with more than 1.6 million people, making 2.7 percent of the population in England and Wales. The British Pakistani population group accounts for the second largest ethnic minority population in the UK. 93 percent of British Pakistanis identify as Muslims which represents the largest Muslim group in the UK (Office for National Statistics, 2022). Pakistani migrants came to the UK in the 1960s to contribute to the country's industrial development because of their colonial ties with Britain (Judt, 2007 cited by Naseem, 2019). Pakistani women accompanied their husbands as dependents, who were the main breadwinners of their families. Evans and Bowlby (2000) explain that these Pakistani migrant women were expected to protect their family's honour by dressing modestly and not socialise with males unaccompanied. They were expected to assume

domestic and caring responsibilities and take up unpaid jobs in family businesses or even remain unemployed.

Ijaz and Abbas (2010) and Salway (2007) explained that with the passage of time, there were gradual transitions in the economic conditions and cultural influences for the British Pakistani families, resulting in greater acceptance of women's employment outside home. This led the second-generation British Pakistani women to make more progress in education and employment from the first-generation women. Although the second-generation Pakistani women are still faced with stereotypical sociocultural and religious norms, and have limited opportunities (Ijaz and Abbas, 2010) they have increased participation in the labour market and higher career aspirations as compared to the first-generation Pakistani women (Dale et al., 2002). Therefore, this gradual inter-generational shift has influenced the landscape of the second-generation's economic independence, labour force participation and career progression. There is a wide range of sociocultural and institutional factors that shape the career journeys of second-generation Pakistani women in the UK. This research critically examines the lived experiences of career progression for the second-generation Pakistani women in British workplaces. The rationale behind studying second-generation Pakistani women is explained in the second chapter in detail.

1.3 Language Shift from BAME to Ethnic Minorities

In March 2021 when this research was in progress, the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities advised the UK government to stop using the acronym 'BAME' which stands for Black, Asian and minority ethnic. The term 'BAME' was one of the numerous terms widely used to describe all non-White British peoples' race and ethnicity in the UK. By that time, the literature review for this research was already concluded, and the terms BAME and BME were

widely used in scholarship. To ensure the usage of politically correct language, it was considered necessary to withdraw from using the old terminology BAME and shift towards the suggested alternative, i.e. ethnic minority groups or people from ethnic minority backgrounds (Ethnicity Facts and Figures, 2021). The term 'ethnic minority' was adopted as a close alternative to BAME and is often used by scholars and practitioners to date. As a result, the literature that had already been published with the previous terminology was still included in this research as it was representative of the experiences of ethnic minority populations, and the term BAME was eliminated from the reviewed literature in this research.

1.4. Rationale of This Research

British Pakistani workers are generally employed in the lowest-skilled and lowest-paying jobs (Sharma, 2018). The data from UK Annual Population Survey indicates that from 2013 till 2021, the Bangladeshi and Pakistani ethnic groups consistently received the lowest hourly pay among all other ethnic groups in the job market, and had the highest percentage of employees in the lowest skilled occupations (Ethnicity Facts and Figures, 2023). Over the years, job market inequalities have persisted for British Pakistanis indicating a serious ongoing disadvantage and stark disparities between Pakistani groups, White groups and most ethnic minority groups (Mirza and Warwick, 2024). Data from Ethnicity Facts and Figures (2022) shows that in 2021 almost 40 percent of employees from the combined Pakistani and Bangladeshi ethnic group were employed in low-skilled jobs such as basic labour, sales, and factory work that are generally linked to lower income as compared to other occupations. According to the Office of National Statistics, in 2019 the Pakistani ethnic group earned 16 per cent per hour less on average than the White British group (ONS, 2022; Dixon-Fyle et al., 2023).

The Race Disparity Unit and Equality Hub used the Ethnicity Facts and Figures data from 2023 to investigate disparities in the labour market for ethnic minority groups. In order to examine the inequalities, they used indicators such as ethnicity, qualification, marital status, generation category (first-generation or second-generation), country of birth (UK born or non-UK born), health, difficulty in speaking English, age, children and geographical location. While these variables indicate labour market inequalities for ethnic minorities, there is underlying structural inequalities and systemic bias that are hugely responsible for the disadvantage. Thus, it has become more important than ever to unpack the systemic bias and prejudice routinely projected in everyday lives of ethnic minorities in the UK, especially in the workplaces. Similarly, it is crucial to examine the role of employers and organisations in giving rise to employment inequalities for ethnic minorities. At the same time, the in-depth examination of the employment situation of ethnic minorities is also useful in navigating the disadvantages experienced by Pakistani women in their careers.

The visible religious identities of Muslim women are perceived as problematic in the wider society (Chakraborti and Zempi, 2012) and stands true for the experiences of Pakistani women as well, since religion is an important aspect of their identities. Even though there are workplace equality and diversity laws in the UK that aim to protect racial diversity at work, ethnic minority women and Muslim women are constantly faced with bias and discrimination in the British workplaces (Cannon, 2023; Kele et al., 2022; Tariq and Syed, 2018). This indicates the compounded disadvantage experienced by British Pakistani women due to their religious identity, especially in simultaneity with other identity markers like race, ethnicity and gender, and this is discussed at length in this research.

British Pakistani women emphasise that they have to reconcile their career aspirations within the context of a patriarchal culture (Mellor, 2011). There is considerable pressure on Pakistani women to conform to traditional roles and prioritise their families, rather than participating in the labour market (Dale et al., 2002). According to survey data collected from more than 10,000 ethnic minority families across England, 96 per cent of Pakistani non-working mothers believed that their primary activity was looking after the home and family (Bell et al., 2005). This discussion sheds light on the complex sociocultural dynamics encountered by the British Pakistani women that are likely to hinder their career aspirations; whilst it becomes even harder to battle the structural racism and systemic inequalities due to their gender, racial, ethnic and religious identities. At this point there are two elements which need to be reconciled and meshed together successfully: patriarchal repression within a culture reinforced by religion and structural racism and discrimination in the wider society.

1.5. Significance of the Research and Gaps from Literature

The in-depth review of literature related to organisational studies, workplace equality and discrimination showed that there are many limitations in the scholarship; most importantly it is noted that the British ethnic minority women are largely absent from the workplace equality and discrimination literature (Opara et al., 2020). The workplace diversity and inequality scholarship mostly focuses on the experiences of White women and Black men or on the US context (Opara et al., 2020; Ryan and Branscombe, 2013). Often the representation of Black men in mainstream literature is considered sufficient to narrate the experiences of Black population; without considering the experiences of Black women. Opara et al. (2020) and Holvino (2010) argued that the experiences of Black, Asian and ethnic minority women employees cannot be homogenised. Similarly, there is little acknowledgement of the various differences within the respective ethnic

minority groups, and the experiences of Pakistani women may be embedded within the experiences of South Asian women who are not a homogenous population group (Salway, 2007). This is why this research is important because it narrates the voice of second-generation British Pakistani women through primary data; an area which is largely overlooked in mainstream scholarship.

Although the career-related experiences of ethnic minorities have been elaborated in empirical research (for example, Al Ariss et al., 2013; Tomlinson et al., 2013; Van Laer and Janssens, 2014, 2017) there is a need to examine intersectional identities and their impact on career experiences of ethnic minority women as highlighted by scholars (Arifeen and Gatrell, 2013; Bhopal, 2020a; Cannon, 2023; Rosette et al., 2018; Tariq and Syed, 2017). This research is significant because it aims to shed light on the intersectional and overlapping nature of ethnic minority women and British Pakistani women's multiple identities and career journeys, for instance, the interactions of race, ethnicity, gender, religion in the light of broader 'systems of domination' (Opara et al., 2020). The intersectional analysis in its current form tends to view the separate identity categories of individuals as stand alone, static identity markers, and often the simultaneity of the various intersecting factors is overlooked (see Opara et al., 2020; Tariq and Syed, 2018). For instance, many studies tend to focus on gender alone, while ignoring race, ethnicity and religion in examining the workplace experiences of ethnic minority women (for instance, see Fearfull and Kamenou, 2006). Holvino (2010) argues that intersectionality should be viewed as 'a simultaneous process of identity, institutional and social practice' (p.262) having great significance for this research. This research elucidates the dynamics of multiple identity markers, institutions and social practice in simultaneity by considering the intersectional identities of Pakistani women in British organisations seeking progression in their careers.

1.6. The Need for This Research

I am building my research on my Masters dissertation which studied the experiences of power, resilience and resistances of immigrant Muslim Pakistani women during their cultural transitions in the UK. For this PhD research, I am studying the working experiences of second-generation British Pakistani women to understand the barriers to their career progression. This research identifies the underlying discrimination and systemic inequalities as a result of which these women are unable to secure decision-making roles in British workplaces. Meanwhile, this research also identifies the coping strategies of these women to address the identified barriers to career progression. The aim is to examine the challenges encountered by these women in their careers that explain their under-representation in leadership positions in British workplaces, despite the wide range of equality and diversity legislation in the UK. Hence, the primary data collected from 30 second-generation British Pakistani women is not only used to identify the barriers, but also developed the coping strategies adopted by these women to overcome these barriers.

This study is significant as it highlights the cultural and religious aspects of Pakistani women's lives that influence their career journeys. At the same time, it reveals the institutional dynamics, especially the role of employers in shaping their workplace experiences in the light of their intersectional identities. Altogether the manifestations of sociocultural and institutional nuances are pivotal in understanding that despite their qualification and experience, Pakistani women fail to progress to senior jobs in the British workplaces. This research is significant because it may encourage and pave ways for British Pakistani women to find their own solutions and pursue career progression amidst being the *others* and facing racial discrimination and systemic bias.

At the same time, this research responds to the call by Opara et al. (2020) in addressing the limitation of intersectional analyses that considers the individual identity categories with singular and static focus, while ignoring their simultaneity, and the same is emphasised by Tariq and Syed (2018). This research examines the career journeys of second-generation British Pakistani women by considering their intersectional identities in simultaneity like race, gender, ethnicity and religion, especially in institutional and sociocultural contexts and how this comprehensive approach is crucial in examining the barriers to their career progression. Therefore, this research is critical to examine the interaction of intersectional identities of second-generation British Pakistani women in institutional and sociocultural contexts.

1.7. Studying Ethnic Minority Women and Pakistani Women

Although this research is focused on the career journeys of second-generation Pakistani women working in British workplaces; there is a compelling need to understand the experiences of Black, Asian, and minority ethnic women, and Muslim women in order to gauge the experiences of Pakistani women. It is felt that the niche community of Pakistani women cannot be fully understood without understanding the experiences of ethnic minority women and Muslim women in the British context. It is important to note that there is limited literature available regarding the career-related experiences of ethnic minority women and Pakistani women in the UK (Arifeen and Gatrell, 2013; Opara et al., 2020). Khattab and Hussein (2018) share that there is limited evidence-based knowledge available regarding how well Muslim women are incorporated within the job market in the UK. Since the Black women, Asian and minority ethnic women, Muslim women and Pakistani women have evidently remarkable similarities in their experiences and are stakeholders of the same socio-political and economic dynamics of the British context, therefore, it is helpful to combine their narratives and understand the common

barriers to career progression. At the same time, this research ensures that the narratives of British Pakistani women are highlighted by giving due regard to their unique intersectional identities; instead of generalising their experiences with the broader group of Muslim women or Asian women. This thesis highlights the lived experiences of British Pakistani women with reference to their progression to managerial and leadership roles in their careers and the interaction between their intersectional identities with the institutional and sociocultural dynamics.

1.8. Research Aims and Objectives

The aim of this study is to (i) examine the barriers to career progression experienced by British Pakistani women and (ii) examine the coping strategies and solutions adopted by these women to overcome the identified challenges. The intersectional identity markers of these women like gender, race, religion and ethnicity are key in shaping their lived experiences of career progression. The sociocultural and institutional factors act as barriers towards the career progression of Pakistani women in the British workplaces and may vary depending on individual experiences. This research aims to highlight the barriers to career progression on sociocultural and institutional levels, especially in the light of the intersectional identities of these women including gender, race, ethnicity and religion.

Family expectations and community norms rooted in patriarchal culture, perceptions of gender roles especially being confined to households (Kaur Rana et al., 1998) to maintain modesty and not socialising with men (Dwyer, 2000) can lead to stereotypes and biases that limit women's opportunities for career progression. Navigating these sociocultural dynamics requires Pakistani women to negotiate between family responsibilities and career aspirations, often facing

conflicting pressures and expectations in their professional lives (Shah et al., 2010). It is interesting to examine the career journeys of these women in the light of their sociocultural and religious backgrounds, and how these cultural influences interact with the organisational dynamics.

In addition to the sociocultural challenges, ethnic minority women and Pakistani women are faced with various institutional challenges, for instance, institutional racism, discriminatory hiring and promotion practices, workplace microaggressions, gendered and racialised organisational culture to name a few (for instance, see Gyimah et al., 2022; Tariq and Syed, 2017, Arifeen and Gatrell, 2019; Kamasak et al., 2019). While this research acknowledges the sociocultural constraints, it embarks to critically examine the various institutional barriers that restrict the career journeys of these women.

Coping is referred to as the process of using different techniques to decrease stress and strain (Shinn et al., 1984). According to Sideridis (2006) coping strategies consist of various cognitive and behavioural practices that help individuals manage the challenges posed by their environment. Similarly, Kaplan et al. (1996) explain that resilience can be understood as the individual's ability to function effectively when faced with significant life challenges. It can be understood as the ability to manage stressful and adverse situations. Pakistani women employ various coping mechanisms and resilience strategies to navigate the career-related challenges in British workplaces (Sproston and Bhui, 2002). This may include seeking support from their social networks of colleagues, friends, acquaintances, for instance ethnic minority academics would create their 'safe spaces' (Bhopal, 2022) to seek support from other ethnic minority colleagues. Ethnic minority academics (Bhopal, 2019) and healthcare staff (Kalra et al., 2009) seeking career progression may find it useful to engage in formal mentorship practices and

develop networks with like-minded colleagues. Additionally, many women leverage educational opportunities and professional development programs to enhance their skills and qualifications, empowering themselves to overcome obstacles and advance in their careers (Tariq and Syed, 2017). Furthermore, British Pakistani women often draw strength from their cultural and religious beliefs, finding inspiration in their faith communities to persevere in the face of adversity and maintain a sense of purpose in their career pursuits (Akhtar, 2014). Therefore, this research aims to examine the different coping strategies adapted by the participating women in addressing the barriers to career progression. This is significant because it reveals the lived experiences of Pakistani women voicing their own solutions that worked for them to overcome the career-related challenges and continue with their progress.

1.9. Research Questions

In order to understand the career journeys of British Pakistani women, and to examine the different challenges faced by them during their career progression, two main research questions are carefully designed. Therefore, this PhD research is guided by the following main research questions:

1. What are the barriers faced by second-generation British Pakistani women in securing managerial and leadership roles?
2. How do second-generation British Pakistani women address the identified barriers for enhanced career progression?

The above two questions have mainly guided this research including the collection of primary data as well as the secondary data. For the purpose of this research, securing managerial and leadership jobs is comprehended as career progression of British Pakistani women. Importantly,

the population under study is second-generation Pakistani women working in the British organisations from any field of work. The diverse fields of work and professions are included in this research to gauge richness of lived experiences and understanding them across different sectors.

1.10. Research Contribution

A key aim of this PhD research is to ensure that this thesis generates knowledge that is 'accessible, transferable and relatable to a range of social, cultural and professional contexts at the local, national and international levels' (Herr and Anderson, 2015, p.13). This research examines the career experiences of Pakistani women in British workplaces by considering the interactions of their intersectional identities with institutional and sociocultural barriers that shape their career journeys. Arifeen and Gatrell (2013, 2019) highlight the critical need for empirical research on the experiences of second-generation British Pakistani women with careers to examine the challenges they encounter in reaching managerial roles. They suggested intersectionality as the most appropriate approach to study the complexity of their multiple identities in order to give voices to the experiences of this invisible group in organisational scholarship. Thus, this research sheds light on the lived experiences of educated second-generation British Pakistani women who have served in a managerial or leadership role at some point in their careers, which is a salient empirical contribution. This research contributes to intersectional analyses by examining the interactions of different identity markers like gender, race, ethnicity, religion in simultaneity with the broader systemic inequalities, rather than considering these as singular, static identity markers.

This is a socially engaged research with immense strategic importance for organisations and inclusion of female ethnic minorities in the wider society. Overall, this research is significant as it contributes from both theoretical and practical perspectives where theory will be linked to practice. Its findings are relevant and useful to a wider range of audience, including policymakers, employers and organisations, DEI practitioners and other groups. This work has implications for a broad range of non-academic groups and organisations and sets out to improve the existing knowledge and related practices in the society, especially on the equality, diversity and inclusion front.

1.11. Structure of the Thesis

This PhD thesis is structured in the form of chapters and the outline of the following chapters is described as follows:

Chapter 2 presents a review of related literature around the employment situation of ethnic minority women, Muslim women and Pakistani women in the UK while highlighting the wide range of challenges experienced by them. It sheds light on the intersectional identities of these women and introduces the theoretical frameworks of Critical Race Theory and intersectionality. Chapter 3 presents details of the research methodology. It discusses the research philosophy, recruitment of participants, data collection and thematic analysis. The research ethics and researcher positionality is discussed as well. It presents an overview of the thematic analysis as well as the demographic information collected from the participants.

Chapter 4 and 5 demonstrate the series of findings from in-depth data analysis. Chapter 4 presents the institutional barriers to career progression while chapter 5 discusses the sociocultural barriers and the coping strategies to address the identified barriers. Next is chapter 6 which

presents a detailed discussion on the key findings in the light of existing literature. Lastly, chapter 7 presents the conclusion and highlights the recommendations and limitations of this research along with directions for further research.

Chapter II - Literature Review

Overview of Literature Review

This chapter presents an in-depth review of related literature regarding the career progression for ethnic minority women, Muslim women and Pakistani women in the UK. The first section of this chapter is based on setting the context by introducing key concepts related to this research and introducing the theoretical framework used in this research. Section II sheds light on historical migration of the Pakistani community to the UK and discusses the barriers to career progression for all women in general. It presents the reviewed literature on the careers of ethnic minority women and Pakistani women in the UK. Relevant inferences from ethnic minorities and Muslim women's literature are drawn to illustrate the experiences of British Pakistani women. The impact of various influences like sociocultural, religious, institutional and structural factors are also examined. The intersectional identities of British Pakistani women are highlighted which leads to the deeper examination of the employment inequalities experienced by them.

Section III presents the framework of Critical Race Theory that has a striking relevance to ethnic women's career progression, therefore, it is interesting to look at their careers through this theoretical lens. This section includes the gaps identified from the review of the related literature, and the conceptual framework of this research. Lastly, the limitations and gaps identified in the reviewed literature are highlighted.

Section I - Context and Background of The Research

At the start of this chapter, it is important to define the concepts of race and ethnicity. Alongside, the definitions of important concepts frequently used in this study are presented in the following section.

2.1. Definitions and Explanation of Key Concepts

i) Race and Ethnicity

Mirza and Warwick (2024) discuss the historical and political context in the emergence of the idea of race. Although race and ethnicity are two different concepts, yet they are often used interchangeably, hence it is important to explain their meanings. Since the 17th and 18th century, the idea of race was inherently associated with systems of power and domination. Race can be understood as a way of classifying people into biological categories on the basis of the visible physical differences between them, for instance, skin colour. It is used to describe the perceived differences between people, 'particularly asserting the superiority of the Europeans over Black, Brown and Asian 'others'' (Mirza and Warwick, 2024, p.368). Thus, the observable physical characteristics establish the basis of recognising different races, however, the very basis of this concept is argued to be politicised.

Ethnic origin involves a shared history or ancestry, language, or exclusively shared culture. Ethnicity can be referred to the association with a group, as a result of a mix of cultural and other factors including language, religion, ancestry and physical features that are traditionally associated with race (Bhopal, 2004). The idea of ethnicity is different from nationality or the country of origin, since there may be more than one ethnic group in a country. Ethnicity is mainly self-ascribed and is likely to change over time. Often people prefer to self-identify with

more than one ethnic group, therefore, the ‘mixed’ category was introduced in the UK 2001 Census (Public Health Scotland, 2023).

Usually, Muslims are not categorised as a racial group, but religion and ethnicity can overlap, as religious ties often connect to specific regions. Ethnic minorities can be understood as those population groups in a community that have different cultural, national and religious traditions as compared to the main population. Often the term ‘minority’ is viewed as implying marginal or less important, although it is acknowledged that this is not the intention.

ii) Institutional and Structural Racism

According to Gyimah et al. (2022) institutional racism can be understood as the discriminatory policies and practices within an organisation or workplace that work against a group of people because of their skin colour, culture or ethnicity. On the other hand, structural or systemic racism refers to the broader system of societal inequality, perpetuating exclusion and racial disadvantages. It relates to the discrimination and bias that is observed in the wider society beyond the organisation. Therefore, structural racism encompasses the overarching system in which societal institutions collectively perpetuate racial inequality across multiple areas such as education and employment.

Feagin (2004) narrates that structural racism or systemic racism is the ‘unjust, deeply institutionalised, ongoing intergenerational reproduction of Whites’ wealth, power, and privilege’ (p.4). Also, Lingayah (2021) explained that structural or systemic racism is ‘the condition where society’s laws, institutional practices, customs and guiding ideas combine to harm racially minoritised populations in ways not experienced by white counterparts’ (p.6). He further elaborated that as a result of structural racism, the negatively racialised groups experience

complexities of being ‘over-scrutinised, over-sanctioned, under-served and under-valued’ (p.6) in different social settings. These groups are faced with exclusionary treatment in the wider society, for instance, in educational institutions and the job market.

iii) Whiteness and White Privilege

Whiteness is the social construction of power, dominance and privileges that favours White people, shaping societal norms, values, and power structures in ways that often benefit White individuals. It is not just about skin colour, but about the social, economic, and political power that comes with belonging to the dominant racial group.

According to Bhopal (2018) White privilege is ‘the expression(s) of whiteness through the maintenance of power, resources, accolades and systems of support through formal and informal structures and procedures’ (p.19). White privilege can be understood as a consequence of Whiteness, referring to the entitlement, unearned advantages and societal benefits that White groups experience due to their racial identity. These privileges are often invisible to those who possess them and are manifested in better social treatment, greater opportunities, and favourable experiences in education, employment, services and legal systems, while the negatively racialised groups face systemic barriers. Thus, White privilege shows how Whites benefit from their identity (Bhopal, 2022) existing by virtue of the systemic racial inequalities that favour Whiteness and disadvantage negatively racialised groups.

iv) Career Progression

According to Weerarathna and Hapurugala (2019) career progression or career growth refers to ‘making progress within the organisational hierarchical ladder’ (p.26). It refers to making progress to higher positions at work and working on set goals when climbing up the ladder of

career growth. Career progression is understood differently from career development which involves improvement in employee's skills and talent. Essentially, career progression entails certain milestones in the job that an employee should achieve. It is a method of advancement or promotion from a lower position to a higher one in the organisation on the basis of performance and experience. On the other hand, career development is different from career progression, as it refers to the self-improvement that takes place because of training and development, and gaining more working experience, that aids in achieving work objectives (Weerarathna and Hapurugala, 2019).

Therefore, career progression is the process of climbing the hierarchical ladder in the organisation and advancing the path during an individual's working life. Career progression entails making advancement (whether slow or fast) in an employee's occupation or career. It includes professional growth, moving forward, being promoted to higher or better positions, and finding new opportunities during the career journey. In the absence of career progression, there would be minimal or no progression in the individual career. For the purpose of this research, career progression of British Pakistani women towards securing managerial and leadership positions is being examined. It would be useful to gauge whether British Pakistani women are making sufficient progress in their careers, and if they are able to secure decision making roles in British organisations.

v) First-Generation British Pakistani Women

In sociology the individuals who permanently move to another country are referred to as 'immigrants' as it involves long-term settlement in the new country (Noels and Clément, 2015) and those who temporarily move to another country and seek short-term stay are called

'migrants'. There is a degree of similarity between migrant and immigrant; since both categories are moving abroad from their country of origin to another country, therefore it involves leaving their country for settlement in another country, i.e. migration. However, the differentiating line is drawn between migrants and immigrants based on the length of their stay in the new country. The migrants stay in the new country for short periods of time and immigrants move to the new country with the intention of long term settlement.

The idea of British Pakistani immigrant women refers to the women of Pakistani origin who are living in any part of the UK (including England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland) for long-term duration or permanent stay. For the purposes of this study, the notion of *British* refers to the geographical scope of residence of the population under study; and does not signify national origin or change of nationality (passport) from Pakistan to British. Therefore, the women being studied in this research may still hold Pakistani citizenships while living in the UK; or they may hold multiple or any other nationalities. Irrespective of the current citizenship status that these women hold, their ancestral heritage is Pakistan, and they are residing in the UK for a long time, therefore, they are being referred to as British Pakistani women. The first-generation British Pakistani women are those who are the first ones in their families or generations to immigrate to the UK to settle down (Asher, 2011). These are the women who either got British citizenship or a lawful long-term residence status in the country. The first-generation British Pakistani women are born in Pakistan but have migrated to the UK at some point in their lives for long-term settlement and they are the first ones in their families to do so.

vi) Second-Generation British Pakistani Women

The second-generation immigrants are those who have at least one parent born abroad (Asher, 2011; Schneider, 2016). The second-generation immigrants may or may not be born in the host country; and they may or may not have experienced migration firsthand. Instead, their parents (either both parents, or one of the parents) migrated from their country of origin to a new country, which makes the second generation immigrants; i.e. the offspring of those who immigrated from their countries of origin. The second-generation British Pakistani women are those women who are daughters of immigrant parent(s) of Pakistani origin. This means that either one of their parents or both may have immigrated from Pakistan in the past and that makes their offspring the second-generation children. The second-generation British Pakistani women may have known migration from Pakistan in their childhoods when they accompanied their parents during migration from Pakistan to the UK. It is likely that the second-generation British Pakistani women may not have experienced migration in their childhoods, as they were born in the UK and not in Pakistan.

It is interesting to note that the life experiences of first-generation and second-generation immigrants may vary hugely due to a number of different factors (Dustmann et al., 2010; Foner, 2011; Hussain and Bagguley, 2005). This research particularly focuses on the career journeys of second-generation British Pakistani women.

2.2. Navigating Pakistani Women Within Ethnic Minority Women

As discussed, the ethnic minority population consists of various ethnic groups; and the British Pakistanis are one of those groups that form the ethnic minority population in the UK. While there are noticeable commonalities between the working experiences of ethnic minority women

and British Pakistani women (due to similarities in some identity markers); at the same time, the experiences of Pakistani women in the UK are heterogenous and are not in uniformity with the other ethnic minority groups (see Fearfull and Kamneou, 2006).

It is important to acknowledge that the British Pakistani women are an ethnic minority group having some similarities with women from other ethnicities; yet they possess cultural, social, religious and geographical diversity within their ethnic group. This is because Pakistan is a massively diverse country where the ideological landscape changes from one province to the other; depending on the varying regional culture, traditions and socioeconomic dynamics. The consideration of these elements of diversity within the Pakistani population are key to understanding the variations within this group, because they contribute to the formation of the Pakistani women's identities and experiences. Shah and Iqbal (2011) suggest that social and cultural traditions of the countries of origin (such as Pakistan) influence beliefs of the diaspora. Since the researcher shared the same cultural heritage as the population under study, therefore, the homegrown knowledge and sensitivity to cultural nuances was useful to examine the lived experiences and also in developing biographical profiles of the participating women. This aspect of researcher's positionality is discussed in detail in chapter 3.

The following section presents an overview of the main challenges faced by women during their careers, in general. These challenges are not ethnicity or race specific, rather, these are the barriers that are usually experienced by all women. The discussion is narrowed down in the later parts of this chapter when the challenges specific to ethnic minority women, Muslim women and Pakistani women are discussed.

2.3. Barriers to Women's Career Progression

This section presents the common challenges and the perceived barriers of career progression experienced by women in general. Omar and Davidson (2001) explained that women are seldom able to secure management and leadership roles across different countries and most of the senior managerial and leadership roles are occupied by men. Women are largely faced with issues of discrimination, stereotypes and blocked progression to senior roles and they are often labelled as selfish and cruel if they seek opportunities of employment and have high career aspirations. Davidson and Burke (2000) argue that women are often employed in lower management roles which involve limited decision making responsibilities and have little power. In fact, it is found that women are mostly employed in administration, personnel and training roles that have fewer chances of progression to senior roles. Historically in the contexts of UK and USA, it was regarded as near impossible for women to reconcile family and employment; such that the women in management would either have families (marriages and children) or be employed, and both could not go hand-in-hand (Omar and Davidson, 2001).

Research suggests that career progression of women is largely impacted by family responsibilities (Lirio et al., 2007; Wolfinger and Goulden, 2008) notably in connection to marital status and childbearing (Davidson and Burke, 2004). Family responsibilities, often tied to marital status and childcare are huge considerations for women's career progression (Davidson and Burke, 2004) and merging family and career can restrict women's career prospects (Davidson and Burke, 2004; Morley, 2013). Women themselves concur that taking a career break to have children and childbearing obligations slow down their career progression (Hill et al., 2008). At the same time, women are expected to have greater obligations even in dual-earning household couples where the family responsibilities are shared by both partners (Budworth et al.,

2008). It is no surprise that the major share of family responsibilities often puts women at a disadvantage, especially while they are expected to meet the extensive organisational commitments at the same time (Mavin, 2001). Tharenou (2005) explained that inadequate support in childcare is a major threat to the career growth for women managers. Furthermore, organisations are more likely to facilitate and support the career progression of single women, as compared to those female employees who are married.

According to CIPD data presented by McCartney (2010) women in Ireland can take up to 42 weeks of maternity leave, but those who do so are less likely to be promoted. When it comes to having children, women in positions of leadership face a conflict between work and home life. Research suggests that women in management jobs working in the West are challenged with difficult options, such as staying unmarried or having no children in comparison to their male peers, who are married and have children in the majority of instances (Powell and Graves, 2003; Mortazavi et al., 2009). Similarly, women often struggle with the self-belief to embody masculine leadership traits once they are employed in managerial roles (Omar and Davidson, 2001) and this is in conflict with the nurturing roles associated with them.

Additionally, evidence shows that women in the UK job market are faced with significant barriers across different fields of work. Maddrell et al. (2019) conducted a study on the barriers faced by women in the initial stages of their careers in the UK universities and collected data from more than 250 survey responses. They argue that women's career progression in the higher education institutions in the UK is impacted by institutional protocols where some of the main challenges are early-career job precarity, excessive workload, reproductive decisions, family and domestic responsibilities (Maddrell et al., 2019). While experiencing these challenges during the

early-career stage, their career progression becomes hampered from the beginning, and the situations are even more difficult for women with intersectional identities.

It is found that academic women in science and technology subjects, especially in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths) in the UK universities are under-represented in leadership and management roles in their professions (Howe-Walsh et al. 2016; Wong and Copsey-Blake, 2023) because of stereotypical roles associated with them; like childcare responsibilities are to be performed solely by women. At the same time, Howe-Walsh and Turnbull (2016) suggest that there are many perceived barriers to the career progression for these women academics, including male-dominated organisational culture in UK universities, temporary-work contracts and intimidation and harassment which lead to lowered self-confidence. Similarly, the lack of opportunities in STEM fields of work poses a major challenge in the career progression of ethnic minority women (Wong and Copsey-Blake, 2023). Many STEM jobs in academia are time-bound because they are mostly contract-based for short durations, and often they are contingent upon the availability of funding, part-time or project-based; therefore, there are minimum chances of progression for employees who take up these roles (Howe-Walsh and Turnbull, 2016).

A systematic review by Hirayama and Fernando (2018) on the career progression of women surgeons suggests that unfavourable gendered organisational structures majorly hinder their career progression; for instance, rigid career structures that are likely to retain men surgeons more than women surgeons. As a result, the women surgeons struggle to maintain work-life balance while working in a male-dominated workplace environment. Rahim et al. (2018) share that women are unable to secure senior roles in their careers; not because they lack qualifications and experience, but because of cultural and religious prejudice, family circumstances,

psychological and organisational factors that restrict women's career progression. Therefore, it is understood that women with high career aspirations who wish to progress to senior and decision-making roles are faced with a wide range of barriers in the job market across different sectors. The following section presents a review of related literature on the careers of ethnic minority women, Muslim women and Pakistani women in the British context.

Section II - Barriers to Career Progression for Ethnic Minority and Pakistani Women in the UK

Due to scarcity of available literature about the British Pakistani population, the literature on ethnic minority women, Black women, South Asian women and Muslim women is included in this literature review. The studies about the employment of first-generation and second-generation Pakistani women were included, with due consideration given to the generational aspect of their identities. The reason is because the experiences and struggles in the UK greatly vary across the first-generation and second-generation populations (Khokher and Beauregard, 2014). Hence, their respective career-related experiences may be different from each other; owing to the contextual differences. The reviewed literature sheds light on the different aspects of these women's careers including their individual profiles, sociocultural and religious dynamics and the role of employers that have key roles in shaping their career-related experiences. In doing so, it reveals the consequences of employer bias and discrimination on career progression of these women. On the basis of the main findings from the literature review, the following figure 1.1 is developed by the researcher.

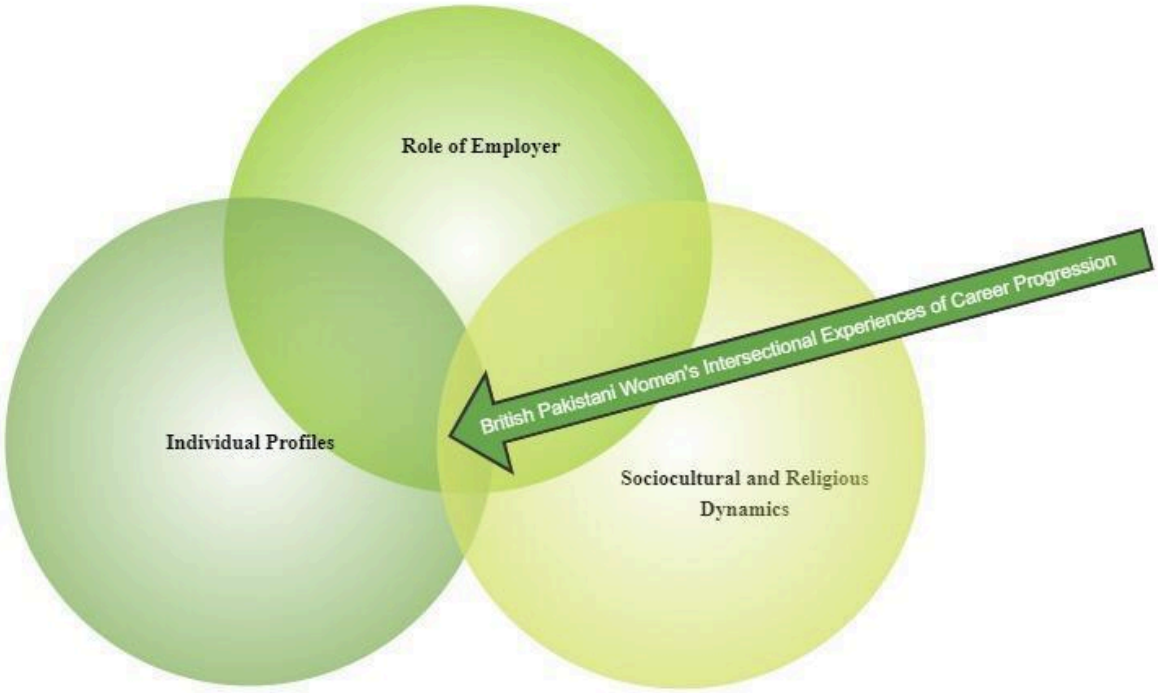

Figure 1.1. Findings of Literature Review - Career Progression of British Pakistani Women in the UK, Source: Literature Review by Researcher

The above figure 1.1 shows the three main aspects discussed in the literature review; individual profiles, role of employer and the sociocultural and religious dynamics that come together to shape the career experiences of British Pakistani women. The overlapping nature of these layers is shown in the diagram with intersectional experiences at their heart.

2.4. Theoretical Framework

It is understood that the career progression of ethnic minority women and British Pakistani women involves complex institutional and sociocultural dynamics. There are many barriers that restrict the career journeys of these women and none of these challenges can be studied without taking into consideration the other ones. Although the various factors exist at different tiers, they are interconnected in nature and this complexity of connection is pivotal to contextualise the

whole narrative. Therefore, it is crucial to examine the whole phenomenon comprehensively without isolating any of the sociocultural, institutional, or structural layers. Having said that, a combined framework is developed for this research in the light of Critical Race Theory and intersectionality shown below as figure 1.2. These theoretical approaches are used in simultaneity to characterise the barriers to career progression for British Pakistani women from the standpoints of intersectional identities and the wider systemic inequalities. This diagram is an illustration of how the two guiding theoretical approaches are adopted and integrated for the purpose of this research.

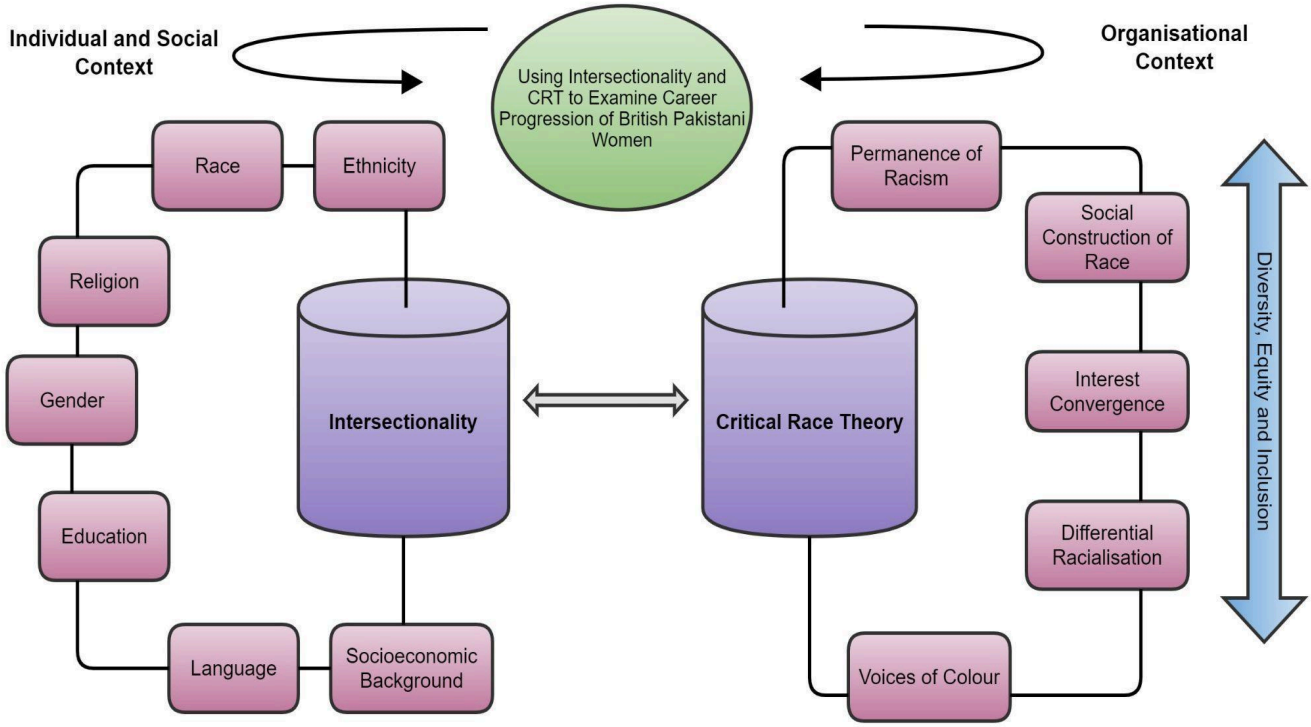

Figure 1.2. Integrated Theoretical Framework - Critical Race Theory and Intersectionality, Source: Author

The above figure 1.2 presents an integrated model of Critical Race Theory and intersectionality which shows the visual representation of how the individual, sociocultural and institutional contexts come together to simultaneously shape the career experiences of British Pakistani women. This research attempts to shed light on the complexity and interconnectedness of the different aspects of British Pakistani women's identities; all while keeping an eye on the institutional dynamics and efforts towards diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI). As highlighted by Opara et al. (2020) mainstream literature that presents intersectional analysis (in its current form) is entirely focused on separate categories and tends to ignore the wider context like national processes and systems of domination that contribute to the individual identity aspects of intersectionality. The separate identity markers have been viewed in simultaneity in this research, and in doing so, the frameworks of Critical Race Theory and intersectionality are combined and illustrated in the above figure 1.2. The review of related literature has formed the basis for developing this framework in such a way where the emphasis is not entirely on identity markers or sociocultural factors; in fact the wider institutional and structural dynamics are considered as well, with the intention to gain deeper insight into the lived experiences of career progression of British Pakistani women.

2.5. Intersectionality and Intersectional Identities of British Pakistani Women

Intersectionality theory was introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) who explained how various identity markers such as gender, race, class, and religion intersect to create specific forms of inequalities. She believed that the common approaches to inequality did not consider how these overlapping identity markers amplify the challenges faced by marginalised groups, particularly ethnic minority women (Bešić, 2020). She emphasised that existing systems often ignore these overlapping identities, resulting in inadequate protection and representation for

negatively racialised groups who face discrimination on multiple fronts. Hence, intersectionality emphasises upon a thorough examination of different 'forms of oppression' (Opara et al., 2020) interacting simultaneously and shaping lived experiences of ethnic minority women (Crenshaw, 1991). The concept of intersectionality is considered important in this research to elucidate the complexity of career-related experiences for second-generation Pakistani women.

Arifeen and Syed (2020) employ intersectional framing to describe the links between interrelated and interconnected identity constructs; i.e. gender, race, ethnicity, and religion and referred it as 'intersectional identities' to elucidate the experiences of second-generation Pakistani women in managerial jobs in the UK. Due to the conflict of British Pakistani women's intersecting identities with the dominant workplace culture and organisational norms, they are faced with greater exclusion in the workplace and minimal acceptance from their colleagues and employers (Arifeen and Syed, 2020). The experience of an individual is not entirely contingent upon a singular identity marker, in fact it is influenced by a range of other interconnected and intersecting aspects of the multiple identities of that person (Crenshaw, 1989; 1991) for instance, such as being White or Black. The impact of each intersection of identity can intensify or diminish based on the prominence of other intersections in that instance, which make the identities subjective and non-static in nature.

Francis (2021) narrates Carbado (2013) that 'the greater the number of marginal identities to which an individual belongs, the more disadvantage they are likely to experience' (p.2). For example, ethnic minority Muslim women from working class backgrounds would experience greater disadvantage as compared to White middle-class women. Thus, because of possessing marginalised race, ethnicity, gender, religion (and other identity markers) the ethnic minority women experience complex challenges as opposed to those with dominant identities (Francis,

2021). According to Arifeen and Gatrell (2013, 2019) and Tariq and Syed (2018) an intersectional approach is useful to understand the working experiences of ethnic minority women; as it allows the researcher to acknowledge the interconnected identity markers and their interactions (also see Kele et al., 2022) including race, gender, social class, religion, ethnicity. They acknowledge that while there are ambiguities in the understanding of workplace experiences of underrepresented groups, an intersectional approach is the vehicle through which experiences of the unheard can be voiced, recognised and understood (Arifeen and Gatrell, 2013, 2019).

Khattab and Hussein (2018) found that the job market experiences of British Muslim women are primarily shaped by their multiple identity ascriptions; thereby meaning that the various identity aspects such as gender, race, ethnicity, religion, migration profiles (first- and second-generations) are central to examining their employment experiences, instead of being based on educational qualification or achievements. Thus, these women experience the job market not only as women, but through the interactions of various aspects of their identities; i.e. ethnic, racial, religious, migration profile, thereby leading to multiple relative social positions and significant inequalities. Therefore, British Pakistani women are often disadvantaged in their career journeys because of the multiple layers of their identities, including religion (being a Muslim), ethnicity (being a Pakistani), race (being brown-skinned), social class (family socioeconomic status) and often the migration status as first- or second-generation, depicted in the following figure 1.3.

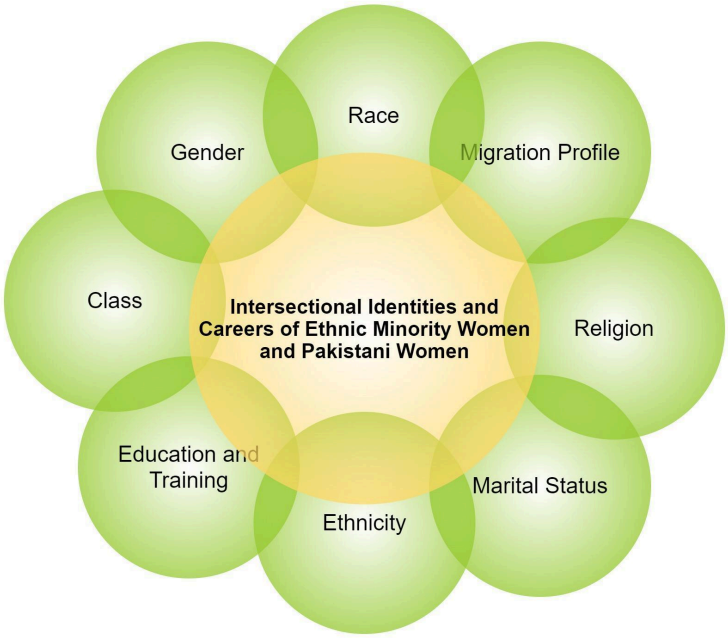

Figure 1.3. Intersectional Identities and Careers of Ethnic Minority Women and British Pakistani women – Source: Crenshaw (1989) as interpreted by researcher

The above figure 1.3 shows the different layers of identities of ethnic minority women and Pakistani women that combinedly determine the disadvantage experienced by these women. Depending on the context, the identity markers may become relative and some identities can become dominant than the others. There are other identity markers specific to different women that are not included in this figure, for instance, disability, age, sexuality. Anthias (2012) highlights the key identity categories that shape the experiences of British Pakistani women including gender, ethnicity, nationality and religion (Arifeen and Gatrell, 2013).

Research suggests that the intersectional identities of ethnic minority women are significant in shaping their career-related experiences (Kele et al., 2022) such that these multiple identities may be engaged simultaneously, and it can be challenging to untangle these from each other. For

instance, in the views of Hopkins and Gale (2009) distinguishing between the influences of ethnicity and religion is highly challenging, both in theory and in practice. In the same way, for the careers of ethnic minority women and Pakistani women, it is difficult to understand the impact of one layer of identity in isolation with the other intersecting identities. Therefore, it becomes necessary to examine the intersectional identities of these women in combination with the broader systemic inequalities to gauge the challenges of career journeys comprehensively because it is challenging to separate gender from ethnicity and religion, as these categories interact and influence each other differently in different contexts.

The McGregor-Smith Review (2017) found evidence of inequalities in the workplace for ethnic minorities which highlights the impact of their intersectionality on employment outcomes. The study, which included 479 participants from diverse ethnic backgrounds across different areas of the UK found that multiple forms of racism existed in the British workplaces. These included barriers to job promotion, glass ceiling experiences, and disparities in pay and working hours compared to White colleagues. The evidence regarding multiple disparities faced by ethnic minorities in the workplace revealed discrimination and unconscious bias as the main barriers.

2.6. Historical Migration of Pakistani Women to the UK

The Pakistani population represents the majority of British Muslims present in the UK and 93 percent of British Pakistanis identify as Muslims. Pakistani people comprise the second largest ethnic minority in the UK at 2 percent of the total population; i.e. 1.6 million. Pakistani communities are densely populated in the West Midlands at just above 20 percent, in Yorkshire and Humber at around 20 percent, in London at just under 20 percent and in the Northwest at almost 20 percent (Ethnicity Facts and Figures, 2022).

Pakistani immigrants arrived in the UK during the 1960s, because of their colonial connections with the British. This migration was primarily driven by the goal of contributing to the country's industrial growth (Judt, 2007 cited by Naseem, 2019). The Pakistani migrants settled down in areas where there was shortage of local labour, for instance areas with declining textile industry in the northwestern part of the UK and took low-paying factory jobs there (Dale et al., 2002). They mostly had patriarchal mindsets and belonged to working-class farming backgrounds, where agriculture was their main occupation in the home country. Pakistani women arrived in the UK as dependents, joining their husbands in the migration and became largely confined to unpaid domestic roles. There was a traditional division of labour at home where these first-generation women would assume a large share of the household and caring responsibilities. As a newly arrived group, they were isolated because of having limited social networks in the UK and were faced with language barriers as well. These women were expected by their families to uphold their strict cultural, ethnic and gender identities. The industrial collapse in the 1980s drastically affected the Pakistani families and resulted in a sharp rise in unemployment in the local job market (Dale et al., 2002). As a result, they were encountered with financial struggles and isolation which contributed to their socioeconomic disadvantage. Eventually the first-generation Pakistani men resorted to working in precarious jobs at restaurants owned by Asian people and also took up jobs as taxi drivers.

2.6.1. Working Experiences of First-Generation Pakistani Women

After arrival in the UK, the first-generation Pakistani women encountered unfavourable participation in the job market where they would either remain unemployed, or accept unpaid jobs in family-run businesses, or accept other low-paying and low-skilled jobs (Werbner, 2005). Due to the initial struggles of migration to a new country, unfamiliarity with the job market with

limited social contacts, these women were at a disadvantage from the beginning (Miaari et al., 2019). Most of the time, these women were expected to assume unpaid caring and domestic roles while the men would work in the job market to earn for their families (Dale et al., 2002).

Shaikh (2011) argued that the British Muslim women are isolated and disadvantaged in education and employment due to the conservative culture of the first-generation migrants and the widespread theological misconceptions regarding Muslim women's roles. Research shows that Muslim women, particularly first-generation immigrants and new arrivals to the UK are more likely to encounter job market disadvantages and reduced employment opportunities due to their religious identities and challenges of adjustment in the host country (Khattab and Hussein, 2018; Li and Heath, 2018). The first-generation Muslim women are also restricted in the job market because of conforming to the sociocultural factors such as domestic roles, caring responsibilities, gender roles from the home country, their submissive attitudes and work-life choices (Dale et al., 2002). Li and Heath (2018) explained that first-generation ethnic minority groups, particularly those who migrated to Britain as adults, are often marginalised due to limited English language skills and social isolation (Miaari et al., 2019). These factors limit their scope of employability and the opportunities to secure well-paid jobs (Zuccotti and Platt, 2017).

Khattab and Hussein (2018) discussed that better English language skills and enhanced opportunities of training and development may pave ways to improve the socioeconomic status of immigrants and ethnic minorities in the host country, only in the case where their intersectional identities are 'neutral' and not in conflict with the identities of the majority population (White British in this case). As far as British Muslim women are concerned, most of their identity markers are polarised with the dominant White identities. Their ethnicity, class, religion, migration status, and race are prominent and often interrelated, and work

simultaneously in determining their opportunities of employment and career progression. If immigrants are negatively racialised by the majority group and viewed as 'others' in the host country, their skills may remain under-utilised, eventually leading to marginalisation in the British job market (Cheung and Phillimore, 2014). As a result, the initial disadvantages faced by some ethnic groups can turn into long-term penalties that persist throughout their career journeys (Modood, 2004) and for Muslims ethnic minorities in the West, these ethnic penalties are being shifted onto the second generations.

Research by Dustmann and Theodoropoulos (2010) found that the educational achievement for most British-born ethnic minority groups is remarkably high as compared with the White British population. However, they found that the employment possibilities for ethnic minorities (whether UK-born or not) are substantially lower as compared to the White British population (Dustmann and Theodoropoulos, 2010). This reinforces the fact that albeit the ethnic minority women being highly educated first- or second-generation immigrants in the UK, they are still disadvantaged in the job market due to their ethnic and racial identities. Research suggests that the first- and second-generation ethnic minority women in the UK are expected to project very specific gender identities and conform to cultural stereotypes (Brah, 2003) whereas British Pakistani women may be subject to religious expectations as an addition (Ahmad, 2012).

2.6.2. Working Experiences of Second-Generation Pakistani Women

The term 'second-generation' typically refers to individuals born in a country to at least one immigrant parent (Schneider, 2016). Interestingly, the first- and second-generation ethnic minorities experience different types of challenges of career progression. For instance, first-generation immigrants are faced with additional problems like cultural transition and

making adjustments to the new environment, language barrier, non-UK qualifications, to name a few. However, the second-generation immigrants have already spent a longer time in the host country; and most probably their elders have gone through the initial hardships of migration; so they are likely to be faced with different challenges. For instance, normally the second-generation of immigrants do not struggle with English language proficiency as the first-generation (Mirza and Warwick, 2024). At the same time, they have some common challenges too, i.e. their race and skin colour are common features which organically run through both generations and become grounds for exclusionary experiences. It is found that the British born ethnic minorities have greater tendencies to be unemployed and on average earn lower remuneration (ONS, 2018; 2022; 2023) despite having the same skill sets and characteristics as their British-born White peers.

Second-generation minority ethnic immigrants often have higher levels of education compared to their parents and often have higher educational outcomes as compared to the White native communities (Dustmann et al., 2010). It is assumed that the second-generation British Pakistani women should be comparatively more advantaged because of their educational achievements. However, this is rarely the case, because factors like education and training are not entirely responsible for deciding labour market outcomes for ethnic minority groups in the UK. Studies have found that ethnic minorities in the UK, particularly Pakistani, Indian and Bangladeshi groups have higher ratios of university education than the White British groups, however, this does not reduce the substantial disadvantage they have in the British job market (Modood, 2005; Algan et al., 2010; Zwysen and Longhi, 2018).

It is found that female graduates from ethnic minority backgrounds have to wait longer to become employed as compared to British White graduates with similar qualifications (Zwysen

and Longhi, 2018). Similarly, Muslim Pakistani female graduates are less likely to obtain full-time employment or managerial and professional roles than their Indian counterparts (Khattab, 2012). Compared to Pakistani men, these women encounter 'additional penalty' due to the gendered nature of the labour market (Khattab, 2009, p.316), patriarchal family values (Dale et al., 2002; Ahmad, 2012) and their visible religious identities like wearing hijab (Shaikh, 2011; Zempi and Chakraborti, 2014). Therefore, the transition from education to employment and career progression for second generation ethnic minority women and British Pakistani women, is shaped by a variety of sociocultural, religious and structural barriers as well as their multiple identity markers like gender, religion, ethnicity.

Naseem (2019) discussed that intersectional identity markers like gender, class and ethnicity are significant in shaping the career trajectories of second-generation Pakistani women; not just for accessing opportunities of employment, but also in terms of the long-term impact on their career progression; particularly if they are university-educated (Naseem, 2019). Therefore, it is asserted that education, especially university qualification, is not the sole indicator that determines the career progression of ethnic minority women and British Pakistani women. In fact, the employability, the careers of ethnic minority women and British Pakistani women are largely contingent upon the interactions of their different identities with the social, cultural and institutional factors. It is found that the second-generation South Asian and Pakistani women often need to negotiate the pursuit of higher education with their parents and families who would normally perceive the university as a White space that is harmful for their daughters (Ijaz and Abbas, 2010) and would 'modernise' them unnecessarily (Ahmad, 2012).

The research by Arifeen and Syed (2020) sheds light on the experiences of highly educated second-generation British Pakistani women in professional and managerial roles. They argue that

these women are faced with multifaceted structural and personal barriers while pursuing higher education in the UK universities and these struggles transpire into their professional lives later on (Arifeen and Syed, 2020). Thus, the basis of restricted career progression for British Pakistani women is formed during their student lives as they are pressured to uphold stereotypical gender and cultural expectations from a younger age (Brah, 2003). Therefore, these initial sociocultural barriers multiply the struggles of educated second-generation British Pakistani women in the British job market.

2.7. Ethnic and Racial Inequalities in Job Market

The challenges in the job market are experienced by women in general, however, the barriers for ethnic minority women are far more complex (Khattab and Johnston, 2015; Tariq and Syed, 2018). There are huge ethnic inequalities in the British job market (Berthoud, 2000; Heath and Cheung, 2006) and data from Office of National Statistics (ONS, 2018, 2022, 2023) shows that some ethnic minority groups are more disadvantaged in the job market as compared to other groups (Khattab, 2012). This can be understood as ethnic penalty which suggests that ethnic minorities experience different types of exclusion and differential treatment as a punishment due to their racial and/or ethnic identities (Khattab and Johnston, 2015).

While the White British employees are better off, the Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Black African groups are faced with higher levels of unemployment and lower earnings (Berthoud, 2000; Heath and Cheung, 2006; Platt, 2005). In terms of their job market outcomes and socioeconomic status, the Bangladeshi and Pakistani ethnic groups are below Black-African ethnic groups (Li and Heath, 2018) also showing the lowest pay and participation outcomes in the UK government statistics (ONS, 2022). Similarly, ethnic minority women often face considerable ethnic and

gender penalties in their careers, including lower income, higher unemployment rates and limited representation in managerial and leadership roles (Grant, 2008). Similarly, the Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups are often absent from professional and managerial jobs and have limited opportunities of socioeconomic growth as compared to the Indian population (for instance, see Modood, 2005).

An important dimension of the employment dynamics in the British job market is racism and ethnic discrimination that gives rise to inequalities in the job market, where hiring and remuneration is subject to the ethnic and racial identities, rather than qualification and experience (Zwysen and Longhi, 2018). The racial bias against ethnic minorities in the UK has a multifaceted impact on their lives; especially on their careers, impacting the types of jobs they get, their income, access to opportunities of professional development, as well as career progression. Thus, ethnic minorities in the UK are disadvantaged in the job market at various stages; especially during job search, hiring, re-hiring after unemployment and promotions (Li and Heath, 2018).

Research regarding the careers of ethnic minorities and Muslim women in employment emphasises upon the impact of gender, religion and ethnicity in these women's careers (Essers and Benschop, 2009; Kenny and Briner, 2007; Khattab and Hussein, 2018). The report 'Race Inequalities in the Workforce' by Bowyer and Henderson (2020) reveals that young employees from ethnic minority groups are 47 percent more likely than White groups to secure zero-hour job contracts and remain employed in precarious jobs, and these risks are much more pronounced for young employees from Pakistani backgrounds.

In addition to gender and ethnic penalties, ethnic minority women are disadvantaged due to their religious identities. The ‘gendered and racialised Eurocentric discourses’ (Ahmad, 2012, p.193) signify the idea of being religious and identifying with Islam as problematic; especially for ethnic minority women. Muslim women are imagined to be ‘inherently oppressed’ (Ahmad, 2012, p.193) by means of an extremely patriarchal religion and culture perpetuating exclusion and limiting women's participation in opportunities of growth, education and employment (Ahmad, 2012). Consequently, these constructs falsely project Muslim women's images and identities as traditionally uneducated, ‘backward’ and religiously oppressed (Ahmad 2001, 2003, 2006, 2012) and they ‘lose the race even before they start to run’. It takes a lot more effort for ethnic minority Muslim women to prove their skills and talent in the British job market when their religious identities are seen as a potential threat and problem. Velayati (2018) highlights that many British Muslim women aspire to succeed in education and employment but encounter additional barriers, such as discrimination related to their clothing and faith, which make securing jobs difficult. It is also noted that Muslim women are more likely to experience multiple market penalties at the same time; for instance, ethnic penalty, gender pay gap, Muslim penalty and motherhood penalty (Khattab and Hussein, 2018).

2.8. Ethnic Minority Women in Senior Roles

Ethnic minority women are seriously under-represented in senior positions in the UK (Krook and Nugent, 2016; Kele et al., 2022). According to Dey et al. (2021) ‘women make up 6% of CEOs of FTSE 100 companies, 21% of the civil service board and 35% of civil service permanent secretaries, but none of these are women of colour’ (p.12). There is a critical absence of gender and racial diversity at the senior management and leadership levels in British organisations (Bowyer and Henderson, 2020; Krook and Nugent, 2016; CIPD, 2017) for instance, in the retail

sector (Kele et al., 2022), science and technology (Howe-Walsh and Turnbull, 2016), higher education (Bhopal, 2019; Bhopal and Henderson, 2019), healthcare (Kalra et al., 2009; Woodhead et al., 2022).

Bhopal (2024b) shared that from the academics in UK universities, only 6.1 percent Black and ethnic minority academics are heads of institutions. Almost 90 percent of professors in the UK universities are White and the remaining 10 percent comprise of ethnic minority groups, thus showing huge disparities of progression. Similarly, ethnic minority academics are likely to secure fixed-term contracts thereby meaning less secure jobs and receive less pay as compared to their White colleagues. Howe-Walsh and Turnbull, 2016 explained that women in science and technology working in UK universities struggle with job promotions because they need to show their ability to publish peer-reviewed research in reputable journals and win research grants which is challenging because of gender disparities in the field. When racial disparities are added to the equation in addition to gender, the situation for ethnic minority women becomes even more complex in all fields of work (see Herr and Anderson, 2015).

Kaur Rana et al. (1998) found that the British South Asian women felt that families did not cooperate with them to meet the demands of their managerial and professional jobs. They further elaborated that although White women may also face challenges of work-life balance, nonetheless, these cultural pressures are much more complex for South Asian women, because the stereotypical expectations of prioritising family over work are not only being projected by the immediate family, but also from the extended families and the wider community. Consequently, the professional South Asian women seeking managerial and leadership positions feel guilty for preferring work over family which adds to their challenges of career progression.

Institutional racism and discrimination at the workplace are major reasons behind the hampered career progression of ethnic minority women employees in the UK, and consequently limits their representation in senior roles (Dey et al., 2021; Bhopal, 2020b; Woodhead et al., 2022). Ethnic minority women in leadership roles believe that their leadership and communication style is less liked as compared to the White women leaders (Dey et al., 2021). Similarly, the ethnic minority academics do not receive sufficient institutional support for career progression and are neither encouraged to apply for promotions (Bhopal, 2020b). Research indicates that employers are less inclined to hire or even consider Muslim women for decision-making positions (Ridley, 2014). In fact British employers prefer to hire applicants who fit-in with the organisational culture rather than considering their knowledge, qualifications and skills (Opara et al., 2020). This indicates that the employers will recruit someone based on how well their identities match with the dominant workplace culture, which is largely based on White, Western, non-Muslim values (see Arifeen, 2020) regardless of how experienced and competent the candidates are for the position. It is concerning to note that while dealing with such exclusionary workplace dynamics, Muslim women are bound to fall behind in their careers, making it extremely difficult to make progress to secure decision-making roles in the British workplaces.

2.9. Social and Cultural Capital

In addition to the intersectional identities of ethnic minority women that are key in shaping their career journeys, the social and cultural capital is important in explaining their experiences in the job market. Sullivan (2001) explains Bourdieu's perspective that cultural capital encompasses the knowledge, skills, education and cultural competencies that enable individuals to navigate social structures and opportunities of social mobility. Similarly, social capital can be understood as the resources and advantages gained through social networks and relationships. Both social and

cultural capital significantly contribute to maintaining social hierarchies as they are unequally distributed due to social class and education (Sullivan, 2001). For instance, Bourdieu argues that higher-class parents are able to impart greater cultural capital among their children which promotes their academic achievement, ultimately leading to improved employment outcomes, even though it amplifies class inequalities. Whereas, limited social and cultural capital puts the individuals from lower social class at a disadvantage even before they enter the job market.

Studies show that in the UK, the ethnic minority graduates often belong to lower socioeconomic backgrounds (Connor et al., 2004; Modood, 2005; Richardson, 2015). This is due to racial and ethnic disadvantage experienced by the first generation (their parents), as well as the downward social mobility which the immigrant parents had experienced (Platt, 2005). The second-generation of immigrants is likely to become a source of climbing up the social and economic ladder for the family by gaining academic qualifications from the UK (Modood, 2004; Zwysen and Longhi, 2018). The pursuit of higher academic qualifications may be motivated with the aim to overcome the economic disadvantage and perceived discrimination in the wider society (Zwysen and Longhi, 2018; Connor et al., 2004; Heath et al., 2008) though it is worth considering whether attaining higher qualifications from the UK really paves ways for employability of ethnic minority groups. This is because the university-educated ethnic minorities are faced with various structural, cultural and policy-related challenges that restrict their employability in the job market (Ahmad, 2012). Over time, due to significant improvement in academic achievement for ethnic minorities, the graduates from higher social class earn higher qualifications resulting in increased earnings, and this has reinforced the existing divide in the British job market, thereby limiting social mobility of those from low socioeconomic backgrounds (Lindley and Machin, 2012).

Parents with high socioeconomic status pass on soft skills to their children that are valuable in the labour market (Bowles et al., 2005) thus adding to the disadvantage of those who come from low-income families. Young people often depend on their parental social networks to secure employment, and these networks can be specifically more advantageous for those who come from higher social class and live in higher socioeconomic neighbourhoods (Kadushin, 2012; Patacchini and Zenou, 2012). Similarly, residence location is a notable consideration in shaping ethnic inequalities in the job market as it determines the distance from opportunities (Patacchini and Zenou, 2011). Residing in low-income neighbourhoods with fewer opportunities makes it even more difficult for ethnic minority graduates to access employment. Thus, these women are more likely to apply for admissions in nearby universities that allow them to continue living with their parents while studying at the university so that they do not need to commute far or find university accommodation (Dwyer and Shah, 2009). This may considerably reduce the chances of these women to be qualified from high ranking institutions. It is argued that qualifications from less prestigious universities are likely to result in limited access to prestigious jobs (Noden et al., 2014).

The residence location is important in developing potentially valuable social contacts that may support ethnic minority graduates in their job search in addition to parental resources (Patacchini and Zenou, 2011). Weaker social ties within the community often result in limited social capital, and the inability to utilise social networks for opportunities of job referrals. This is especially crucial for ethnic minorities, who rely on social connections more than White British job seekers in their job search (Battu et al., 2011; Dustmann et al., 2016). It is interesting to note that the intersectional identity markers like ethnicity, social class, generational profile are interconnected here in shaping labour market inequalities.

2.10. Family Responsibilities

Women's career journeys are challenged because of their family responsibilities and stereotypical expectations to perform domestic roles (Davidson and Burke, 2004; Lirio et al., 2007; Omar and Davidson, 2001; Wilson, 2014). While family responsibilities negatively impact the economic activity of all women, this impact is particularly significant for South Asian women (Kaur Rana et al., 1998), Pakistani and Bangladeshi women (Zwysen and Longhi, 2018). British Pakistani women struggle more than women from other ethnicities to combine their family responsibilities and employment (Dale, 2005; Kamenou, 2008). These women are faced with a variety of cultural challenges where they are expected to fit into the role of an 'ideal woman' who is confined to the household and assumes nurturing roles (Aston et al., 2007). Shaikh (2011) argued that arranged marriages and fear of discrimination due to modest dressing and hijab cause limitations in the educational achievement and career progression of British Muslim women. Those women who gain support from male family members; and are able to negotiate their paths into education and employment; continue to juggle between domestic and professional spheres of life.

Ali et al. (2017) explained that British Pakistani mothers are more likely to remain unemployed during and after childbirth as compared to other British ethnic minority women like Indian and Black women. They struggle to enter the workforce; even if they are in low-skilled professions or low-paying roles, while keeping up with the unpaid work they are expected to do at home. Even though the Pakistani community and extended family members can be supportive to assist in child care; however, on the other hand they can be sustaining and even perpetuating traditional gender roles for Pakistani women (Aston et al., 2007).

Dale and Ahmed (2011) reviewed employment patterns among South Asian women (mainly from Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Indian origin), the Muslim women in particular have lower rates of economic activity mainly because of differences in education and family responsibilities (Ali et al., 2017; Dale et al., 2002; Dale et al., 2006). These differences in levels of economic activity are associated with the differences in education, marriage and family responsibilities and may even vary from one ethnic group to the other (Dale et al., 2006). At the same time, it is not the only important impediment to their economic activity and career progression; in fact, when coupled with stringent policies and organisational practices, the overall situation becomes even more complicated for these women.

2.11. Anti-Muslim Racism and Careers of British Muslim Women

Anti-Muslim racism involves the prejudice and hostility directed towards individuals based on their Muslim identity or perceived association with Islam (Carr, 2015). It is visibly manifested in the career journeys of British Muslims in general, and British Muslim women in particular. Literature has reported the rising concern of Islamophobia and racism towards Muslim population, especially Muslim women (Zempi and Chakraborti, 2012; Carr, 2015; Cheng, 2015; Triandafyllidou, 2010; Weller, 2011). These dynamics have certainly amplified the challenges in daily lives of British Muslims; especially the British Muslim women due to their visible identity markers (referred to as visible 'Muslimness'). In the views of Chakraborti and Zempi (2012) and Dobson (2014) the growing concern of anti-Muslim racism is one of the main reasons why Muslims, especially women, encounter serious discrimination in the job market in the UK.

Carr (2015) shared the work of Hickman et al. (2011) who narrate that Muslim people are often treated as 'suspect community' and as the 'enemy within' because of the widespread animosity

from the dominant groups towards their Muslimness especially in the wake of 9/11 and the war on terror. Cherney and Murphy (2016) further discuss that Muslims as suspects are considered dangerous, threatening and problematic and they find it difficult to avoid public suspicion towards them. They are stigmatised and discriminated against because of their visible religious identities, i.e. 'Markers of Muslimness' (for instance Chakraborti and Zempi, 2012; Carr, 2015) and similar behaviours are reflected in workplaces as well.

British Muslims face the worst discrimination in the job market out of all other ethnic minority groups (Dobson, 2014). Ahmed and Gorey (2023) argue that these women experience triple to quadruple disadvantage in employment due to their intersectional identity markers of religion, gender, race and ethnicity. Muslim women hold multiple positions and identities in British context that are complex and multi-layered, therefore, they cannot be viewed as a homogeneous group (Ruwanpura, 2008). Visible markers of identity, such as gender, race, wearing a veil or hijab and dress code play a significant role in the construction of 'otherness' (Brah and Phoenix, 2004; Brown, 2006; Zempi and Chakraboti, 2014) thereby illustrating the intersectionality and dynamic nature of race and ethnicity (Archer and Francis, 2006; Arrighi, 2001; Crenshaw, 1991; Lewis, 2004; Reay et al., 2007). In addition to race and gender, religion is a compelling aspect of intersectionality that should be examined in simultaneity with other identity markers (see Tariq and Syed, 2018; Cannon, 2023). Muslim women are significantly disadvantaged as they suffer obstacles and bias due to their intersectionality (Zempi and Chakraboti, 2014; Ahmed and Gorey, 2023; Cannon, 2023). For instance, Muslim women observing hijab are more likely to encounter employment discrimination due to their visible Muslimness (Kumra and Manfredi, 2012). Zempi and Chakraborti (2014) argue that because of wearing hijab, these women are easily identified and are considered 'soft targets' in public places exposed to serious risks of Islamophobic

victimisation and physical and verbal abuse. Similarly, due to their hijab they are vulnerable in the workplaces, resulting in discrimination and racist behaviours by their colleagues. This unfairness has also been observed during hiring and recruitment processes, for instance, Muslim women have reported being inquired about their plans for marriage and having children during job interviews (Wallis and Robb, 2013). While this belief is held by some employers about all women, there is a particular concern among certain employers that Muslim women may be more likely to leave their jobs shortly after getting married (Ahmed and Sardar, 2012).

When Muslimness is considered a taboo form of identification, most of the Muslim women may prefer to stay unemployed rather than risk compromising their religious beliefs (Weller, 2011) resulting in useful talent being wasted (Dale et al., 2002). Most British employers view religion as a problem and refuse to accommodate Muslim employees (especially Muslim women) at work due to their hostility and hate towards them (Ahmed and Sardar, 2012). Muslim women have reported being bullied, ridiculed or receiving casual comments from colleagues about wearing hijab. Since their visible Muslim identities are misperceived to signify a 'terrorist religion' (Zempi and Chakraborti, 2014) it is argued that the Muslim women felt the need to apologise and explain to their non-Muslim colleagues, every time there was a terrorist attack anywhere around the world (Stevenson et al., 2017).

This discussion presents the extent of deeply embedded hostility towards Muslim women's visible identities and the magnitude of challenges they are faced with in their career journeys. There are various dimensions of these women's careers that indicate anti-Muslim racism giving rise to their exclusion from opportunities of career progression while projecting them as the 'others'. This idea is of particular significance for this research because Muslimness is a dominant part of the intersectional identities of most British Pakistani women.

2.12. Imposter Syndrome and Racism

Experiences of discrimination and prejudice hugely affect the access to fair opportunities and well-being (Safi, 2010) resulting in declining mental health for ethnic minority groups (Nandi et al., 2020; Schmitt et al., 2014). Bowyer and Henderson (2020) elaborate the links between employment and mental health, and suggest that job market inequalities have detrimental impact on mental health and wellbeing of the ethnic minorities. Thus, there is an overriding possibility that the discrimination against ethnic minority women may damage their sense of belonging, self-image, and mental health. For instance, Zempi and Chakraborti (2014) discuss that Muslim women who were at risk of Islamophobic victimisation in the British public places due to their veils reported feelings of low self-confidence, insecurity, loneliness, feelings of worthlessness and damaged self-esteem. Since there is likelihood of not being a preference of the White British employers, ethnic minority women may question their self-worth during their career journeys, and believe that they are not good enough for securing higher-level jobs or progress in their careers.

Imposter syndrome can be understood as a persistent sense of self-doubt where the individuals suffering from it assume that they have fooled others into believing in their talent and abilities (Peteet et al., 2015). It affects the individuals who are unable to accept a sense of accomplishment or competence despite evidence of their abilities. They believe they are less talented and less competent as compared to the common judgement by others. It is often observed in those who belong to negatively racialised backgrounds or lower socioeconomic status than those who often hold positions of power in organisations. Ethnic minority employees are more likely to suffer from imposter syndrome due to lack of representation in leadership and management positions in the British organisations (Murray, 2023). It is noteworthy that ethnic

minority women are already dealing with a myriad of challenges owing to their intersectional identities; and on top of that, they seem to be either discouraged from applying for managerial and leadership roles, or simply lose the confidence to do so because the top most roles in the organisations are predominantly White, and are a no-go-zone for them.

Hewertson and Tissa (2022) argue that imposter syndrome is not only a personal feeling, rather it has crucial sociopolitical implications for negatively racialised groups, especially those with intersectional identities who go through experiences of 'multiple oppression'. The scarcity of role models and racist power structures in organisations that only favour White employees can serve as continual reminders that the ethnic minority women are different from the majority of their colleagues and that they do not fit in, thus leading to feelings of not being good enough. Hence, British Pakistani women may lose their self-confidence and suffer from imposter syndrome because of their intersectional identities and wider structural inequalities that attract experiences of exclusion at the workplace.

2.13. Role of Employers

Organisations and employers have important roles to play in ensuring that all employees should have equal access to employment opportunities and the ability to reach their full potential, regardless of their identity, background or race. By not paying due attention to racial, ethnic and religious diversity in the British political economy, employers are presently propelling the ethnic and racial divide, ultimately contributing to the wider system of 'multiple oppression' as noted by Crenshaw (1991) and narrated by Opara et al. (2020). The notion of 'multiple oppression' posits that oppression is not a separate and isolated discourse; rather it is experienced in many different ways because of the intertwined nature of identities that become the basis of oppression.

Employers hold the power to foster equitable organisational cultures and take steps to ensure that the workplaces have inclusive, non-discriminatory culture, in order to attract diverse talent and retain it for the benefit of the organisations, employees, and the wider society. The following discussion elaborates some important organisational norms and practices that shape the career journeys of these women; including hiring and recruitment practices, opportunities and promotions, workplace culture and after-work socialising. The intersectional identities of ethnic minority women are given due consideration in the discussing these organisational dynamics.

(a) Hiring and Recruitment Practices

Ethnic minority women are faced with discriminatory hiring and recruitment practices in the British job market right from the stage of applying for a job, through to being called for interviews and in selection processes (Kamenou and Fearfull, 2006). There is a considerable variation in interview callback rates in response to job applications for applicants with similar qualifications but racially distinct names. It is natural to expect that job seekers with equivalent qualifications on their resume would have an equal chance of securing an interview. However, not all resumes have the same likelihood of being contacted by recruiters or HR departments for an interview. It is established that racial information corresponding to different names on resumes has a major impact on response rates (Moss-Racusin et al., 2012).

Oreopoulos (2011) suggests that job applicants having ‘foreign’ and ‘non-English’ sounding names receive significantly less interview calls by the employers as compared to those with similar qualifications and with more English-sounding names, highlighting employer bias in the hiring processes. It is further shown that Asian names for example Aisha or Jamal received the

least interview calls as compared to those applicants with more English-sounding names like David (Moss-Racusin et al., 2012).

Similarly, it is explained by Kang et al. (2016) that in order to overcome the discrepancy in response rates, Asians use the technique of resume 'whitening' which involves changing their names to more neutral, English-sounding names. This technique also sometimes requires removing experiences from the resume that signify minority status and interestingly, such techniques increased call-back rates significantly (Kang et al., 2016). Even though the employers have not yet interacted with these individuals, this treatment can be considered exclusionary and racist. Nonetheless, it is evident that racial, ethnic and female names result in lower callback rates for job interviews or are perceived as incompetent for the job even before they have a chance.

Oreopoulos (2011) argues that employers tend to make prejudiced assumptions around individuals' English language skills based upon their names. Ethnic minority women perceive the non-transparent recruitment practices in UK organisations to be loaded with racial and gender bias. At the same time, the lack of meaningful feedback gives rise to ambiguity around how women can secure jobs and progress in their careers. Research reported that wearing hijab had a negative impression in job interviews, being a visible marker of Muslimness (Zempi and Chakraborti, 2014). Researchers have made distinctions between women who 'covered' (wore a hijab or face veil) and those who did not, suggesting that the former faced greater challenges in securing their preferred jobs. In contrast, simply being 'Asian' posed fewer barriers in the job market compared to being both 'Asian' and 'Muslim' (Wagner et al., 2012; Dale and Ahmed, 2008).

(b) Professional Development and Job Promotions

After hiring, the employers have the responsibility to ensure continuous professional development of their employees. Recent data by McKinsey and Company revealed that ethnic minority women are faced with barriers like inadequate support by the management for job promotions, lower remuneration, and limited networking opportunities (Dixon-Fyle et al., 2023). Research by CIPD (2017) has reported lack of transparency around training and development opportunities in British organisations which impacts ethnic minority women's ability to gain new skills and progress in their jobs. Less than half (42 percent) of ethnic minority women of the total sample said that their employer provides transparent opportunities of career development (CIPD, 2017). There were many difficulties reported, that would restrict the access to training and development opportunities in the organisations, including exclusionary informal networks at work motivated with racial prejudice. It is found that ethnic minority women's likelihood to work in part-time roles in order to accommodate their caring responsibilities at home was considered as a barrier in their participation in training and development opportunities (CIPD, 2017). These factors obstruct their career progression and ultimately reinforce their concentration into low-skilled and low-paying jobs. At the same time Dixon-Fyle et al. (2023) revealed that organisations have cut back on important initiatives that support the career development needs of women. It is concerning that not many employers are prioritising gender and racial diversity; consequently, the data from this McKinsey report shows decline in formal initiatives of career development, mentorship and sponsorship programs for ethnic minority women. Eventually, these limitations would lead to greater difficulties in securing decision-making roles for these women, as they may not be able to meet the necessary 'criteria' to qualify for leadership roles (Otaye-Ebede and Shaffakat, 2024).

(c) Workplace Culture

Research suggests that workplace culture plays an important role in shaping the working experiences and career progression of women employees (Atkinson, 2011; Fletcher, 2005); especially ethnic minority women and British Pakistani women in different sectors (for example Brathwaite, 2018; Fielden et al., 2010; Fielden and Davidson, 2012). Ethnic minority women in academia find it difficult to fit in with the dominant workplace culture that upholds White supremacy (Bhopal 2019) and Pakistani women struggle in this regard as well (Arifeen and Syed, 2020). The prevalence of masculine workplace cultures in the British organisations often dominated by White male employees (Opara et al., 2020; Fielden et al., 2010) which has unfavourable impact on the careers of ethnic minority women; for instance, Acker (2006), Atkinson (2011), Opara et al. (2020) and Tariq and Syed (2017).

Acker (2006) elaborated that gendered organisations give rise to social and economic inequalities and how gender, class and racial disparities are often reproduced through organisational practices. The ethnic minority women often find it challenging to integrate in gendered and racialised workplace culture due to their gender, racial, ethnic and religious identities (see Acker, 2006). Not conforming to the prevalent workplace culture leads to othering and ethnic minority women develop a sense of disadvantage and lack of belonging. The conventional norms and practices at the British workplaces are likely to intensify inequalities amongst the employees because they are expected to comply with the dominant workplace culture and practices that uphold White privilege (Arifeen and Syed, 2020; Opara et al., 2020). Therefore, gendered and racialised workplace culture in British organisations can be problematic for ethnic minority women and Pakistani women who are already struggling with the interaction of their multiple identities in the UK job market (Opara et al., 2020). Similarly, Kamenou and Fearfull (2006)

argue that ethnic minority women are expected to 'fit-in' with the dominant workplace norms and participate in informal networking in order to progress in their careers and gain opportunities of professional development and the inability to 'fit-in' can restrict their career progression (Acker, 2009).

Atkinson (2011) highlighted the findings of Kanter (1977) to explain the problems with masculine workplace culture; where the male employees would use specific types of behaviour that would make the female colleagues feel excluded; for instance swearing or casual sexist jokes. Atkinson (2011) further argues that female managers in male-dominated organisations identified masculine culture as the primary barrier to their career progression. It is reported in the same study that female employees were promoted less frequently as compared to their male colleagues with similar qualifications and received little pay, even after achieving new qualifications. Ironically, these findings represent only one aspect of intersectional identities; i.e. the role of gender and the population sample under study was White British women. While it is important to note that gendered workplace culture impedes the professional lives and career progression of women when they belong to the dominant racial identity (White); it is notable that the challenges for ethnic minority women in the British organisations are even more complex; where multiple aspects of their intersectional identities come into play. For instance ethnic minority women in the retail industry in the UK who are under-represented in senior management and leadership roles in the retail sector (Kele et al., 2022).

It is crucial to examine the impact of the race, ethnicity, religion and social class of ethnic minority women at work that shape their workplace experiences (e.g. see Tariq and Syed, 2017; Kamenou and Fearfull, 2006). A study by Arifeen and Syed (2020) based on interviews with 37 British Pakistani women managers and professionals, suggests that the intersectional identities of

British Pakistani women; especially their gender, ethnicity and religion are often in conflict with dominant organisational culture, which largely favour the male, White colleagues who are engaging in informal social networks especially alcohol-related socialising which is further discussed below.

(d) After-Work Socialising

Kanter (1977) has emphasised on the importance of socialising for women's career progression. The expectation from Muslim ethnic minorities to engage in social networking is discussed by researchers (Opara et al., 2020; Arifeen, 2020; Arifeen and Gatrell, 2019). In British organisations, there is a notable tendency of engaging in alcohol-related socialising as part of the workplace culture and norms (Arifeen, 2020; Flores-Pereira et al., 2008). In the light of the 'inequality regimes' by Acker (2006) it is argued that such workplace norms are likely to aggravate inequalities and exclusionary practices within the organisations and sustain White supremacy.

Since such interconnected practices uphold the intersecting inequalities of gender, ethnicity, class, race, however, the dimension of religion is a central aspect of this inequality regime. Due to their religious beliefs, Muslim women from ethnic minority groups often choose not to participate in after-work drinks, and this religiously motivated choice can impede their comfort level with their colleagues or even give rise to religious prejudice and exclusion within the organisation. It may happen that the colleagues discuss a work-related matter in the after-work social events (Arifeen and Syed, 2020); since the Muslim women are not a part of it; so they are likely to fall behind on important information.

Holvino (2010) suggests that British Pakistani female employees from the fields of law, medicine and human resources showed concerns regarding the prevalent organisational culture of alcohol-related socialising. Often Muslims are deeply attached to their religion which plays a significant role in shaping up their employment-related decisions. Arifeen and Gatrell (2020) tie this intrinsic religious belief with the notion of 'invisible glass chains' that bound the Muslim Pakistani women with their 'ethical selves'. These invisible glass chains may indicate religious and familial obligations because of which these women are able to stay consistent in following their faith, and abstain from negotiating their religious identities (Muslimness) in the pursuit of their career aspirations. For example, it is because of these invisible glass chains that Pakistani women avoid alcohol-related social events in the British workplaces, which often result in restricted opportunities of professional development and limited career progression (Arifeen and Gatrell, 2020; Arifeen, 2020). The similar notion of invisible glass chains is interesting to examine the lived experiences of Pakistani women in this research, i.e. highly educated, professional, second-generation British Pakistani women.

According to Holvino (2010) intersectionality should be understood as a concurrent phenomenon of different identities, social and institutional processes which is relevant in this context. For instance, alcohol-related socialising underpins these three processes at the workplace. While alcohol-related socialising may be a common workplace norm (Flores-Pereira et al., 2008), it represents unequal systemic dynamics that favour non-Muslim White majority employees (Acker, 2006; Healy et al., 2011). This scenario can be particularly difficult for ethnic minority employees, especially ethnic minority women who are already facing exclusion due to their intersectional identities (Holvino, 2010; Werbner, 2013).

(e) Racial Microaggressions at Work

Racial microaggressions are behavioural or verbal actions conveying hostility to members of different racial groups manifesting in three different forms: microinsults, microassaults, and microinvalidations (Sue et al., 2007). Microinsults are rude, insensitive behaviours, or discrediting an individual's identity or heritage. Microassaults express verbal or nonverbal actions aiming to hurt the victim. These actions include avoidant behaviour, name-calling, and in some cases purposeful discrimination. Microinvalidations invalidate any psychological feeling or reality of an individual.

The various forms of microaggressions are critical in understanding the manifestations of workplace bias against ethnic minority women hampering their career progression; even though they may not all be actively engaged in the act of exclusion at a given time; within a given context. Microaggressions can be a peculiar experience based on the stereotypes concerning a particular ethnic minority (Kim et al., 2018). Therefore, researchers categorise microaggressions based on their type i.e. general microaggression or stereotype-based microaggressions (Kim et al., 2015).

General microaggressions are forms of verbal or behavioural harassment that occur independently of social identity group affiliation. Denying the heterogeneity of the various ethnic and racial groups, for instance, implying that Asians, Blacks, and women all have similar experiences, is referred to as general microaggression (Sue et al., 2007). Microaggressions based on stereotypes are specific sorts of verbal or behavioural treatment based on the content of stereotypes perceivers hold about specific groups of people's ethnicity, gender, or identification (e.g. stay-at-home mother). 'Alien in their own land' and assumption of terrorism crimes

committed by Muslim groups are examples of some stereotype-based microaggressions and studies about Muslims being the 'suspect community' is discussed in studies by Allen (2015), Cherney and Murphy (2016), Hickman et al. (2011). These may be very subtle and sophisticated acts of racism, and this is why they may qualify as racial microaggressions. Gyimah et al. (2022) highlight that ethnic minority women were expected to change something about themselves in order to fit-in with the White dominant workplace culture, and most of these women were faced with scrutiny for behaviours that others would not be questioned upon. Such workplace dynamics can nurture very subtle and sophisticated forms of racism, although no racist slurs are being said here, but the racial microaggressions are visibly manifested within such workplace inequalities.

At workplaces, microaggressions are present in both forms i.e. general and stereotype-based microaggression. Workplace microaggressions can stem from biases related to the intersectional identities of negatively racialised and often microaggressions are rooted in stereotypes about these groups. These may manifest at various stages of the careers, starting as early as hiring and recruitment, opportunities of professional development and job promotions. For instance, ethnic minorities women often experience microaggressions in the hiring processes and even after they are hired. Some researchers have been able to examine microaggressions directly in the workplaces that mostly included clinical and academic settings (Constantine and Sue, 2007; Sue et al., 2007). The workplace microaggressions that ethnic minority women encounter in everyday work lives symbolise the implicit hostility that is held within the majority White groups.

An example of racial microaggressions can be the ethnic minority women to be mistaken as less intelligent than their colleagues. For instance Black academics are not given the due credit for their hard work and are treated as less intelligent than their White colleagues (Rollock, 2023).

Another example can be the assumption that the ethnic minority women must be hired as a secretary or a cleaner or may be merely the boss's wives (Mahony and Weiner, 2020; Otaye‐Ebede and Shaffakat, 2024). Even when most ethnic minority women encounter some form of racism or inequality at work, it is notable that they hardly report it to the employer. Therefore, seemingly minor microaggressions may give rise to serious consequences and prejudiced workplace culture which subsequently promotes systemic racism, discrimination and inequality at the workplace without any checks. Holder et al. (2015) found that Black women managers in senior roles in American corporate organisations regularly experienced racial microaggressions having detrimental impact on their wellbeing and job performance. These women used various coping strategies to address this issue; for instance, mentoring and support networks, self-care and also resorted to spirituality and religion.

The next section sheds light on how Critical Race Theory and intersectionality are conceptualised for this research, along with significance of this study and some major gaps that are identified in the reviewed literature.

Section III - Critical Race Theory

2.14. Contextualising Through Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory (CRT) signifies an intellectual and social movement, providing a framework for legal analysis which posits that racism is deeply embedded within laws and institutions (Delgado and Stefancic, 2023). It attempts to reveal racial subsequent inequalities like sexism, classism, ethnic discrimination, thereby, putting the various contributing systems of inequality into perspective. Historically, CRT constructed a discourse that emphasised the issues of race and racism in the law (Crenshaw, 1989). It was envisioned in 1989, at the first annual Workshop on Critical Race Theory, though its intellectual origins date back to the 1960s and 1970s. Its immediate predecessor was the critical legal studies movement, which studied how the law and legal institutions secure the interests of the wealthy and powerful at the cost of the poor and marginalised. In views of the legal scholars Richard Delgado (one of the founders of CRT) and Jean Stefancic, there are many general propositions regarding race and racism that many critical race theorists would acknowledge (Delgado and Stefancic, 2023) and these propositions compose the basic principles or tenets of CRT including permanence of racism, interest convergence, social construction of race, counter-storytelling and differential racialisation.

CRT rejects the biological nature of race and argues that race is a socially constructed idea based on a performative identity that is variable in different contexts depending on different social interactions (Bhopal, 2024a). Thus, physical characteristics like skin colour are associated with the judgments of being good or bad, superior or inferior which favours the White groups and harm the people of colour. The dominant White groups tend to use these associations to portray the minority groups (people of colour) as inferior, in order to justify the exploitation of those

with ‘different’ physical features as the negatively racialised groups. Hence, CRT supports the idea that race is a social classification system which is introduced by humans. The idea of race was initially conceived to mark the physical differences between individuals, however, it is certainly not biological and has been frequently used as a means to promote oppression and discrimination.

CRT supports that racism is normal and ordinary, not rare; thereby meaning that it is the ordinary experience of most people and is more of a permanent experience (Delgado and Stefancic, 2023). The beliefs of the majority population’s culture endorse the idea of ‘colour-blindness’ and ‘meritocracy’, both of which are interlinked and strive to exclude negatively racialised groups (the non-White groups). Colour-blindness and meritocratic paradigm have significant roles here; i.e. they enable the White population to feel oblivious and intentionally not responsible for the problems that ethnic minorities face in their everyday lives; moreover they also serve to further empower White population by keeping the existing power structures intact.

According to Bell (1980) the notion of interest convergence is an important component of CRT, and suggests that the interests of ethnic minorities in achieving racial equality will be safeguarded only in the case when it coincides with the interest of the dominant groups, i.e. White groups. Furthermore, interest convergence indicates that Whites groups would always watch out for their own interest; and they would allow and support racial justice only in the case when it is beneficial for them, or when there is a ‘convergence’ between the interests of Whites and non-Whites (Bhopal, 2024a). CRT emphasises on how some narratives play their part to silence and exploit the ethnic minority groups, while concurrently promoting and legitimising the privilege of the White groups. As a result the majority population of Whites continue to maintain control and gain even more power; i.e. White privilege. The notion of counter-storytelling

emerges from its compelling and descriptive nature to unlearn common beliefs that are often perceived as the truth; and CRT supports this premise as ‘storytelling’ and ‘counter-storytelling’.

The contrast between storytelling and counter-storytelling is based on the idea that institutions are neutral spaces where everyone is treated equally and justly; however, the reality is otherwise. In reality, the social structures and institutions continue to revolve around the dominant White, middle-class values and uphold the wide racial inequalities to serve the vested interest of the White groups (Delgado and Stefancic, 2023). Counter-storytelling is a dynamic tool used by minority ethnic groups to voice their experiences and tell their own stories that narrate their side of the picture and their lived experiences. Counterstories challenge the dominant narratives constructed by the majority White groups accepted by the majority. In the absence of counter-storytelling, the truth would not reach the public, and certainly everyone would believe that there is nothing wrong with mainstream narratives nor there is any hidden truth beneath the superficial stories.

CRT posits that Whites have been the real recipients of civil rights legislation. Delgado explains the importance of the five primary tenets of CRT that although Whites have undoubtedly been the recipients of civil rights legislation, it has also been confirmed that affirmative action profoundly serves the interests of White population (for example Delgado and Stefancic, 2023; Delgado, 2008). Delgado (2008) emphasises upon the dire need to reveal, examine, and destabilise the prevalent affirmative action. He notes that it is crucial to understand who the real beneficiaries of affirmative action are; whether the systems are designed by the White majority to promote their own purposes, instead of the interests of ethnic minorities.

Affirmative actions are such policies and procedures that are introduced to reverse discrimination laden with the belief that equality has been achieved by means of such affirmative systems and processes that the previously disadvantaged population groups have now gained the privilege which was held only by the majority (Nan, 1993). As discussed by Freeman (1988) advocates of the affirmative action programs contest that affirmative action addresses past and present discrimination. The advocates of CRT argue that affirmative action promotes diversity within otherwise homogeneous institutions and workplaces, as a primary aim of these policies is to provide role models for marginalised and underrepresented groups (Nan, 1993). The UK government has introduced many policies for equality, diversity and inclusion in the British context, for instance the Race Relations Amendment Act, 2000 and Equality Act 2010 for all public bodies and the Athena Swan Charter, 2005 and the Race Equality Charter 2014 for academia (Bhopal, 2023). Due to the lack of implementation of these equality and inclusion policies, the job market inequalities have persisted over years, benefiting the interests of the White British groups and marginalising the ethnic minority groups (see Bhopal, 2022; Bhopal and Henderson, 2019).

2.15. Combining CRT and Intersectionality in This Research

It is understood that ethnic minority women in the UK are experiencing both subtle and visible discrimination in their career journeys. Crenshaw (1989) contended that ethnic and black women have been ‘theoretically erased’ and the law is incapable of highlighting the discriminatory behaviour experienced by black women, which are intersectional. Crenshaw (1989) argued that intersectional experiences of black women in terms of sexism and racism are pivotal, however; they have been entirely ignored in the anti-racist and feminist paradigms. This projects the notion of counter-storytelling that the ethnic minority women need to voice their opinions and share

their stories regarding workplace discrimination and disadvantaged career journeys. The mainstream paradigms serve the interests of the White population groups and fail to cater to the diverse needs of ethnic minority women. The voices of White population have been considered sufficient to express the stance of all racial groups; whereas the reality is contrary to this because the White population has been watching out for their own interests; and not the interests of ethnic minorities.

It is found that most literature on intersectionality in the workplace ignores the broader systemic dynamics of power, especially while considering the individual experiences and intersections of their identity markers (Rodriguez and Freeman, 2016). Therefore, intersectionality researchers emphasise the need to 'look at the broader social landscape of power and hierarchy' (Anthias, 2012, p.14). On the other hand, some researchers are of the view that this lack of research on 'how these systems of inequality are institutionalised' is an opportunity to expand the existing scholarship on intersectionality (Rodriguez and Freeman, 2016, p.203). Nonetheless, this is where there is a need to use the lens of CRT which underpins the systems of power and White domination by pulling in the institutional dynamics; as they function to develop and uphold social, economic, and political inequalities between White groups and ethnic minority groups. When applied here, CRT presents that law and institutions are inherently racist and they serve the interests of the White majority in the UK.

In the light of the above discussion on CRT, it is important to acknowledge the broader systemic inequalities within which the intersectional experiences are situated, together forming a combined system of oppression (Crenshaw, 1991; Bešić, 2020; Opara et al., 2020). Applying the CRT approach for this research, the following figure 1.4 depicts an onion diagram based on the

work by Crenshaw (1989) and adapted from the work of Bešic (2020). It shows the multiple layers of systemic inequalities that come together to shape the career experiences of ethnic minority women and British Pakistani women.

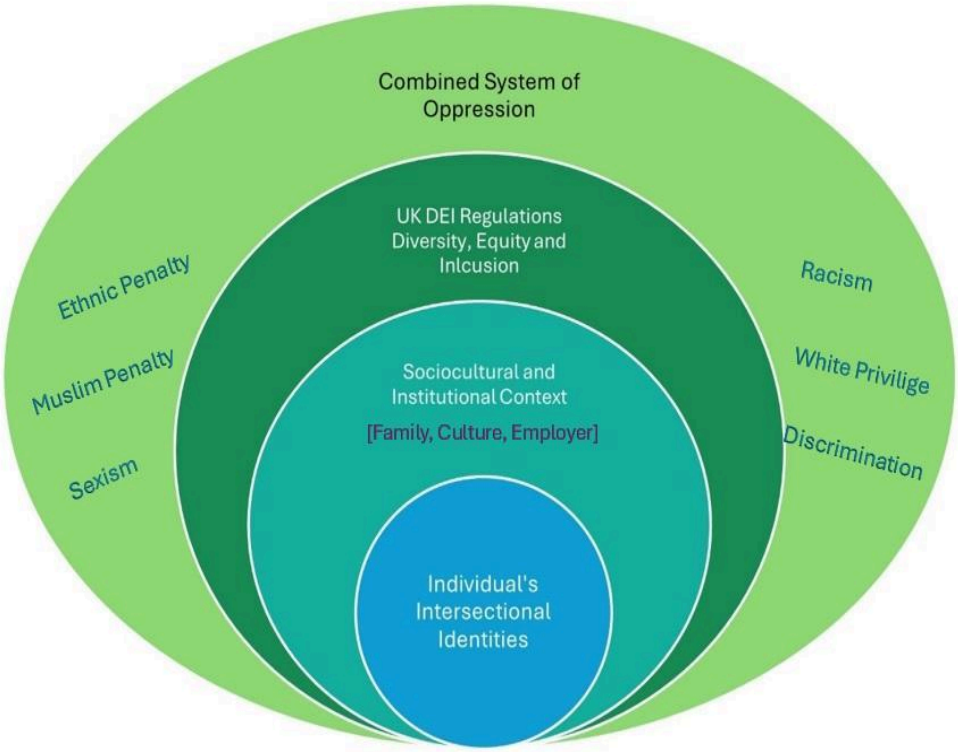

Figure 1.4. Conceptualising the Lived Experiences of Barriers to Career Progression for British Pakistani Women

Source: Developed by Author, based on Crenshaw (1991), adapted from Bešic (2020)

The above figure 1.4 shows an onion diagram to elaborate separate systems of power in order to gauge the perceived barriers behind career progression, including the individual, social and cultural layers, and DEI regulations that come together as a collective phenomenon. It is

important to note that the intersecting identity categories of individuals like gender, race, religion and others cannot exist in isolation and are inevitably impacted by structural factors and the political economy. This is why it is considered important to contextualise the intersectionality of ethnic minority women and British Pakistani women's career progression by keeping in consideration the broader systemic inequalities like sexism, racism, multiple penalties as well as the existing UK government DEI regulations for British workplaces. This idea of systemic inequalities is evident in the diagrammatic representation above, such that the combined system of oppression and its actors are acknowledged.

2.16. Significance of This Research in Addressing Gaps from Literature Review

The in-depth review of literature related to organisational studies, workplace diversity, inequality and discrimination shows that there are many limitations in the scholarship; most importantly the voices of British Pakistani women and British ethnic minority women are majorly missing from the literature (Holvino, 2010; Arifeen and Gatrell, 2013; Opara et al., 2020). There is a dearth of literature around the lived experiences of these women, although there is more literature available on the employment outcomes. In fact, the workplace diversity and equality scholarship largely focuses on the experiences of White women, Black men or they are framed in the US context (Holvino, 2010; Opara et al., 2020; Ryan and Branscombe, 2013). Especially in research on racial diversity, the representation of Black men is considered to be representative of the experiences of ethnic minority population groups and often generalised for both men and women. Due to this absence of ethnic minority women in mainstream literature, it becomes difficult to gauge the real complexities and nuances of their lived experiences. This research is significant because it reveals the lived experiences of British Pakistani women through primary data; without clouding the narratives by males or White employees.

Many empirical studies have focused on the career-related experiences of ethnic minority employees (for instance, Al Ariss et al., 2013; Tomlinson et al., 2013; Van Laer and Janssens, 2014, 2017), however, there is greater need to focus on the intersections of different identity markers like gender with ethnicity, religion, ethnicity in shaping their careers (for instance, see Arifeen and Gatrell, 2013; Heath and Cheung, 2006; Yuval-Davis, 2006; Rosette et al., 2018; Tariq and Syed, 2018; Opara et al., 2020) and the experiences of ethnic minority women managers, especially Pakistani women managers (Arifeen and Gatrell, 2013, 2019; Kamenou and Fearfull, 2006). This research is important because it highlights the intersectional and overlapping nature of the multiple identities of British Pakistani women in their career journeys, i.e. the simultaneous interactions of race, ethnicity, gender, religion.

Additionally, there is lack of research on the impact of racial discrimination on experiences of second-generation ethnic minority women at work (Opara et al., 2020; Salway, 2007; Tariq and Syed, 2018). As discussed above, existing research mainly encapsulates the experiences of White employees at work and male employees; while the voices of ethnic minority women are particularly silenced and unheard (Holvino, 2010). Salway (2007) argues that literature has the tendency to homogenise the experiences of South Asian women in the UK. Nonetheless, it is crucial to acknowledge that there is a wide scale of diversity within the South Asian women due to their different national origins, different cultures, having different religions and languages, as well as having different socio-political national contexts.

Similarly, literature is often inclined to combine the Pakistani and Bangladeshi population groups in reporting economic activity and employment which should not be the case (Arifeen and Gatrell, 2013). It is crucial to note that there are vast social, cultural, political, language and geographical differences between both countries and also between the Pakistani and Bangladeshi

people who live in the UK. According to government data (ONS, 2018, 2022) both these ethnic groups are at the lowest in terms of employment outcomes like pay and participation, have highest ethnic pay penalties, and are highly proportioned in low-skilled and low-paying jobs. At the same time, these groups are not homogenous in their characteristics and sociocultural backgrounds, therefore, the differences between them should be acknowledged which is important for their intersectional identities.

2.17. Summary

In the light of the reviewed literature it is argued that ethnic minority women and British Pakistani women are largely absent from decision-making positions in the British organisations and there are a plethora of challenges that restrict their career progression. The most pressing challenges, according to the reviewed literature, are sociocultural and religious barriers, institutional racism, exclusionary workplace culture and discriminatory hiring and promotion practices that come together to form a combined system of oppression (Crenshaw, 1991). One limiting factor supports another constraining factor, and together it becomes a continuous loop of racial exclusion and prejudice which limits the career progression of ethnic minority women and Pakistani women in the UK.

It is understood that there are prominent differences between the careers of first- and second-generation ethnic minority women and Pakistani women. The second-generation ethnic minority women and Pakistani women have higher educational achievements than their parental generation, but have lower employment outcomes; including pay and participation. This indicates the presence of variables other than education and training, that determine the careers of ethnic minority women and Pakistani women. At the same time, Government statistics show

that there are huge disparities of pay and participation between different ethnic groups, consequently, that give rise to deep-rooted ethnic penalties in the job market. There are no real consequences of racial discrimination that takes place in subtle ways; especially in workplace practices. It is found that there is ethnic and racial bias towards ethnic minority applicants which has serious implications like higher unemployment, lower pay, blocked career progression, and little job security. Racism unfolds as a perpetual characteristic of career trajectories in the UK, thereby contributing to the unequal social dynamics in ways that structurally reproduce unfavourable circumstances for ethnic minorities, especially Pakistani women. Since everyday racism and microaggressions are so deeply embedded, it has a significant impact on ethnic minority groups, throughout their career trajectories. As a result, the ethnic minority women are routinely exposed to overt and covert racism by their colleagues, managers and clients. Hence, it is essential to recognise that racial exclusion and institutional racism are multi-faceted problems that should be understood as societal, moral, and institutional problems that shape the career journeys of ethnic minority women. While the various challenges of career progression are discussed in this research, it lays emphasis on the organisational level barriers faced by Pakistani women.

Through this literature review, it is evident that the characterisation of the working experiences of ethnic minority women and British Pakistani women is truly intersectional in nature. Because of overlapping intersectional aspects of the identities and struggles of these women, there are a lot of similarities between their narratives and overall career related challenges. It is found that ethnic minority women and British Pakistani women face a plethora of gender and racial barriers that impact their ability to participate, grow and sustain in their career journeys. Very few ethnic minority women are able to progress to a managerial role or leadership position in their careers,

and they are often faced with complex disruptions such as cultural stereotypes, ethnic bias and racial discrimination from the society, and negative stereotypes from senior colleagues and other staff members (Halrynjo and Jonker, 2016).

At the same time, the religious association and Islamic way of dressing is considered 'problematic' by the British employers; as well as the White colleagues in general. The British Pakistani women in law, medicine and human resources have reported that alcohol-related socialising or after-work socialising in the organisations was a huge hindrance for their career progression (Holvino, 2010). Important issues like lack of professional development opportunities, masculine and racialised workplace culture, anti-Muslim sentiment among the White colleagues and hijab have posed challenges for British Pakistani women to progress in their careers. Similarly, the literature review suggests how multiple identities of ethnic minority women and British Pakistani women continue to intersect and overlap one another; and result in the complexity of working experiences. When intersectional identities interact with the norms in specific institutional or societal settings, the contextual power dynamics give rise to numerous complexities. At this point, the consideration of individual profiles becomes important because that determines the resilience of individuals, and their approach to cope with such challenges.

For British Pakistani women, the conflict between their intersectional identities and the routine practices and norms in organisations creates significant struggles, as detailed in this literature review. Their intersectional identities (especially visible Muslim identities) are looked down upon in the workplace, resulting in exclusion and incompatibility with organisational culture and practices. Typically, organisations also become a part of this cycle of perpetuating this disadvantage, simply by expecting the employees to comply, without acknowledging their diverse backgrounds and intersectional identities. Hence, organisations contribute to ethnic

minority women and British Pakistani women's incompatibility with the organisational culture, by discreetly expecting conformity from them. The lack of acknowledgement of intersectionality of these women amplifies their disadvantage at the workplace and gives rise to workplace microaggressions, resulting in systemic exclusion and racism. Being at the intersection of multiple disadvantaged groups makes 'fitting-in' especially challenging for ethnic minority women, perpetuating the inequalities they face. The following chapter presents an elaboration of the research methodology which is used to collect primary data for this research.

Chapter III - Research Methodology

3.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the details of the research methodology used to examine the lived experiences of career progression of British Pakistani women. It sheds light on the research philosophy, rationale of the methodology and research design, along with an explanation of the study population, sampling procedures as well as the researcher's positionality in this research. It presents the details of data collection as well as discussion around how the data was analysed. To conclude this chapter, the importance of thematic analysis is discussed along with the methodological limitations.

3.2. Research Philosophy

Research philosophy is a researcher's perspective on a phenomenon, influencing data collection and analysis methods (Babbie, 2013) and includes strategies, techniques, and ethical considerations. Ontology, epistemology, and methodology are core pillars of a research paradigm (Ponterotto and Grieger, 2007). The three major philosophical approaches are positivism, interpretivism, and pragmatism (Crotty, 1998; Eine et al., 2017). Interpretivism emphasises upon the personal interpretation and understanding of the phenomenon under study, distinguishing social science research from natural sciences. It aims to capture the complexity of insights (Englander, 2012; Alharahsheh and Pius, 2020).

This research adopts an interpretivist philosophy to examine the deep-rooted systems of inequalities experienced by British Pakistani women, recognising that these experiences are not merely surface-level incidents, but are shaped by societal norms and ideologies. Through

qualitative methods, this research examines the subjective meanings and interpretations attributed to the careers journeys of the participating women. Personal narratives of these women, i.e. life stories are employed to highlight exclusionary lived experiences that are often overlooked in mainstream literature. Ethical considerations are central to the research, which signifies a transformative approach aimed at challenging exclusionary practices that affect ethnic minority women and British Pakistani women. The research also emphasises reflexivity, acknowledging the researcher's positionality and its potential influence on the research.

Methodologically, the study adopts a qualitative, critical inquiry approach focusing on the career experiences of British Pakistani women. The primary data is collected through open-ended interviews and life stories, with a focus on exploring the sociocultural and institutional factors that shape these lived experiences. The concept of intersectionality is central to the analysis, providing a framework for understanding how multiple identities, such as gender, race, ethnicity and religion intersect and overlap to determine the lived experiences. In this regard, Critical Race Theory (CRT) is employed to examine the lived experiences of British Pakistani women, revealing how workplace practices and systemic inequalities contribute to their disadvantage in British workplaces. Additionally, the research underpins the importance of counter-stories in addressing these barriers, offering a means to voice the exclusionary experiences and challenge the dominant power discourses.

3.3. Research Design

In the views of Glatthorn and Joyner (2005) it is important to find an appropriate research design based on the type of issues to be investigated. Creswell (2013) explains that qualitative research is conducted when a problem needs to be 'explored' and that exploration is needed in

circumstances in which variables cannot be easily measured, or in which 'silenced voices' need to be heard (p. 47-48). British Pakistani women in their career journeys may be those 'silenced voices' because they are among the ethnic minority women who are often under-represented in mainstream literature (Opara et al., 2020) and they present a unique set of experiences that need in-depth examination in order to understand their narratives. The complex experiences of racism and workplace discrimination cannot be sufficiently understood by quantitative measures alone, through numbers and graphs; as quantitative measures and associated statistics often fall short of adequately capturing the complexity of experiences of ethnic minority groups. Therefore, a qualitative approach is the most appropriate way to begin to understand the experiences of these women.

3.4. Methodological Considerations

In the initial stages, several methodological approaches were considered for this research, including participatory action research, IPA, and thematic analysis. Participatory action research was considered an interesting approach because it would allow the participants to be collaboratively involved in the research process; especially in identifying the barriers and coping strategies. Since participatory action research is a practical and engaging approach requiring peoples' interaction and sequential gatherings, it was considered practically difficult because of the rapid influx of the pandemic and the social lockdowns.

Next, the researcher considered the IPA (Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis) to examine the career journeys of British Pakistani women. IPA is a qualitative approach related with the detailed exploration of individual lived experiences (Smith et al., 2009). It focuses on personal meaning and sense-making in a specific context, for people who share a certain experience. This

approach is mostly suitable for a small number of participants as shown in the work by Alase (2017), Brocki and Wearden (2006), Smith and Osborn (2015) and Guihen (2020). Therefore, while IPA is valuable for in-depth analysis of individual experiences, it is more suited to smaller, homogeneous groups, and the researcher was interested in examining the lived experiences across a larger sample. This is why the idea to use IPA (Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis) was dropped and using thematic analysis approach was considered suitable for this research.

Thematic analysis offered a broader and more flexible approach to identifying patterns in data for a larger group of participants, which aligned better with the objectives of the research of examining the barriers to career progression for second generation British Pakistani women. This approach offered greater flexibility in terms of the number of participants, the choice of data collection techniques, and its methodological rigour (Braun and Clarke, 2006, 2022) making it highly applicable to the research topic. It involves a systematic process of examining and analysing the viewpoints, opinions and experiences of the research participants around a given topic (Terry at al., 2017). Therefore, thematic analysis was chosen as the final method for analysing the data in this research. The researcher borrowed an aspect of IPA where participants' experiences are studied individually; thereby creating individual biographical profiles for the participants in addition to conducting thematic analysis of the data. These biographical profiles were used to make sense of the individual life stories of the participants and how their childhood experiences, their education and family backgrounds had impacted their careers.

3.5. Significance of Using Thematic Analysis

For the in-depth examination of British Pakistani women's lived experiences, thematic analysis as introduced by Braun and Clarke (2006; 2022) was recognised as an appropriate approach. Thematic analysis is typically used in qualitative research to identify, analyse and interpret data to find patterns and themes, with the aim to generate rich and informative findings (Finlay, 2021). Gerald Holton first introduced the concept of developing themes and applying thematic analysis in research (Joffe, 2011) but with the innovative work of Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis gained more acceptance in academia. Thus, for this research, thematic analysis was chosen because it allows the researcher to make sense of the lived experiences of the participants from a large set of data with flexibility in interpretation (Braun and Clarke, 2021). NVivo-14 software was used to conduct the analysis on the interview transcripts of 30 British Pakistani women.

Thematic analysis and qualitative research complement each other, as qualitative data is most appropriate for conducting thematic analysis effectively (Joffe, 2011). The thematic analysis approach allows researchers to develop new insights and concepts in data, due to its significance in finding patterns in the qualitative data collected from the participants. There are two main approaches to conducting thematic analysis; one is the inductive approach where the primary data determines the themes without any presumptions in mind. The other one is a deductive approach where the data analysis is conducted with pre-defined concepts and theories. The deductive process focuses on coding data that aligns with the established themes to support theoretical frameworks (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006). For this research, a hybrid approach to coding, i.e. combination of inductive and deductive approach was used by the researcher (for instance, Opara et al., 2020). The inductive approach was organic in nature, with the flexibility to

develop codes, themes and sub-themes from the primary data. Based on findings of the reviewed literature, the deductive approach was adopted in early stages of the analysis process. Further considering beyond what was already known from the literature, an inductive approach was adopted. This hybrid approach is useful when the researcher intends to address certain aspects of the topic as a starting point, but also intends to leave room for deeper exploration of the issues, diving into the perceptions of the participants regarding the phenomenon being examined. Therefore, review of related literature on the career journeys of ethnic minorities and British Pakistani women informed the researcher's knowledge regarding the key challenges of career progression (deductive approach), while an inductive approach to coding was undertaken by the researcher to gauge the lived experiences organically from the interview data. The process of developing themes, sub-themes and codes is explained later in the chapter on data analysis.

While clarifying some common myths regarding thematic analysis, Braun and Clarke (2021) explained that thematic analysis cannot be atheoretical, even the inductive approach cannot be conducted in a theoretical vacuum. They argue that 'it is sometimes assumed that inductive thematic analysis is entirely without theoretical foundations, and that only deductive thematic analysis requires discussion of theory' (Braun and Clarke, 2021 p.337). In fact, thematic analysis should be considered as theoretically flexible, suitable for critical orientations of qualitative research. Braun and Clarke (2021) advise researchers to acknowledge and consider the theoretical framework which guides their use of thematic analysis, regardless of using the inductive or deductive approach. The theoretical underpinnings of this research draw upon intersectionality and critical race theory, which provide a lens to examine the complex interactions of identity markers like gender, race and religion in shaping the career progression of British Pakistani women.

3.5.1. Thematic Analysis and The Role of Researcher

Braun and Clarke (2021) argue that often researchers are under the misconception that the themes would miraculously appear from the data with minimal role of the researcher. They problematise the implications of use of terms like ‘emerging themes’ or ‘discovering themes’ which indicates a simplistic data extraction process and little intervention from the researcher. This may lead to the misconception that the researcher has a passive role in data interpretation and analysis which does not echo with the premise of thematic analysis. Thus, Braun and Clarke (2021) argue that the development of themes is a detailed and reflective process where the researcher has a crucial role to play. It requires the researcher to be like an analytical tool in this process who would utilise their own thinking and perceptions to examine the data, spend time on reading and re-reading, and engage actively with it while identifying patterns and developing the themes. Thus, the researcher is able to shape the analysis through engagement with data and reflecting on their own judgments, practices, and belief systems (Braun and Clarke, 2022). The personal identity, past experiences and positionality of the researcher were given due consideration in the data analysis in this research.

3.5.2. Steps of Conducting Thematic Analysis

While doing thematic analysis, a single statement is not enough to present the data, instead large data is needed to comprehend the full picture (Joffe and Yardley, 2004). Following are the six steps of thematic analysis (see Braun and Clarke, 2006) that were followed in this research.

According to Braun and Clarke (2021) this step-wise approach is not supposed to be followed rigidly, and has flexibility to adapt according to the researcher’s analytical skills and choice. Therefore, these six phases may overlap to some extent, and the data analysis process may

gradually become more sequential. Initially, the researcher spent time to become familiar with the data by thoroughly checking it and reading the data repeatedly to gain full knowledge i.e. the audio interviews were listened to repeatedly and transcribed into text. As the second step, initial coding of the data was conducted in NVivo-14 software by using both inductive and deductive approaches to coding. Coding is an analytic process in which researchers start assigning codes or names to a certain group of sentences that have the same meaning or lead to the same conclusion (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Coding of the primary data is an important procedure in the data reduction process and large amounts of data can be reviewed in a short period of time (Miles and Huberman, 1994). As advised by Braun and Clarke (2021) to not rush through the process, the researcher spent plenty of time reading, re-reading and making sense of the data.

As the step 3, the researcher developed the themes in data through the codes created in the previous step. It involved organising the codes to create themes, all while connecting and finding the relationship between the data. The inductive and deductive coding were used in combination, and the codes that were vague or not relevant were discarded at this stage. According to Miles and Huberman (1994) themes should be developed and evaluated at the start as well as at the late stages of the research to ensure reliability in the process of analysis. Themes are not to be discovered, rather they are identified and developed by the researcher after having deeper insights and understanding of the codes (Braun and Clarke, 2021). As step 4, the researcher started reviewing the themes and sub-themes, whether they match with the data set. If there were problems in matching the themes and data, the codes would be split, merged with other codes, discarded or revised to make them more useful. At this stage, the researcher spent time to ensure that the codes represented the narratives from the data and were useful to arrange concepts and thoughts.

After all the themes and sub-themes were developed, it was important to label them, which is step 5 of the analysis. Relevant labels were assigned to all the themes and sub-themes that were characteristic of the aspects of data covered in that area. A detailed analysis of each theme was written down at this stage. Step 6 is the final step in which the report is written with an introduction of the research questions, aims of the study and the methodology which describes how the data is collected and the details of how the thematic analysis itself is conducted. The details were included regarding findings of the research and conclusion about how the analysis has answered the research question. This stage involved coherent and contextualised writing in relation to the existing literature. Therefore, the above explained phases were followed by the researcher to conduct a thorough thematic analysis for this research.

3.5.3. Limitations of Thematic Analysis

While thematic analysis is a widely used and flexible qualitative data analysis approach, it comes with certain limitations and it is important to be aware of these limitations when planning and conducting research. Thematic analysis involves the interpretation of data, and researchers' subjective judgments can influence the identification and interpretation of themes. Different researchers may identify different themes from the same dataset, leading to potential subjectivity and variability in results (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis requires the condensation and simplification of data into themes, potentially losing some nuances and complexity present in the raw data. It is likely that this simplification may oversimplify the richness of the data, and certain subtleties or context may be overlooked (Nowell et al., 2017). Effective thematic analysis relies heavily on the skills, experience, and reflexivity of the researcher, and the quality of the analysis can be influenced by the researcher's expertise. If the thematic analysis is not conducted

carefully and systematically, the researcher may struggle with the process, leading to potential bias or misinterpretation of data (Guest, 2012).

Thematic analysis does not provide explicit guidance on data collection methods. Therefore, researchers need to make informed decisions about the most appropriate methods for the research. Without clear guidelines, researchers may choose data collection methods that are less suited to their research questions or context (Braun and Clarke, 2014). Thematic analysis is driven by predefined or emerging themes, but it may not capture unexpected or unanticipated themes that could be relevant to the research. Unless researchers are careful, they might miss out on important aspects of the data that fall outside their predetermined coding framework (Braun and Clarke, 2019). At the same time, thematic analysis lacks a standardised set of procedures, leading to variability in how researchers apply the method. The lack of standardisation makes it challenging to compare studies, and the method may lack the rigour associated with more structured qualitative approaches (Braun and Clarke, 2013). An important aspect is that thematic analysis can be a time-consuming process, particularly in the coding and theme development stages (King and Horrocks, 2010). Despite these limitations, thematic analysis remains a valuable and widely used qualitative research method, especially when applied with rigour, transparency, and reflexivity. Researchers can address some of these limitations through careful study design, reflexivity, and transparency in reporting their methods and findings.

3.6. Research Sampling

A combination of purposeful sampling and snowball sampling was used to recruit participants for this research. To begin with, the researcher sought help from her sisters and connected with some British Pakistani women. These women were asked to help identify potential participants

from their own networks of friends, family and acquaintances that they believe would be interested to take part in this research. This method of sampling can be referred to as snowball sampling because new participants would be recruited upon recommendations from the initial participants (Parker et al., 2019). At the same time, purposeful criterion sampling was adopted as a sampling technique since the participants had to meet the pre-set eligibility criteria of the research. Purposeful sampling is a technique widely used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases for the most effective use of limited resources (Patton, 2002). Patton (2002) identified criterion sampling as a means of purposeful sampling that involves the review of all cases that meet an essential, predetermined criterion. This involves identifying and selecting individuals or groups of individuals that are especially knowledgeable about or experienced with a phenomenon of interest (Creswell et al., 2011). It is a sampling method which is used to identify situations and people who have knowledge and experience about a particular area of interest or concept (Palinkas et al., 2013). The following eligibility criteria was developed to recruit participants in this research:

- must be second-generation Pakistani women living in the UK at the time of the participation in the research;
- age range between 25 to 65 years;
- may or may not be presently employed;
- may come from any field of work, any sector, or can even be a businesswoman;
- should have been employed as a manager or leader in a decision-making position in the UK at any point in their life for a minimum of one year;
- must be willing to take part in the study.

In order to gain access to the second-generation British Pakistani women, employing multiple sampling strategies was considered particularly useful; especially because of the researcher's past research experience with this population and the importance of using multiple sampling strategies to maximise range of the sample.

3.7. Profiling Participants of the Research

The following demographic information was collected from the participating women as shown in table 3.1. This information was considered crucial in understanding the individual profiles of the participants which would ultimately help in understanding their lived experiences.

Name:
Residence Location:
Age:
Marital Status:
Religion:
Job Title and Organisation:
Highest Qualification:
Total Working Experience (Years):
Time Spent in Managerial/ Leadership Role (Years):
Parents Socioeconomic Status (Select the one that applies) Low Income Middle Income High Income

Table 3.1 Demographic Information Form Template

Initially, the transcripts were thoroughly read in order to make sense of their lived experiences and then, these were organised into broad ideas. These broad ideas were then combined under the segment called 'lived experiences' in NVivo-14. The researcher coded the inputs under 'lived

experiences' as follows: childhood and family background, education and qualification, working experiences. It is important to note that this segment of 'lived experiences' did not directly address the research questions guiding this study, therefore, these were not analysed as a distinct theme in the thematic analysis. In fact, this section was treated as a separate element from the thematic analysis. The responses under 'lived experiences' were central to understanding the stories of these women, their backgrounds and career choices, their multiple identities and how they dealt with various challenges in their professional lives. These stories were important because they were raw, uninterrupted information that shaped up the lives of these women in many ways. At many points, these accounts did not necessarily present any particular challenges of career progression, rather, they were personal stories of their lives, their individual realities, their lived experiences in their own words. These responses were given due consideration in the process of data analysis, especially while doing the transcription, first-level and second-level coding, because this data puts everything in context.

The 'lived experiences' of the participants were combined with notes of the researcher along with the demographic information provided in written form and together, this was utilised in developing the individual biographical profiles for each participant. These biographical profiles are meaningful to gauge the unique lived experiences of their careers as well as their life stories. They are variable in terms of information because each participant has shared a life story which is unique to them, therefore, they do not have a set pattern of information. The biographical profiles for all 30 participants are presented in the appendix B for the reader to make better sense of their career journeys.

3.8. Data Collection Methods

Data collection in thematic analysis involves gathering information relevant to the research questions and meeting the objectives of the research. For this research, it was decided to use in-depth interviews as the primary data collection tool because it was deemed to be most appropriate for this research. Open-ended interviews in a qualitative study allow the researcher to gain deeper understanding about the participant's inner thoughts and feelings regarding the topic in discussion (Patton, 2015). It requires the researcher to be patient when conducting interviews and be prepared to handle emotionally sensitive reactions from the participants (Creswell and Poth, 2018) in case of sharing information which involves personal accounts and feelings. As Berg (2004) suggests not to initiate an interview 'cold', it is important that the interviewer establishes a comfortable environment for the conversation where the interviewee feels safe to talk about their experiences and feelings freely (Berg, 2004; Kvale, 1996). A way to create this space is to make the opening questions simple and informational ones and start with personal introductions. Interviewers may also initiate a few minutes of idle chat at this stage, as it gives the interviewee a chance to feel comfortable with the interviewer before they allow themselves to talk freely, exposing their experiences and feelings to a stranger (Kvale, 1996). This is an important time to ensure that the respondent is comfortable as they usually set their boundaries in these initial stages (McCracken, 1988). These simple ideas of developing an initial rapport with the participants and starting the interview with a small talk were applied carefully and discreetly by the researcher. They proved to be useful to develop the comfort level of the participants and set a friendly tone for the interviews. The interviews were framed as conversations and reflections, which allowed the interviewees to express themselves the ways they want and recall their life stories. The sequence of questions was not strictly followed as in the designed format;

rather discussion cues were dropped in by the researcher as and when necessary with flow of conversations. This flexibility in interviewing technique led to developing an environment of comfort and trust; thereby achieving a desirable level of information-sharing by the interviewees. Depending upon the level of information shared by the participants during the interviews, the questions were steered accordingly.

The interviews were conducted in complete privacy and the participants were often reminded in between the conversation (where needed) that whatever they are sharing remains completely confidential. There was frequent use of pauses, reassuring nods, note-taking, slight smiles from the researcher and it was ensured that the researcher did not give out any expressions of dislike or disbelief about any information that might be in conflict with the researcher's own ideas or beliefs. Initially two pilot interviews were conducted to test the interview questions, and based upon the responses from pilot participants and feedback from the supervisors, the interview questions were modified as needed.

3.9. Research Ethics

The researcher had obtained approval from the University of Limerick Research Ethics Committee before beginning the data collection process. The KBS research ethics approval reference number for this research is 2022_01_KBS_07. It is noteworthy that in the surge of Covid-19, the virtual presence of many working people had increased manifold; thereby enhancing their online accessibility. This is why the previously hard-to-reach participants were likely to become more identifiable and reachable at the time of participants recruitment. Once the potential participants were identified and met the eligibility criteria for participation, they were contacted by the researcher to explain the process of participation. The participants were sent a

brief introduction of the research, consent form, demographic information form, along with the University of Limerick Research Ethics and Privacy Notice, and research ethics were strictly observed at every stage. They were given time to think, ask questions and clarify any concerns that they may have, and then decide whether they wanted to participate or not. Interview meetings were set up with the participants depending on their calendar availability and preferred mode of meeting (online or in-person). The researcher had informed the participants that the interviews would involve sharing personal experiences, therefore, it was advised that they chose a time and place where they would be comfortable to have a conversation in private, with minimum to no distractions.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

The researcher made sure that identities of the participants are anonymised properly and the findings do not contain any information that may reveal the identities of the participants or their whereabouts. For instance, the correct names of the women, their employers and colleagues and cities identified in the interviews were assigned pseudonyms to protect their respective identities. The data files with identifiers were securely locked in the researcher's home office and the researcher is the only custodian of a key. Similarly, any related printed material which was not used for the purpose of this research was destroyed immediately. After a period of five years, the data of this research will be destroyed.

Provisions for Trustworthiness

As qualitative research traditions continue to grow, there is a greater need for guidelines and tools to support researchers in conducting trustworthy qualitative research (Castleberry and Nolen, 2018; Finlay, 2021; Nowell et al., 2017). Trustworthiness or rigour of the research can be

understood as the confidence that the reader can have in the quality of the data, interpretation and methods used to conduct the research (Polit and Beck, 2020). As elaborated by Finlay (2021) and Stahl and King (2020) trustworthiness in qualitative research can be achieved by attempting to generate credible, transferable, dependable, confirmable and authentic research based on the criteria by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Thus, the researcher sought provisions of trustworthiness in conducting the thematic analysis to ensure its quality i.e. 'credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability' (Finlay, 2021 p.110) that may be considered a positive methodological contribution to qualitative research.

For the provision of trustworthiness, additional notes were taken besides conducting the actual interviews (Creswell and Poth, 2018) which was also useful for the reflexive analysis. At the same time, the triangulation of data was done by referring to the interview recordings (audio or video), the notes of the researcher and the transcripts. The data collected from participants in the form of interviews was transcribed and in case there was any ambiguity, it was re-verified with reference to the interview recordings and researcher's notes.

The researcher adapted validation strategies in order to verify accuracy in the data collected from the participants. For instance, if the participants shared something which was unclear; or where the researcher thought that it was appropriate to probe further about a certain experience, then further questions were asked as needed. At the same time, data triangulation was used to ensure that the transcripts reflected exactly what was said by the participants, and those parts were eliminated that the participants had requested to be excluded. Patton (1999) explains that triangulation in qualitative research is the utilisation of different sources of data to strengthen the research findings. This strategy is useful to test the validity of the findings through the convergence of information from various sources (Carter et al., 2014; Patton, 1999). As

explained by Carter et al. (2014) through triangulation, it is possible to verify the findings by cross-checking information; for example, triangulating the responses of British Pakistani women related to their career journeys.

3.10. Identification and Recruitment of Participants

Almost 40 women were contacted requesting their participation in the study, and more than 40 initial emails were sent to potential participants at different points of time. The researcher began finding the research participants with the help of two personal contacts (researcher's sisters) who were also the participants of the two pilot interviews. One of them was well-connected with local networks of Pakistani women, and she sent out emails to the potential participants (while putting the researcher in email cc) making introductions and mentioning briefly about the research. Upon receiving a positive reply, the researcher took up direct communication with the participants from there onwards. A total of 9 responses were immediately received as a result of these introductory emails, and online interviews were scheduled accordingly. More participants were identified with the referrals of these initially recruited women and more emails were sent, resulting in 6 more participants (snowball sampling). The researcher sent emails to some personal contacts in the UK and another 5 women were recruited as a result.

Some of the women were contacted through social media and 2 participants were recruited directly by identifying and contacting them on Twitter (now X). A poster was designed by the researcher to announce a call for participation as shown below in figure 3.1. It was shared publicly on Facebook groups of British Pakistani women and 4 women were recruited through these announcements. This poster was also circulated among the already recruited participants who would share it among their social contacts.

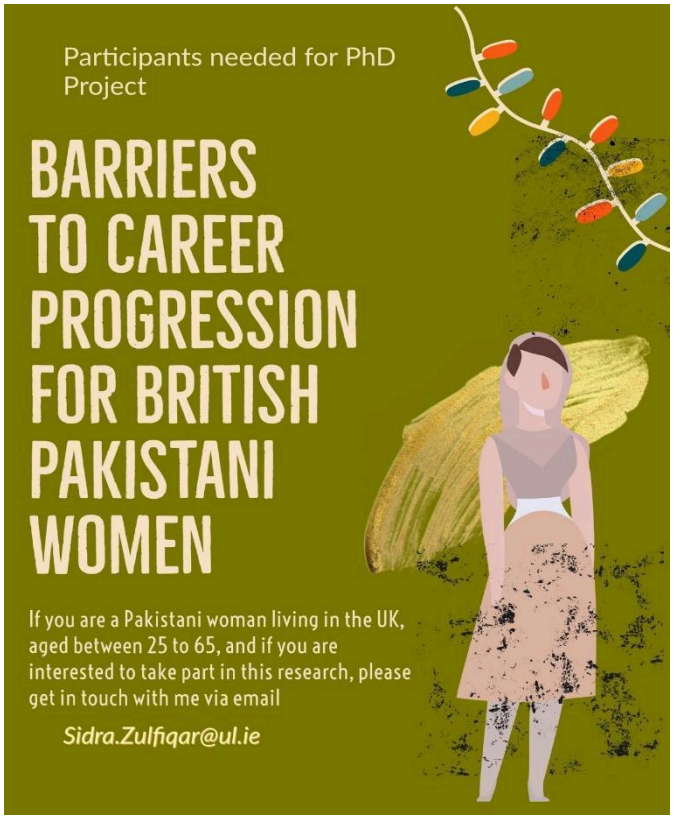

Figure 3.1. Poster Announcing Call for Participation in the Research - Source: Researcher

The researcher used direct Google search to identify more participants and some search strings as follows: 'Pakistani female lawyers in UK', 'Pakistani employees in UK organisations', 'Pakistani artists in UK', 'Pakistani female doctors in UK', 'Pakistani women academics in UK universities'. Some of these searches were not useful; and others proved valuable in finding some Pakistani women whose contact details were given on the organisation's websites. 4 women were recruited as a result of this direct Google search and this brought the total number of participants to 30. The process of recruiting participants is diagrammatically represented in the following figure 3.2.

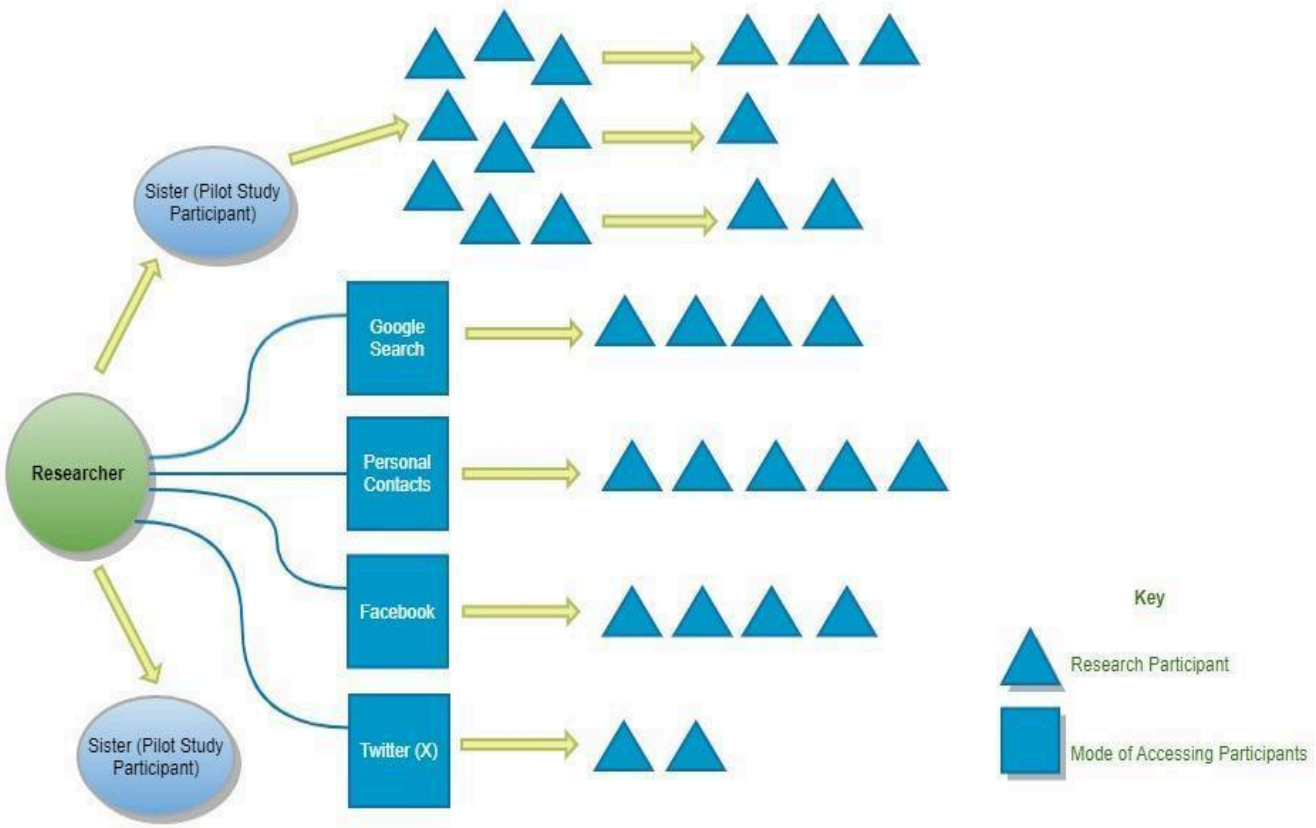

Figure 3.2. Identifying and Accessing Research Participants - Source: Researcher

3.11. Challenges of Participant Recruitment

The researcher faced many challenges in accessing and recruiting participants who met the eligibility criteria of participation in the research. Some women who were contacted through social media had expressed their initial interest, but it did not finalise due to various reasons. For instance, a potential participant had initially agreed to participate by exchange of Whatsapp messages and asked the researcher to share the details via email. When the standard 'invitation to participate' email was sent to her, she responded that her husband is employed in the Pakistan Army in a sensitive position, therefore, she cannot fill out the demographic information form,

nor can she provide information about her personal life and career. So, she withdrew from participation after receiving the introductory email and the forms. Similarly, another woman who was interested to participate could not make time for the interview, so it did not materialise despite several efforts by the researcher. With another potential participant, an online interview was scheduled but they did not show up on the day. The researcher waited online and sent reminder messages, but there was no response. An acquaintance of the researcher expressed interest in participating, but she was based in Ireland, which contradicts with the eligibility criteria; therefore, she was not recruited.

The researcher realised that it was easier to get responses if there was a referral in the loop of communication. Several emails were sent to the British Pakistan Foundation to request support in recruiting participants from that network, but there was no response. Many Pakistani professional women were contacted via LinkedIn direct messaging and via emails, but no positive responses were received. The researcher faced huge delays in getting responses to the emails sent out to women who were performing senior roles in their organisations. Since these late-responding women were employed in key positions in their organisations, and their inputs were considered to be valuable for the richness of the data; therefore, the researcher recruited them despite the delays. Some of the participants took more time than expected to submit their consent forms and demographic information forms, requiring gentle reminders by the researcher.

3.12. Research Questions and Study Protocol

An interview guide is an outline of the questions that are to be used for data collection in the research. These sets of questions were developed in order to keep the interview on track and get the required information from the participants. It also ensured that the same kind of information

is gathered from all the participants. The questions in the interview guide were developed to provide a thematic area which the interviewer could explore and ask questions from the participants (Bryman and Bell, 2003). It serves as an essential checklist during the interview to make sure that all related topics are covered. While the interview was being conducted, the interviewer could change the wordings of the questions to make it flow in a conversation style, at the same time focusing on the subject/theme on which the interview guide is created (Patton, 1999; 2015). This checklist of questions is 'useful to guide the interviewer to connect the interview from the different parts of the interaction' (Miller and Brewer, 2003, p.167). Such a guide can lay out a structure for the questions to be used in conducting the interview (Bryman and Bell, 2003).

The reviewed literature was used as a baseline to create the interview guide, making sure that all the key issues identified in the literature were included in the interview (Flick, 2000). The protocol included relevant open ended questions that would fall under different themes, and would be useful to find information from the research participants. A guided interview protocol was developed as shown in Table 3.2.

Research Question	Interview Questions
Q.1. What are the barriers faced by British Pakistani women in securing managerial and leadership roles? Key Themes: -Socio-Cultural Factors -Religious Factors	● How would you describe your journey to where you are in your career today? ● What are the different challenges or barriers that you faced during your career history? ● What specific challenges have you faced in trying to move into a managerial role?
Q.2. How do British Pakistani women overcome the identified barriers for enhanced career progression?	● What are the most important steps and actions you took to overcome the challenges that you faced in your career?

Key Themes: -Role of the Employer -Coping Strategies to Address Barriers to Career Progression	• If you could change something about your journey and your circumstances that led you here, what would that change look like? • In your opinion, what are the main challenges for Pakistani women to excel in their careers, and what could be done to overcome those challenges?

Table 3.2 Guided Interview Protocol Matrix

Once the interview protocol for this study was designed, it was shared with the supervisors for their review and feedback. The supervisors provided insightful feedback and suggested the reframing of some of the questions, that were sounding leading and suggestive. It was decided by the researcher and supervisors together, to keep the conversations organic and asking questions based on the individual stories and circumstances of the participants, to allow more relevant probing and further understanding the individual situations they would be sharing in their interviews.

3.13. Covid-19 and Data Collection Limitations

The rapid spread of Covid-19 brought health and safety concerns with it, making face-to-face interviews risky for both participants and the researcher. Ethical considerations required a shift towards alternative data collection methods that could be conducted remotely (Smith and Osborn, 2003). Face-to-face interviews often involve multiple logistical arrangements, such as travel, venue booking and scheduling. The pandemic disrupted these logistics, making it challenging to conduct interviews in a timely and efficient manner (Charmaz, 2006; De Villiers et al., 2022; Saarijärvi and Bratt, 2021).

For this research, the decision to move from face-to-face to online interviews was primarily influenced by health and safety concerns for both participants and researcher and Covid-19 was

the main reason behind this decision (De Villiers et al., 2022; Lobe et al., 2020). Face-to-face interactions became impractical and potentially unsafe due to social distancing guidelines and lockdown measures (Smith and Osborn, 2003). Therefore, the researcher adapted to the situation by transitioning to online interviews, leveraging video conferencing platforms and other channels of virtual communication (Saarijärvi and Bratt, 2021). This transition allowed for the continuation of data collection while adhering to public health and safety guidelines (Braun and Clarke, 2006; De Villiers et al., 2022). This shift called for the researcher to recognise the ethical responsibility to protect the well-being of the participants, and as a result, the methodology was adjusted accordingly and may be seen as a responsible measure to mitigate the potential risks associated with face-to-face interactions during a global health crisis (Morse, 2015).

The online interviews are more cost-effective due to no associated travelling costs which results in more efficient use of researcher's time (Braun and Clarke, 2006; De Villiers et al., 2022; Thunberg and Arnell, 2022) and this is particularly useful in resource-constrained research projects. At the same time, researchers must address ethical considerations related to data protection and privacy in online environments. It is crucial to ensure confidentiality and informed consent of participants, requiring researchers to give serious consideration to the ethical guidelines specific to online research (Morse, 2015). For this research, the ethical considerations of data protection, participants' privacy and confidentiality were given utmost consideration at all stages. Although online interviews are logistically convenient, they may not be able to gauge non-verbal aspects of the conversations (Rubin and Rubin, 2012; Thunberg and Arnell, 2022) for instance, facial expressions, body language, and other subtle indicators might be less noticeable in virtual interactions. At the same time, establishing rapport can be more challenging in an online setting as compared to face-to-face interactions (Rubin and Rubin,

2012). Building trust and a comfortable atmosphere may require additional effort and creative strategies by the researcher in order to overcome the digital barrier.

3.14. Conducting the Interviews

While conducting the interviews, the researcher was conscious of ensuring that the conversations are flowing in the right direction and the topics under discussion are of relevance to the research. An important consideration in this regard was time duration, because if the interviewee took too much time in answering one question then there would be less time left for the other questions that the researcher needed to ask. Therefore, the researcher actively steered the flow of the conversation as required, by asking the right questions to get the required information, and by providing appropriate verbal and non-verbal feedback (Patton, 2002; 2015). A key responsibility in maintaining control of the interview is understanding the type of information required, and ensuring that the conversation serves to collect the relevant data (Berg, 2004). In this research, the interview guide made this problem very easy to address, but at the same time, there was no set structure followed during the interviews and they were more conversational in nature.

Active listening and providing feedback was consistently prioritised while the interviews were being conducted. If the participants deviated from the topic by talking too much in answering a question, the researcher posed another question as the interviewee took a pause (Patton, 2015) if it seemed appropriate. At some points, where the participants went off the track in sharing information, the researcher would politely intervene and remind them that they need to come back to the topic. Different participants agreed to different length of time for the interviews, ranging from as little as 20 minutes up to as lengthy as 90 minutes of interview meetings. For 24 participants Microsoft Teams software was used for the interviews. 3 participants were

interviewed on Zoom software, and 3 interviews were conducted face-to-face as shown in the following table 3.3.

Number of Participants	Mode of Interviews
24	Online on MS Teams
3	Online on Zoom
3	Face-to-Face

Table 3.3. Mode of Participants Interviews

A total of 30 interviews were conducted for this research; out of which 27 interviews were conducted online and 3 were conducted in-person. From the 27 online interviews, 22 were video recorded, and 5 were audio-recorded as the participants had requested to turn off their cameras. All 3 interviews conducted face-to-face were audio recorded on a portable audio-recording device.

3.15. Interview Recordings and Transcription

The interviews were recorded in a reliable format which the researcher could refer to later on for transcription and data extraction purposes. The participants were informed about this and their written consent was sought at the recruitment stage. The audio and video files of the interviews as well as the transcript files were securely saved in a dedicated folder in the researcher's personal computer and in an online Google drive. Two backups of these folders were created, just in case. Many transcripts were auto-generated by the system, and others were manually transcribed by the researcher. Depending on the time duration of the interview, the length of the transcripts varied greatly. For instance, the shortest interview was almost 22 minutes in duration,

and made up for almost 1000 words (2 pages) on Google Docs (font size 12, double-spaced text). Similarly, one of the most lengthy interview transcripts automatically generated by MS Teams was almost 16000 words (22 pages with font size 12, double-spaced text) for about 90 minutes of recorded conversation. Some of the conversations were entirely in English, others were bi-lingual (English and Urdu), while a few conversations included expressions of the Punjabi language (so, they were trilingual; i.e. English, Urdu and Punjabi); however, often the conversations were solely in English language. The reason that the auto-transcription was not fully utilised was because the system-generated transcripts were not very intelligent with comprehension of certain words and expressions.

3.16. Saturation in Data Collection

Determining the appropriate number of interviews in qualitative research is a challenging task to achieve (Squire et al., 2024). As the interviews with the participants were being held, there came a point of time when the responses from the participants were becoming quite predictable and not many new responses were emerging from the conversations. This stage of data saturation is an important indicator for qualitative research, as it is the stage of data adequacy where no new information is being collected from research participants (Creswell, 2013). According to Siedman (1991) there are two criteria for reaching 'enough' samples in a research. One is sufficiency where it is ensured that the number of interviewees selected make up a sufficient sample from the population. The other criteria is called saturation where the researcher is not learning anything new from the interviews and the redundancy appears in the interviewees information (Bryman and Bell, 2003; Siedman, 1991; Squire et al., 2024). The work of Sarfo et al. (2021) and Squire et al. (2024) is helpful in understanding the idea of data saturation and the sense of gaining quality data from participants, versus focusing on quantity of data. Gaskell

(2000) suggests that the number of responses does not matter, instead the real purpose of research should be to gauge the range of opinions. Sarfo et al. (2021) suggest that one of the most profound goals in qualitative research is to allow the data to reach the point of saturation and the same is emphasised by Creswell (2013) and Creswell and Creswell (2018). The stage of data saturation was reached in this research; such that the participants' responses to the interview questions were more or less the same, and there was noticeable similarity between the new responses and the ones already obtained from the participants in some of the previously held interviews. As a result, the interviews with participants were stopped after reaching 30 participants.

3.17. Researcher Positionality

The researcher spent time in detailed data immersion while making sense of the lived experiences and ensuring that the codes represent the texts. The reflexivity of the researcher in examining their own thoughts, beliefs, and preconceived notions is instrumental in conducting the thematic analysis. This reflexivity was helpful in interpreting the collected data by adding more meaning and depth to the data (Braun and Clarke, 2019). Since the researcher (myself) shares the same identity with the participants and has the same country of origin as them, therefore, this idea was particularly useful in this research setting. It would put the researcher (myself) in an advantaged position of an 'insider' to be able to relate to the participants' experiences, their responses and resistances (if any) and to understand some of the narratives that another researcher from a different background in the similar position may not be able to capture (see Bhopal, 2001).

The positionality of the researcher is a crucial consideration in a research like this; because it sets out the position of the researcher in the context of the study. In the words of Cassell and Symon (2011) ‘our interpretations are also located within our own sense making framework’ (p.647). Therefore, the background of the researcher, their identities and beliefs, their culture and upbringing, and their personal life experiences significantly impact the ways they would interpret data (Karagiozis, 2018). According to Alvesson and Skoldberg (2009) theory-neutral and interpretation-free facts do not exist, thereby indicating that data and facts are ‘constructions or results of interpretations’ (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2009, p.1) and this is supported by Braun and Clarke (2021). This is why it is important to acknowledge that the researcher's identity and background influences the way they perceive, interpret and comprehend the life stories shared by the interview participants. Similarly, the individual who listens to the story being told, is likely to shape the story that emerges as a result; through pitch of the voice, tonality, pauses in the speech, and also by means of their own interpretations. Even though the interviewer has minimal interference in the qualitative interviews; Josselson (2013) argues that interviews are ‘a shared product’ of the researcher and the participant. It is argued that ‘what is in the mind of the interviewer influences the process and the content of the ‘data’’ (Josselson, 2013, p.1) and the same is experienced in this research as well.

It is crucial to highlight that being the researcher, I am aware of my positionality in this research; especially being a woman of Pakistani heritage. I acknowledge that it was challenging to separate myself from the data and life stories of the participants; since I share common identity markers with the participants in many ways; especially in terms of coming from a Pakistani background, being a Muslim, being a woman of colour, and having the same patriarchal cultural background as the research participants, all of which shaped my positionality as an ‘insider’ (see

Bhopal, 2001, 2010). Since I was mindful of the bias that I had due to our shared identity, I had made conscious efforts to keep my feelings and biases under check at every stage of the research; especially during data collection, interpretation and analysis. I used reflexivity as a means of self-monitoring and questioning my thoughts, feelings, reactions, and decisions while conducting this research (see Corlett and Mavin, 2018; Bhopal, 2010). Corlett and Mavin (2018) have discussed how researchers can use reflexivity to keep a self-check for their feelings and responses to the incoming data in qualitative research; as Hibbert et al. (2010) have elaborated 'through questioning the basis of our interpretations, reflexivity brings about change in the process of reflection' (p.48).

In order to address my bias; I had made a conscious effort to present the data in its original form, exactly as narrated by the participants, and by giving due consideration to the context. Therefore, the data is presented in the form of actual quotes and excerpts from the conversations and in doing so, the participants are briefly introduced alongside the quotes where necessary. I also created individual biographic profiles for each participant; so that the quotes and excerpts from the conversations could be corresponded with those profiles and referred to, when needed. This would be helpful for the reader to understand the participants' accounts especially with reference to their individual contexts, and then develop their own interpretations of the lived experiences, while I attempt to remain in the background. In the data analysis, I draw on the reviewed literature, conceptual framework, complementing it with my cultural knowledge and sometimes my intuitiveness, as I almost share the same cultural, social and religious background with the participants. In some conversations where the participants had used Urdu or Punjabi languages, I could draw on my background knowledge of these languages, and the cultural interpretation of some of the local phrases.

The researcher's positionality is likely to have a huge impact on the data collection process; especially when the researcher is from the same ethnicity and may be positioned as an 'insider' (Bhopal, 2001, 2010). The participants are likely to be more comfortable with the researcher during interviews and the information sharing is likely to be more honest and revealing. At the same time, it makes a huge difference in data collection if the mother tongue of interviewer and interviewees is the same and they have the same racial background. For instance, at the beginning of the interviews when the initial introductions would take place, the participants often asked me questions about my family background in Pakistan, my research work and how my experience has been so far. I would openly share the information they were seeking, and that set grounds for a comfortable environment of sharing experiences and building rapport with the participants (see Bhopal, 2010). During the conversations, I briefly shared relevant information as and when needed, which resulted in further trust and openness in sharing information about sensitive topics like experiences of racism. Therefore, it is acknowledged that my positionality in this study has been crucial at every step of the research process; for example the way the research problem is framed, the way this research was conducted, especially during the data collection and data interpretation phases.

Bhopal (2010) explains that when the interviewer is perceived to be an 'outsider', it is likely to be difficult to access the participants, developing rapport and trust with them, and fully gauging the 'other' side of the story. It is interesting to note that if the same research was conducted by a White male or a White female researcher, it may have impacted the power dynamics between the researcher and participants especially during the interviews, in the responses of the participants and ultimately could impact the research outcomes. As highlighted by Katz (1994) and Gilbert (1994) inequalities come into play when a researcher from a 'first-world' country conducts

research in a ‘third-world’ country and these inequalities are accompanied by a power imbalance. These problems may not be resolved even if the research is conducted in the home country of the researcher or the ‘first-world’ where the researcher resides; because the power dynamics of racial and ethnic differences would still remain alive. Both Katz (1994) and Gilbert (1994) argue that multiple identities like race, class, family status are crucial means of differential power between the researcher and participant; even if they have some common identities. This phenomenon is of particular interest in this research because the context of the research is ‘developed world’; but there is a visible sense of shared identity between the researcher and the participants whose ancestors are oriented in the ‘developing world’.

If the researcher had a different ethnicity, gender, cultural or religious background, or national origin, their positionality in this researcher would differ from that of the present researcher (Nagar, 1997). With these differences, they would frame the research problem and conduct the research in their own ways; and not only this, in fact it would impact hugely on the data collection and interpretation as well. It would impact their engagement and research relationships with the participants and it is likely that the participants would respond to some questions differently if they were being asked by an ‘insider’ as compared to an ‘outsider’. Due to the above reasons, the researcher of this study (myself) has a unique positionality in this setting because of the personal sense of connection with the context of this research. Bhopal (2010) highlights a critical aspect of the insider/outsider dichotomy of the researcher positionality and warns of the illusion of similarity that may come with the sense of shared identity with the participants. For instance, the gender, race, religion aspects position me as an ‘insider’ in this research, whereas, there are likely to be some differences that position me as an ‘outsider’. For instance I am not a second-generation British Pakistani woman, and there may be class and status

differences with the participants that diverge from the notion of 'shared experiences' and make me an outsider. These similarities and differences can shape the communication between the researcher and participants, as well as impact the data interpretations and analysis. Here is an example; regarding the lived experiences of discriminatory hiring practices, I could really feel the emotions expressed by the participants as I had similar personal experiences as well, so I was an insider. Whereas, when some of them shared their experiences of private schooling and the perks of coming from high-income family backgrounds, it was not a shared experience so I was an outsider in that context. My reflexive journal proved helpful to acknowledge my biases and keep those in check.

Therefore, the researcher (myself) being a working woman of Pakistani heritage, struggling to progress in my career, often experiencing racism and inequalities at work, juggling between family and work life; I could deeply associate with many experiences of the research participants while shifting between the insider and outsider positionality. For this reason this research is very close to my heart as I could understand the struggles and challenges of the women being studied on a very personal level. Because of our shared racial, ethnic, sociocultural and religious identities, I was able to gauge their experiences and make sense of those from a homegrown perspective. I feel like this unique insight has been an advantage, and has proved beneficial while conducting this research. This enabled the research participants to have a certain level of comfort to talk to me, and share their personal life stories and lived experiences.

3.18. Inductive and Deductive Coding

The primary data collected through open-ended interviews with 30 participating British Pakistani women was analysed using the principles of thematic analysis by Braun and Clarke (2006,

2021). Once the first-level coding was completed, the second-level codes were created by reviewing the initial codes and organising them into relevant categories. Where needed, the codes with similar meanings were merged together to form one code; for example, in the first order coding, the code ‘after-work socialising’ and ‘sense of belonging’ were created but then, these both were merged to form one code ‘alcohol-related socialising’ in the second-level coding.

One of the examples is from the sociocultural barriers, where three separate codes were created in first-level coding, i.e. ‘domestic chores’, ‘cultural demands’ and ‘caring responsibilities’. In the second-level coding, these three codes appeared quite similar, therefore, they were combined to form one code ‘family responsibilities and cultural stereotypes’. Another example is from the coping strategies, where three separate codes were created in the first-level coding; i.e. ‘motivation’, ‘never giving up’ and ‘will power’. These three codes were combined in the second-level coding to form the code ‘motivation and resilience’. Similar first and second-level coding process was followed for all the initial ideas and codes. Necessary changes were made after detailed review of the initial codes and analysing their relevance to the theme, and usefulness in answering the research questions.

Next, these codes were organised under broader concepts that were further re-arranged, merged and re-named. This review of broad concepts resulted in separate themes and the codes were placed under the most relevant themes. As a result, the three main themes were created, i.e. sociocultural barriers, institutional barriers and enhancing career progression. These themes were carefully placed under the research questions which they correspond to. At this stage, the researcher ensured that the two main research questions were addressed through these key

themes. This final organisation of themes and the relevance with the research questions is presented in the following figure 3.3.

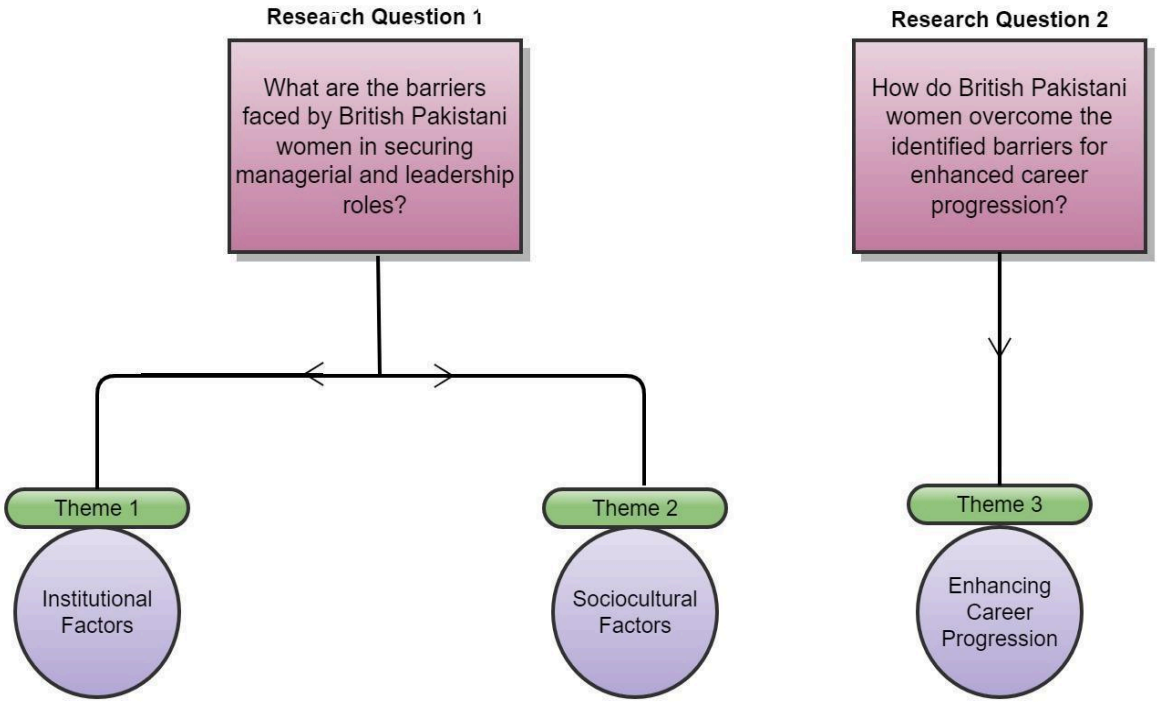

Figure 3.3. Themes corresponding to the main research questions

As shown in the above figure 3.3 the two main themes institutional factors and sociocultural factors address the first research question. The third theme, namely enhancing career progression, addresses the second research question.

3.19. Introduction to Thematic Findings

As elaborated above, the lived experiences of barriers to career progression are identified by thematic analysis of primary data. Selected excerpts from the participants' interviews are included followed by interpretation of the researcher to elaborate on the meaning and sense-making of the viewpoints of participants. In doing so, the individual backgrounds and

profiles of each participant are given due consideration, as that information puts the responses into context. It is important to highlight that while the barriers to career progression are categorised into separate themes, sub-themes and codes; many of the responses still reflect the intersections of gender, race, religion, etc. and carry cultural and social impressions. Although the author has attempted to align the responses with the theme deemed most appropriate, it is not easy to pull apart the specific barriers from one another and the amalgamation of multiple factors and variables may be evident in some of the discussed quotes. The following figure 3.4 shows the breakdown of the themes, including sub-themes and codes.

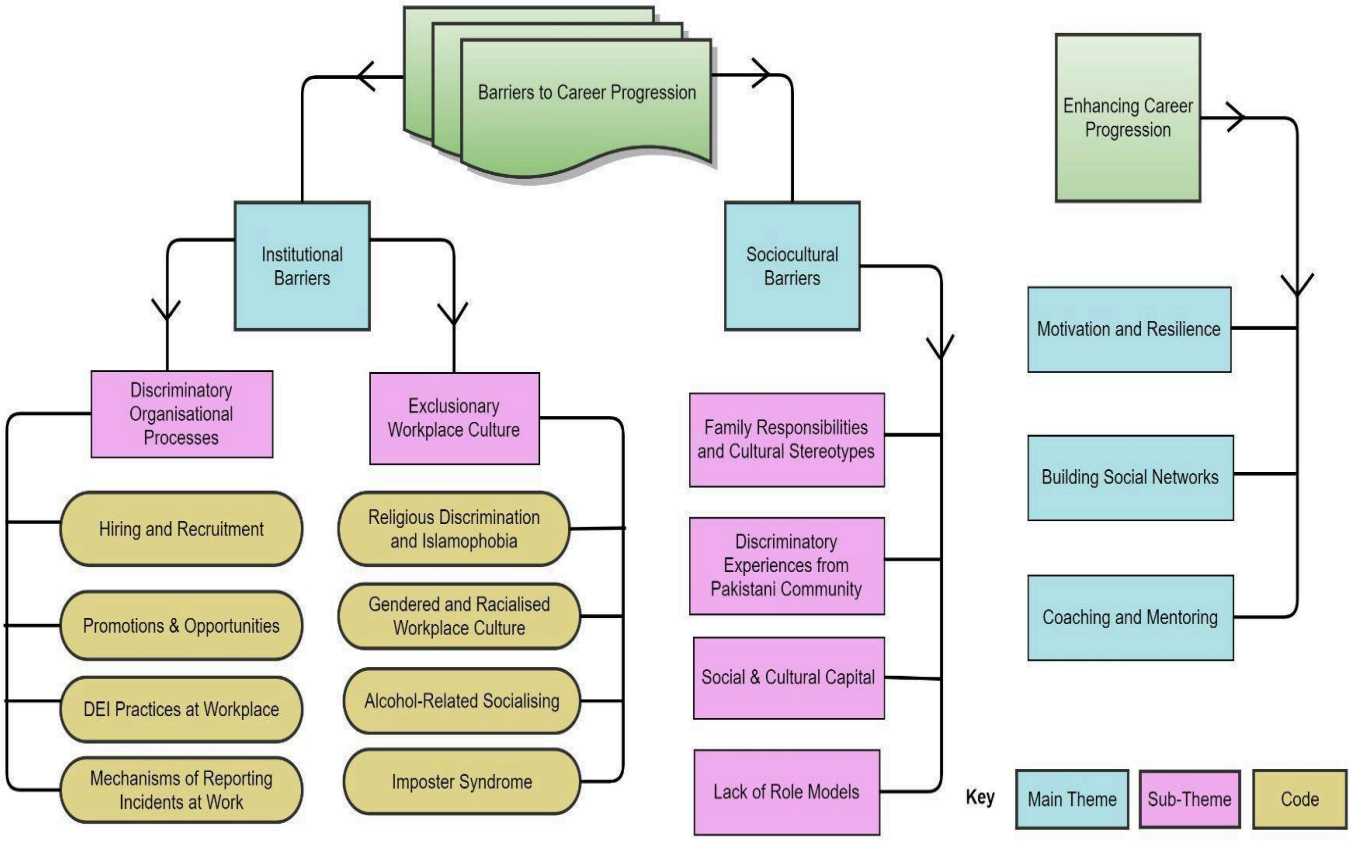

Figure 3.4. Main Themes, Sub-Themes and Categories from the Thematic Analysis

The above figure 3.4. presents a detailed map of the thematic analysis conducted on the primary data along with the breakdown of the main themes, sub-themes and codes. A thorough data analysis was undertaken by the researcher to reach upon these themes, sub-themes and codes as shown above.

Research Question 1: What are the barriers faced by British Pakistani women in securing managerial and leadership roles?

The themes of institutional barriers and sociocultural barriers are developed to address the Research Question 1. Following is an elaboration of these themes along with their sub-themes and codes.

3.20. Theme 1 - Institutional Barriers

The theme of institutional barriers includes the sub-themes of discriminatory organisational processes and exclusionary workplace culture. Within these sub-themes there are codes like religious discrimination and Islamophobia, gendered and racialised workplace culture, alcohol-related socialising and imposter syndrome. The sub-theme of the discriminatory organisational processes includes codes like hiring and recruitment, promotions and opportunities, DEI practices at work, HR mechanisms of reporting incidents at work. The institutional barriers are important ones as these are discussed often by a large number of the participants. The theme institutional barriers along with its sub-themes and the codes is shown in the appendix D. It also shows the number of files (participants) and the references (number of occurrences) alongside each code. For instance, religious discrimination and Islamophobia was mentioned by 25 participants 104 times. This shows that the challenge of religious discrimination and Islamophobia at the workplace is experienced by most of the participating women. Similarly,

gendered and racialised workplace culture was mentioned by 18 participants 75 times also showing that a large number of participants experienced this challenge. Further details on how many participants mentioned a specific code (files), along with the number of times that it was mentioned (references) is shown in Appendix D along with researcher's interpretation of the sub-themes and codes.

3.21. Theme 2 - Sociocultural Barriers

The theme of sociocultural barriers includes the following sub-themes, i.e. family responsibilities and cultural stereotypes, discriminatory experiences from within the Pakistani community, social and cultural capital, lack of role models. The appendix D shows the sub-themes under the theme of sociocultural barriers. 24 participants have shared about experiencing the challenge of family responsibilities and cultural stereotypes with 42 occurrences in their conversations and this is the most frequently experienced socio-cultural barrier among the others. 8 women have mentioned the challenge of experiencing discrimination from within the Pakistani community, 10 participants have experienced the barrier of social and cultural capital with 25 occurrences, 9 participants reported the challenge of lack of role models. This shows that family responsibilities and cultural stereotypes are experienced by most of the women. Further details about the number of respondents who mentioned a specific code (files), along with the number of times that it was mentioned (references) is shown in Appendix D.

Research Question 2: How do British Pakistani women address the identified barriers for enhanced career progression?

The second research question is addressed by the third theme from the thematic analysis, called 'enhancing career progression'.

3.22. Theme 3 - Enhancing Career Progression

This theme includes the coping strategies used by these women to address the challenges of career progression. The theme of 'enhancing career progression' consists of codes of motivation and resilience, social networks and coaching and mentoring. The codes of motivation and resilience were mentioned by 16 participants 22 times, the code of social networks was discussed by 14 participants 17 times and coaching and mentoring was discussed by 12 participants 13 times. The detailed codes within this theme along with the interpretation of the researcher are presented in Appendix D.

3.23. Demographic Information of Participants

During the data collection, demographic information was gathered from the participants to aid the analysis of barriers to career progression. The detailed demographic table containing data for individual participants is shown in appendix A. The appendix B presents the individual biographical profiling of the participants which is helpful to understand the background of each participant and how it has shaped their careers. Appendix E presents the summary of demographics of the participants. Moreover, the appendix F presents summary tables and percentages of the key demographics of the participants.

Chapter IV - Findings - Institutional Barriers to Career Progression

This chapter presents the research findings related to the institutional barriers to career progression. It gives an overview of the themes, sub-themes and codes related to institutional barriers. This theme has emerged as the most dominant theme experienced by all the participants in their own ways. The institutional barriers have two sub-themes, i.e. role of employer and discrimination and microaggressions at work. These sub-themes are divided further into related categories as shown in the following figure 4.1.

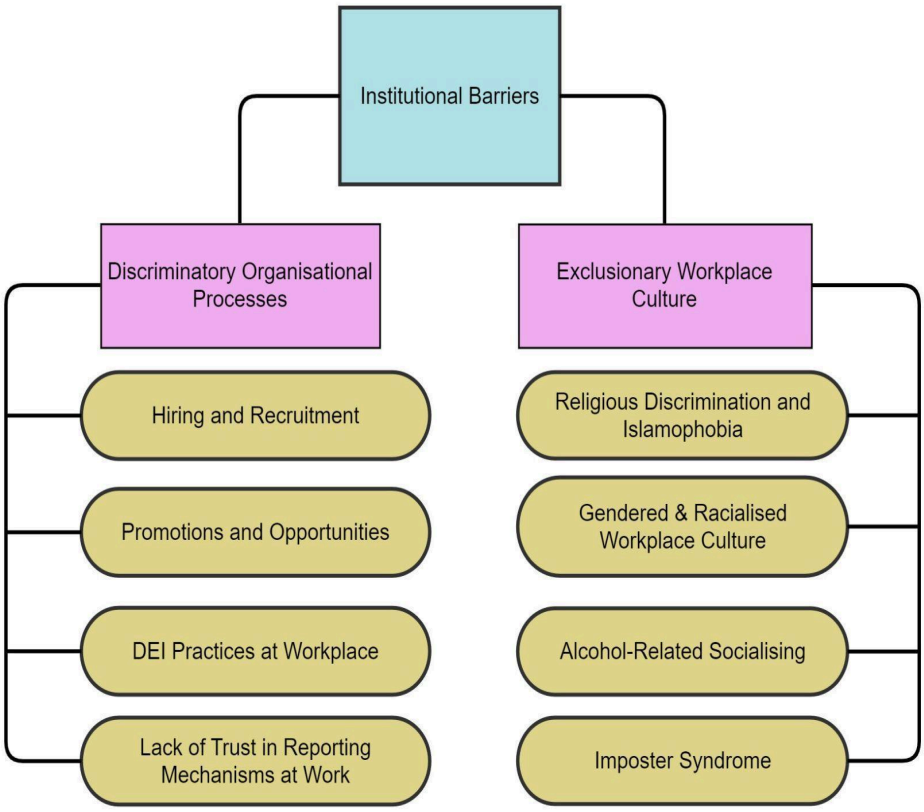

Figure 4.1. Sub-Themes and Categories of Institutional Barriers to Career Progression

4.1. Exclusionary Workplace Culture

This sub-theme describes the lived experiences of these women stemming from exclusion and *othering* in the workplace culture. These experiences largely involve intersectional discrimination and workplace microaggressions. The experiences of discrimination are easy to identify because of their overt nature, whereas the experiences of workplace microaggressions are subtle in nature and are more difficult to spot. Nonetheless, the researcher has attempted to deeply examine the lived experiences of exclusion, perceived discrimination and workplace microaggressions shared by the participants. In doing so, the complex nature of these experiences is revealed with sensitivity towards the intersections of the different identity markers like race, gender, ethnicity and religion and how they shape the lived experiences of these women.

(i) Religious Discrimination and Islamophobia

The experiences of Islamophobia emerged as a key barrier experienced by 25 participants at different stages of their careers; often associated with the visible religious identity or visible Muslimness. The findings for this barrier confirm the research by Ahmed and Gorey (2023) that Muslim women are faced with three to four times more discrimination in employment as any other minority group. The participants shared straining accounts of how their career journeys were negatively affected due to religious biases. It is crucial to remember that anti-Muslim sentiments were reported to take place in both subtle and visible ways, corresponding to workplace microaggressions and visible discrimination as well. Often the participants expressed how these experiences accounted for their delayed and denied promotions, missed opportunities of professional development, exclusion from social events and their wellbeing was affected due

to these experiences (see Opara et al., 2020). The participants shared that they had frequent distressing interactions with colleagues and bosses that made them feel targeted because of their religious identity. Following is a comment by the participant regarding the same:

> *'I am in an international research group, where most of the research is in low- and middle-income countries... They're exposed to diversity all the time, but you'll still get the odd person who doesn't experience racism themselves… and comes out with really inappropriate comments about hijab or stuff like that….'* (Gulalai, Age 62, Professor)

The above example explains that the colleagues were oblivious to their bias against Muslims and considered it harmless to comment about the religious identity of their Muslim colleagues. As Gulalai highlighted that these colleagues 'don't experience racism themselves' indicates that they are from non-Muslim White majority (as it was confirmed by the participant) which is the more *accepted* form of identity in British workplaces today. Since this participant is a *hijabi* in a senior leadership role, the researcher was intrigued to know if the experiences of Islamophobia had reduced during her career progression to this senior role. When she was asked if she still experiences racism and Islamophobia at work, she replied in the following words:

> *'I think it's always been there, and it always will be there…. people probably watch their words a lot more because of who I am, and my background…. it's (Islamophobia) actually on the increase…. I think Islamophobia is not on the decrease at all really….'* (Gulalai, Age 62, Professor)

It is understood from the above example that while the participant is acknowledging the continued existence of Islamophobia, at the same time she is exhibiting guardedness in her behaviour, which is due to the power that comes with her senior position. This demonstrates an

'alertness' on the part of Gulalai towards the prevalence of anti-Muslim racism. However, unexpressed Islamophobia and racism does not ensure the absence of it; so, although she is not in favour of giving a chance to the White colleagues to express their prejudiced remarks due to her guardedness, the racist sentiment towards her is highly likely to still be present. Such scenarios may create socialising gaps between colleagues which impacts their networking and social capital development. It is insightful that both challenges of oblivion to the bias and guardedness from bias coexist in the British workplaces and the same is reported by other participants in senior roles as well.

Sheneela is a young corporate lawyer. She discussed that she does not wear the hijab and often felt that it makes her more acceptable in the British job market. She recalled an incident when she went to Pakistan on holidays and one of her White male colleagues who was also a fellow lawyer, sent her some *friendly* messages. She expressed that she was very much offended by those messages, such that she could not believe her eyes.

> *'... I was in Pakistan, visiting my grandparents, and he messaged me, saying, 'how's Pakistan? I've told everyone here that you're at Al-Qaeda training camp, by the way... Haha…' That really annoyed me. I've got it on Facebook Messenger…. He put it in writing, which is shocking…. That could ruin someone's career...'* (Sheneela, Age 31, Lawyer)

In this example, even though the choice of words and nature of the joke is seriously hurtful for the participant, the colleague is oblivious of the offensive nature of his Islamophobic joke. It is equally possible that the colleague considered Sheneela to be a 'good' Muslim who can take a 'joke' because she does not wear hijab. This connects with the work of Chakraborti and Zempi

(2012) who explained that veiled Muslim women are often viewed as the embodiment of being problematic and threatening, thus, the hijab is not only symbolic of Muslimness, but it also signifies *otherness*. In contrast to the previous example of *hijabi* professor Gulalai, this participant Sheneela frequently expressed in the interview that she has a more 'neutral' and 'palatable' personality, because she does not wear the hijab and engages in alcohol-related socialising after work. Consequently, she would like to believe that because of her dominant *Britishness* and muted religious association, she would be discounted from Islamophobic experiences. Bhopal (2024a) explains that the ethnic minority employees in academia *perform* Whiteness to fit in with the organisational culture and while doing so, they uphold White privilege and existing power structures and this is relevant for this participant as well. Interestingly, her racial and ethnic identity is pronounced in this example since her colleagues knew that she was visiting her grandparents in Pakistan. The intersection of race, ethnicity and religion becomes dominant, therefore, she is faced with anti-Muslim racism wrapped as a harmless joke. Another participant Salmah discusses how people of colour are battling against overt and covert Islamophobia, and she has to face it at work on a regular basis.

> *'We are fighting against that covert Islamophobia as well… overt and covert both…. We are fighting against a certain perception about Pakistan's violent terrorism that you see, you hear and you read every day…. We are in a difficult position…'* (Salmah, Age 58, Clinical Hypnotherapist)

It is understood from these examples that Islamophobia and religious discrimination is prevalent in the British workplaces (for instance, Cannon, 2023). It is experienced both in visible and discreet ways, as highlighted by the majority of the participants (25). The above quote represents anti-Muslim racism, and it is unfortunate that such sentiment is present in British workplaces in

overt and covert manifestations, as confirmed by majority of the participating women. The participants shared many examples of hurtful remarks made by their colleagues and a general anti-Muslim sentiment in the workplace was often felt by them. This echoes with Islamophobia passing the 'dinner table test' as stated by Sayeeda Warsi, who was the first Muslim cabinet minister in the UK, meaning that it has become socially acceptable among the White British middle-class to make negative remarks about Muslims that would be unacceptable for other minority groups (Allen, 2021; Allen and Allen, 2020).

Most participants seemed internally rooted in their religion and placed a huge amount of importance on their Muslimness (except for a few women who shared that they were not very religious). 13 participants wore the hijab and shared discriminatory and prejudiced behaviours by the employers, which illustrates that visible religious identity (e.g. hijab) is viewed as a problem by the employer or the colleagues, then it can create hurdles in the careers of Muslim women who choose to dress in an Islamic way. It becomes even more difficult when the on-job performance of the employee is impacted by the prejudiced perceptions of the employers and the same is reported by the participants who wear hijab. This resonates with the work of Franks (2000) and Moosavi (2015) who argue that religious discrimination at work is mostly associated with modest dressing and hijab. Some participants reported that they were considered less intelligent as compared to other colleagues at their workplace because of their hijab and the same is reported by Mahmud and Swami (2010). There were many examples shared by the women to illustrate this. Naima is a *hijabi* woman of Kashmiri heritage and has worked in higher education for nearly two decades. Following is a similar example shared by her.

> *'...I walked in… wearing my headscarf, and it just really didn't go well with some of my senior supervisors. This lady… pulled me off the till immediately and said… What's that*

you are wearing? Why did you come in wearing that?... I told her I'd got permission from the HR person... She said, okay… that's fine, but you could clearly tell that they were all shocked. I had to work a lot harder… to make people see that I'm still the same person. My input and output at work will still be good… regardless of what the colour of my skin is, or how I appear to you…' (Naima, Age 51, Course Coordinator)

The above example shows first-hand accounts of the deep-rooted hostility experienced by the women with visible Muslim identities. The so-called Muslim penalty is certainly causing challenges in the careers of these women at different stages. They feel the need to work harder than their White colleagues to prove their value at work. Even then, there is a lack of acceptance towards their religious and ethnic identities, and they expressed feelings of lack of belonging at work. Thus, the White supremacy in the organisational power structures continues to exist leaving little to no room for these negatively racialised women to enter the 'White space' of leadership (see Bhopal, 2024a). The participants shared that such complexities tend to discourage them from applying for senior jobs at managerial and leadership levels. Some participants expressed that there is no place on the top table for people who look like them; thus more than qualifications and skills, it is about a '*White fit*'. The work of Khattab and Hussein (2018) confirms that Muslim women's working experiences in the UK are a product of their intersectional identities (gender, race, religion, and more) instead of their skills and experience needed for the job. Due to the structural racism and patriarchy, Muslim women are more likely to experience multiple market penalties at the same time; for instance, ethnic penalty, gender pay gap, Muslim penalty and motherhood penalty.

Similar lived experiences of anti-Muslim racism in overt and covert forms were shared by other participants as well. Carr (2015) explains that Muslim communities are living with a distinct

form of racism that targets them because of their Muslimness. Therefore, it is a grim situation that Pakistani women in British workplaces are shamed and made to feel apologetic for their belongingness to the religion of Islam. Sumbal is one of those participants who shared that they had decided to take off the hijab during their professional lives. It is worth mentioning that two participants (Mahpara and Sumbal) had experienced removing their hijab at different points in their careers and both participants expressed feeling visible changes in their colleagues' behaviours towards them before and after removing their hijab. This indicates that even in jurisdictions that allow for religious dress legally, there remains the social sanction. Following is the quote from the conversation with Sumbal where she discusses how the behaviours of her students at the university had changed after she had taken off the hijab.

> *'... since I have stopped wearing hijab recently, the students are much easier to deal with… They can see a person of colour, but not a person with a specific religious affiliation…. It was very difficult before, when I wore the hijab (now) I am just like one tag down (one label down) … and I am just a woman of colour now…'* (Sumbal, Age 35, Lecturer)

This example shows that Sumbal is aware of her intersectional identity, i.e. her race, and religion. She visibly felt that the complexity of the identity markers can make her *the odd one out;* especially when she is in a position of power, i.e. being a teacher to university students. So, being 'Asian' and 'Muslim' is more challenging, than being just 'Asian'; as expressed by Sumbal that it is *one tag down,* or *one label less* for her intersectional identity of being a Brown, Pakistani, Muslim woman. Therefore, in the light of the above examples, it is found that the participants are struggling with the challenges of religious discrimination, especially anti-Muslim

racism at work. These are manifested in different ways in the workplaces, often resulting in exclusion of these women from opportunities of career progression.

(ii) Gendered and Racialised Workplace Culture

One of the most concerning barriers to the career progression of British Pakistani women is the prevalence of gendered and racialised organisational culture (see gendered organisations by Acker, 2006). The experiences related to this barrier are shared by 18 women which depict various forms and intensities of this challenge. The existence of racism and sexism at work is often intertwined with different layers of intersectional identities of the participating women and reinforce inequalities at the workplace. Many studies confirm the unfavourable impact of masculine organisational culture on ethnic minority women's careers; for instance, Atkinson (2011), Opara et al. (2020) and Ryan and Branscombe (2013). Following are some excerpts selected from the interviews that depict this barrier. Following are some excerpts selected from the interviews that depict these complex challenges.

Sheneela comes from a privileged socioeconomic family and is a *non-hijabi* lawyer. She shared various incidents from her workplace where she had experienced masculine workplace culture and racial microaggressions from her White colleagues. Following is an example where she discusses the disadvantage of being an ethnic woman who felt excluded by her White male colleagues.

> *'... It's much more natural for them to call each other up and hang out…. That's where you have these male associates hanging out with their senior partners ... There's no reason why you can't invite an ethnic minority woman to these things, other than the fact that they just feel awkward about it…* (Sheneela, Age 31, Lawyer)

It is understood that the prejudice experienced by the participant in the above example is not exclusively because of a male-dominant organisational culture. In fact, the layer of racial prejudice is also experienced by her within this instance. This depicts that the exclusionary experience is intertwined with multiple layers of prejudice, i.e. racial and gender prejudice in this case. Such exclusionary workplace norms and practices are likely to increase inequalities among employees at the workplace. Another participant Mahpara faced multiple challenges at her workplace related to racism and unconscious bias projected by her White colleagues. Following is an excerpt from her conversation where she recalls an uncomfortable interaction with a White female colleague.

> '*On the first day I started, this particular person… said to me… I need your username and your password for your email…. I said why….? And she says… Well, just in case something happens, and we need to get into your inbox…. I said, I'm not giving you my password … That's an invasion to basically ask somebody for their password and to be able to access their account….'* (Mahpara, Age not known, Lecturer)

In this example, it is evident that the White colleague was trying to invade the privacy of the participant by seeking access into her official email account. It relates to the notion of viewing Muslims as 'suspects' because their Muslimness is considered dangerous and problematic (Cherney and Murphy, 2016) and this is illustrated in the experiences of many participants. In the above example, Mahpara shared that this was a recent incident where workplaces are striving to be more inclusive in the wake of the DEI agenda, and employees are expected to respect each other's boundaries. Although there were no direct discriminatory remarks spoken in this example, yet there was unconscious bias and anti-Muslim racism projected in a subtle manner. It is thought-provoking that the lived experiences of sexism and racism may not necessarily be

overt and easy to spot. In fact, often, the prejudice is exhibited in subtle ways, where no racist slurs or sexist language is involved, neither any name calling or abusive language. Such experiences are easily neglected since they appear innocent on the surface and unless deeper scrutiny is undertaken, they are hardly identifiable. These subtle acts of discrimination are referred to as microaggressions and are discussed in the review of related literature.

Many participants (28) have reported consistently experiencing workplace microaggressions through their career journeys, and the sophisticated nature of these experiences, which makes it difficult to spot and stop. Following is a similar experience shared by another participant Atiqa who is working in the childcare sector. She talked about never experiencing visible racism, or workplace harassment, however, she never felt fully included in the White-dominant workplace and expressed that often she was subtly excluded from many opportunities at work.

> *'... most of the colleagues were White and I was one of the very few ethnic minority people there. I never faced any harsh remarks, but I never felt a part of them. I felt like an outsider… many times… in the common room, I felt like they became quiet when I entered the room… or sometimes they laughed in a hidden way. I think I lost my self-confidence in that environment. I didn't know what to do, because apparently, they treated me just fine, so there was nothing I could complain about. But in my heart, I knew something was making me feel very uncomfortable with being around them. There was a group of colleagues there, who would ask me, if we travel in cars and if we have television in Pakistan… Really… ! It was very strange…'* (Atiqa, Age 39, Nursery Practitioner)

The above example is powerful in terms of understanding the scale of covert to overt exclusionary behaviour by the colleagues and the extent to which it impacts Pakistani women at

work. The discomfort of the participant is evident in the face of overt discrimination; and she seems to comprehend the disadvantage owing to her intersectional identity. It is frustrating that although no racist or sexist or Islamophobic words are being spoken here, yet the lived experience of subtle bias and exclusion is incredibly obvious. The participant has expressed how this experience is affecting her self-confidence, causing mental stress and anxiety that may lead to imposter syndrome. Experiencing imposter syndrome due to overt and covert discrimination is a commonly observed experience in this research. The participants shared many examples from their workplaces where they encountered discrimination and microaggressions, which led to feelings of lack of belonging to the organisation.

Moreover, the oblivion to racism is reported by most of the participants as a common practice at their workplaces by sharing interesting examples. For instance, A *hijabi* participant Maya recalled her attendance at an office dinner, where she had an uncomfortable conversation with a White male colleague, who happened to be a lecturer too. She shared how she experienced racial prejudice from this colleague, as follows:

> *'... I sat next to this economics lecturer, and it was the first time I'd met him... It was a really uncomfortable conversation… He asked me what my name was… He was like, oh that doesn't sound like you... how you don't look like Maya… he was German himself… Then he went on to talk about how long I'd been in the UK… I have felt like saying, is this immigration? Is this passport control? He said stuff like… oh, are you British? or are you an immigrant like me? like in humour ingestion…. It wasn't very funny at the time….'*
> (Maya, Age 36, Lecturer)

Again, inappropriate remarks regarding race, religion, immigration status (in the above example) seem like a normalised practise in British workplaces; such that the colleague is having a 'casual' conversation, thinking that no boundaries are crossed. It is obvious that this colleague was unaware of his prejudice and racism which is commonly observed in the responses of many participating women. At the same time, the German colleague's behaviour towards Maya's hijab and colour of her skin shows that she is automatically perceived to not belong there, despite her native accent of English. The participants often shared that such lack of sense of belonging can easily translate to imposter syndrome and can discourage them (Pakistani women) from applying for senior roles. It is also significant to note that the White privilege is not only associated with White British colleagues, rather it is also the European ethnic 'White' colleagues who still enjoy the White privilege (race related) such that the unequal power dynamics between them and the Pakistani women are the same as White British colleagues.

In the light of the above examples, it is understood that the participants are faced with multifaceted challenges of gendered and organisational culture, workplace microaggressions, discrimination and unconscious biases. These challenges are compounded because of the intersectional identity markers of religion, ethnicity and class. The participants have expressed battling with these barriers in their everyday work lives, causing mental stress and diminishing their wellbeing and career progression. It is noted that because of these challenges, these women are unable to fit-in with the organisational culture.

(iii) Alcohol-Related Socialising

13 women shared the challenge of alcohol-related socialising, making it a crucial barrier in their career journeys. The participants shared that attending alcohol-related social events is a huge

unsaid expectation in the British workplaces, and it is problematic because it conflicts with their religious identities. While these women expressed the need to have social networks for more opportunities, alcohol-related socialising categorically excludes them, since it is in conflict with their religious identities (for instance, see Arifeen, 2020; Arifeen and Gatrell, 2020). The participants shared various incidents from their workplaces when they encountered this problem. Sheneela shared experiences from working in a large law firm where there is a significant emphasis on alcohol for professional networking and how it excludes Muslim women who abstain from drinking.

> *'... in British workplaces…. there is still a huge emphasis on booze for pretty much anything…. like celebrating the end of a deal, the end of a week, things like that…'* (Sheneela, Age 31, Lawyer)

The participants reported that often important matters regarding professional development and job promotions were informally discussed over alcohol in the after-work hours and the Pakistani women would fall behind, mainly due to their religious choices, but for the women who had caring responsibilities at home would experience this added layer of difficulty to stay for longer hours. Consequently, those colleagues who attended alcohol-related social events would often get promoted faster and were more liked by other colleagues.

Some participants shared that they would participate in after-work social events and not consume alcohol, to remain involved in professional networking opportunities, for instance, they preferred taking soft drinks. They expressed the awkwardness that was felt as a result, because it made their White colleagues uncomfortable to socialise with them. Sheneela elaborated on the social pressures faced by the junior Pakistani female colleagues in such scenarios.

'... I think about Pakistani women who don't drink and they've gotta deal with that extra thing…. not being in the room…. not being invited… And when you are invited, being the only woman… and you're the most junior person. You have to buck the trend and say, well, I'm not gonna have whiskey … Can I just have a drink? Then, it's 2 in the morning and you're supposed to keep going…. just drinking water and juices… It's a tough one...' (Sheneela, Age 31, Lawyer)

It is noted that the challenges of such socialising are compounded for Pakistani women who choose to participate and not consume alcohol because they are viewed as the odd ones out. The participants shared that because of avoiding alcohol-related social events, their colleagues did not warm up to them. They expressed feelings of isolation, exclusion and lack of sense of belonging. Therefore, it is understood that alcohol-related socialising is a difficult decision for the participants due to their religious beliefs, and often they find themselves faced with this barrier at their workplaces, making them feel excluded and isolated.

The participants shared that those who would attend these social events were mostly White colleagues, and sometimes non-Muslim colleagues from other ethnic identities. Salmah felt like she had missed out on various professional development opportunities because she was absent from social gatherings with her colleagues in the pubs.

'... I miss a lot of opportunities because they will hang out in the evenings where they can drink ... That's when they make friendships over a drink, not coffee... I'm happy with a cup of coffee… but this whole evening thing… the 'going out'… I don't do that deliberately… I've been to places where people drink and I'm not drinking... I understand that… but that whole thing of socialising after hours… happy hour… That's where the real networking is for

Indians, as well as [Goras] (meaning Whites in Urdu) ... that's where my biggest disadvantage is…' (Salmah, Age 58, Clinical Hypnotherapist)

It is important to note that the disadvantage experienced by Pakistani women is more pronounced as compared to other non-Muslim ethnic colleagues, due to their religious identity. For instance, as shown in the example above, it is usual for Indian colleagues to engage in alcohol-related socialising, whereas the Pakistani employees would not find it comfortable for themselves.

(iv) Imposter Syndrome

The notion of imposter syndrome was observed in the conversations of 8 participants, making it a prominent barrier to career progression. Imposter syndrome is found to emerge from the lived experiences of exclusion at work, that often makes the Pakistani women feel low self-worth. These women shared that the feelings of imposter syndrome would become worse when they were not given the due credit for their work, thus perpetuating the '*othering'* and feelings of imposter syndrome persisted.

Basharat is serving as Education Director in the global headquarters of an international charity organisation. She has a strategic role in her organisation and is responsible for the portfolio of 22 countries worldwide. She experienced imposter syndrome as follows:

'... as women grow in senior leadership positions, we do suffer from a lot of self-doubt, lack of confidence in our own selves. It's very common especially if you are a woman of colour. For the initial few months, I was constantly having this internal battle, whether I belong here… whether I fit in here. Did they make a mistake by choosing me…. That kind of self-doubt can be very challenging….' (Basharat, Age 39, Global Education Director)

Considering the above example, Basharat has experienced imposter syndrome even though she is already serving in senior management roles for decades. The experience of imposter syndrome, the feeling of low self-confidence and self-doubt is visible in this case; even though she is a woman of high calibre, serving in a decision-making position at her workplace. She has attributed her imposter syndrome with her identity of being the only ethnic minority woman in a leadership position at her workplace. The same is discussed by Murray (2023) that the lack of Black, Asian and minority ethnic women in senior roles has led to feelings of imposter syndrome among these women. Women in leadership are generally faced with imposter syndrome but the challenges are compounded by the intersections of their identity. In this example, it is obvious that even though Basharat is in quite a senior role, she continued to question whether she belonged to the organisation and experienced feelings of isolation at work. Afshar (2012) elaborates that Muslim women often struggle with low self-confidence and low self-worth, even when they are highly qualified and accomplished and is evident in the experiences shared by many participants.

Asma works as a professor at a local university in the traditionally male-dominated profession of engineering. She is faced with unique challenges being one of the handful of women in her department. Although she is a highly accomplished academic; she has faced imposter syndrome at different stages of her career. She mentioned how intimidating it can be for a woman of colour to perform at the leadership level in a male-dominated environment and how it can affect self-confidence. It is important to note that she is from the STEM field of work which has alarmingly low representation from Black, Asian and ethnic minority women in leadership and senior roles (see Howe-Walsh and Turnbull, 2016; Wong and Copsey-Blake, 2023). Asma continued to shed light on her experience as follows:

'... If you work in a male dominated environment (which is very much for engineering)… I think that can be a bit intimidating because if you don't have the confidence, you could actually be overtopped… and that you can feel very under-powered by that.. you might not be heard, or maybe overlooked…' (Asma, Age 50, Associate Professor)

She continued to talk about main barriers and emphasised on how this lack of sense of belonging impacted her self-confidence; and posed a major barrier in her career. Fatima is a healthcare professional and offers online health-related information for South Asian women. Following are some excerpts from her interview where she expressed feelings of imposter syndrome.

'I did not follow any dietician on Facebook and Instagram… with the fear that they will follow me back… and they will know… I am making videos in Urdu…. I had an issue that people would judge me for my language…. I was a bit nervous with how I might sound with my accent, with my English… I'd hidden myself from everyone….' (Fatima, Age 43, Healthcare Professional)

In the light of the above responses by Fatima, the fear of inadequate language skills had added to her nervousness, and she became afraid of being judged by the others. This led her into hiding for a long time, where she did not feel confident enough to offer her services online in her mother-tongue, i.e. Urdu. In her perception, Urdu was a 'lesser' language as opposed to English being the superior language, which was widely spoken by many healthcare professionals in her networks. Interestingly, it is noted in the reviewed literature that English language proficiency has a major influence on the mental health of British Pakistani women and may cause social isolation and even imposter syndrome (Chaudhry et al., 2012).

Salmah is a clinical hypnotherapist. She relocated many times in different countries across the world since her childhood. She has finally settled down in the UK a few years ago, but she feels at a disadvantage because she could not develop a British accent due to frequent travelling history. Although she is fluent in spoken English; yet she considers that those people who have a British accent have an edge, even if they are ethnic minorities. In the following excerpt the participant has shared her thoughts regarding the importance of having a British accent when speaking English and how it can be an advantage in the job market. In the following example, she shares her feelings about how a White Muslim woman with a native accent may be perceived by the others:

> *'... my perception is that they are better accepted…. When they open their mouths, especially when they are on the phone, you don't know what they are wearing… they just sound like you…. I feel that somebody who sounds like you has a real advantage…. If you look at people like Rishi Sunak… Priti Patel… or even Sajid Javid in British politics…. They've reached this level because they sound like them…. If they did not sound like them, then they fit in a stereotype ….'* (Salmah, Age 58, Clinical Hypnotherapist)

This example is interesting as it is discussed in the work by Chaudhry et al. (2012) that regardless of the technical knowledge of the Black, Asian and ethnic minority women, they are more likely to experience discrimination and bias by the employer based on their language skills; especially their accents. However, it is important to note that many participants of this research are native English speakers, yet they have reported experiencing ethnic and racial prejudice, Islamophobia and religious discrimination from their employers and colleagues at different stages of their careers. Most of the *hijabi* participants have been judged negatively because of their visible Muslimness, and the colour of their skin and even excluded from opportunities of

promotion, although they possessed the British accent of English. Hence, it seems like English language proficiency and a native accent for Pakistani women is trumped by other identity markers, as it does not waive off experiences of racism, prejudice and Islamophobia at work. Therefore, the participants have expressed that their imposter syndrome can be often perpetuated by feelings of exclusion and lived experiences of racism and discrimination at the workplace due to their intersectional identities.

4.2. Role of Employer - Discriminatory Organisational Processes

Discriminatory organisational processes constitute an important sub-theme of the institutional barriers of career progression and are further divided into the following categories: hiring and recruitment, promotions and opportunities, DEI policies and practices at work and mechanisms of reporting incidents at work. These categories represent those organisational processes that involve the role of the employer in shaping the lived experiences of career progression for British Pakistani women. These challenges are examined using representative examples from the interviews and in doing so, the undertones of discrimination and prejudice including racism, Islamophobia, sexism are highly evident. 25 participating women spoke about the role of the employer and the prevalent organisational processes, and how central it is in shaping their career-related experiences, regardless of the field of work or career stage.

(i) Hiring and Recruitment

The challenges of hiring and recruitment were mentioned by 15 women, therefore, making it an important barrier for the career progression of Pakistani women and is often demonstrated with the complexity of their intersectional identities of gender, race and religion. These women reported feeling hopeless and loss of trust in fairness of recruitment policies. They felt

disadvantaged and excluded in the job market due to their gender, race, ethnicity and religion, and shared various examples which demonstrated the complexity of their multiple disadvantages especially when it comes in interaction with the organisational policies and practices pertinent to hiring and recruitment. Following are some quotes from the interviews regarding this barrier.

Maya works in an academic position at a local university. She shared about experiencing biases during hiring and recruitment; especially in being promoted to senior roles. She elaborated on her individual disadvantage of Muslimness as it was a major consideration of the employer. She experienced being shortlisted many times for the various roles that she applied for. She shared that whenever she personally appeared before the interview panel, her chances of selection were diminished. It has been a repetitive pattern for her over a period of years (for the reasons she has mentioned below).

> *'... I think being a Muslim woman who wears hijab, your identity is always questioned... if someone looks like you…. then your loyalty, trust, all of that can be questioned in various social ways…. I have quite an angst sized first name… I might get through the shortlisting process, but when I'm interviewed, then it's just gone…'* (Maya, Age 36, Lecturer)

The above comment by Maya demonstrates that her selection for a job was overshadowed by her Muslim name and Muslim appearance, since she is a *hijabi.* This relates to the literature which presents that applicants with non-White names have less likelihood of getting interview calls (Moss-Racusin et al., 2012; Oreopoulos, 2011). Also, there are indications of viewing Muslims as 'suspect communities' as she feels that her '*loyalty, tryst, all of that can be questioned in various social ways.*' She expressed that her educational qualification and past working

experience did not prove to be useful if the interview panel was dominated by White people. However, in instances where there were any people of colour in the interview and/or selection panels, her Muslimness would likely not become a question, therefore, it was mostly relative. Maya continued to share the barriers her intersectional identity has posed in her job promotions.

> *'... It was really hard just to get through that first phase of the application process…. I'm very aware that I know people have taken off the hijab because of that reason…. or they change their name….. How much are you gonna change about yourself….? You're never going to fit in…'* (Maya, Age 36, Lecturer)

In the above comment and further in the conversation, Maya has mentioned that some of her Muslim female colleagues and acquaintances have attempted to remove their hijab or change their ethnic names to more British-sounding names with the objective to pass the hiring and recruitment processes smoothly. Kang et al. (2016) has named this adaptation of names as resume 'whitening' and this is discussed in the reviewed literature (Derous and Ryan, 2019). Maya shared that her colleagues and acquaintances felt that with the adaptation of more British-sounding names, they were likely to be shortlisted and at least have the chance to appear in interviews. This shows that even though Muslim Pakistani women are educated, hardworking and experienced, if they have visible markers of Muslimness, like hijab and/or ethnic names, it is highly likely to impact their shortlisting and selection in the hiring and recruitment processes. Zempi and Chakraborti (2014) found that British employers are more inclined towards hiring employees based on their potential to 'fit in' with the organisational norms and culture, rather than their education and talent. This denounces the Muslimness of these women and reproduces the cycle of racist and discriminatory hiring practices. Hence, it is found that employers are not just seeking applicants with appropriate educational qualifications and skills needed for the job;

rather they are looking for much more in the *ideal* candidates. Similar experience is shared by another participant Sheneela who talks about the biased hiring and recruitment processes she has experienced, and the disadvantage of having an ethnic name (Pakistani name) on the CV.

> *'I guess people will see your CV... They probably see your surname and think 'Ohh… Pakistani surname… Will they fit in? We've got a kind of sort of a joke-y team around here… We like to go out… We like to booze… Will this person fit in…? They might call you in for an interview because your academics are good, but then… It's sort of that fit that they are looking for… and that fit is someone… who is basically similar to them...'* (Sheneela, Age 31, Lawyer)

Ulfat who works at a local telecommunication company. She discusses how after the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre in 2001 had severely affected Muslim around the world. She faced challenges due to her Muslim identity; such that the job opportunity she had lined up for her disappeared, and she struggled to secure employment afterwards. Following are some thoughts she shared in this regard:

> *'My first job was actually just after 9/11 happened… as a Business Analyst apprenticeship. Just after I graduated, September 11th happened, and the job disappeared…. I never heard back from the recruiter, even though I've tried to contact them several times... I found it very difficult to try and find a job in my field for about a year….'* (Ulfat, Age 42, Technical Specialist)

The religious disadvantage was strongly felt by the participants due to having a Muslim name (non-English name) which uniquely represents their non-native identity before the recruiters. In the above example, the participant has acknowledged experiencing religious discrimination in

the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. She shared that it was not because of her gender; rather, it was clearly because of her religious association with Islam. Similar experiences of anti-Muslim racism in hiring and recruitment are shared by many other participants as well.

An example is Wajidaan who works as a psychologist at a local clinic. She shared feelings of frustration once she found out that she and a Bengali female colleague were paid less than their White colleagues. This echoes the findings from the ONS (2020) data that Pakistani and Bangladeshi people experience considerable ethnic penalties in the job market in terms of their income and access to employment and are at the very bottom of the earnings scale as compared to other ethnicities.

> '*…. I really didn't know that I was paid less than them... the agency that I went through, they had provided another British White person to them as well.... The agency revealed… that they're paying me less and they're paying her more…. I also told the Bengali girl and she told me the same thing that she's been paid less as well. This was one of the top-notch private schools of England…'* (Wajidaan, 29, Psychologist)

In the light of the above examples, it is found that participants frequently experienced discriminatory hiring and recruitment processes in their respective fields of work. The prejudice shown by the employers towards ethnic minority women is evident at different stages of the hiring processes and has serious implications on the career progression of British Pakistani women.

(ii) Promotions and Opportunities

Job promotions and opportunities of training, development and secondment emerged as a key barrier of career progression highlighted by 13 participating women. They experienced this

challenge in different ways, often with delayed or denied promotions at work, prejudice of the employer who would prefer White employees over ethnic minority employees for any emerging opportunities and secondment. Most of the participants have shared that they are expected to work harder to prove their worth in the organisation and they are often assigned excessive workload as compared to their White colleagues. Ayla works as a researcher and shared the following thoughts about promotions and opportunities of training and development at work:

> *'... it is obvious that some Scottish and British will be preferred as compared to me in any of the training opportunities... or any of the organisational activities.... They would always prefer anyone who is basically from there... and not someone like me... '* (Ayla, Age 38, Researcher)

The above example shows that the participant is aware of the disadvantage associated with her intersectional identity, such that the professional development opportunities seem to be unavailable to her because of her identity. Ironically, she feels that the selection criteria are not based on expertise or subject knowledge, rather it is based on the colour of the skin. Safi (2010) highlights that employer discrimination and prejudice is likely to create hurdles in access to fair opportunities at work and the same is reported by all 13 participants of this research. Having excessive workloads was an important aspect brought to attention by many other women. The participants shared that they felt obligated to perform well despite having excessive workload, so that they could be considered valuable by the managers. Wajidaan works as a psychologist and expressed having a greater workload and longer working hours as compared to her White colleagues.

> *'I noticed that I had also been given long hours…. I was also assigned more work…. If any day, I had to leave early… I wasn't allowed…. If somebody else had to, they were allowed to… I'm a person who minds their own business and doesn't make a fuss out of anything… So I didn't…'* (Wajidaan, Age 29, Psychologist)

The expectation to perform for longer and inflexible hours with excessive workload, and often unacknowledged is commonly observed in the responses of 10 women. The participants have reported feeling exhaustion and burnout, yet the due credit of their hard work rarely goes to them. In fact, there is general expectation to comply with the way things are and continue working harder to prove their worth in the organisations. For instance, according to Kumra and Manfredi (2012) Black women feel that they are required to work harder as compared to their White colleagues in order to get job promotions. Similarly, many participants of this research reported that they keep working harder with the hopes of tangible promotions, whereas the rare verbal appreciation is almost never translated into a job promotion, nor a salary raise. Likewise, the Pakistani female academics have shared that they are often assigned greater workload and long hours as compared to their White colleagues.

Most of the participants from academia reported being stuck in the same academic positions for long periods of time, often the lecturers and senior lecturers were stuck just below the professor levels. The participants shared that even when they met all the criteria necessary to qualify for the promotion, the outcome is predictable even before applying because of the racial disadvantage. The participants expressed that it was like a vicious cycle that has been going on for the last many years, while incoming White academics would climb up the ladder quite quickly. Maddrell et al. (2019) discussed that ethnic minority women academics with intersectional identities are stuck in UK universities between their early and mid careers for long

periods of time, and are disproportionately occupied in short-term precarious roles as compared to White academics holding much more secure jobs.

Mopet discussed unfairness of the promotion systems at her university, when she applied for the position of an Associate Professor and was unsuccessful on two occasions. She felt that she was disadvantaged not because she was less qualified, but because of her racial and ethnic identity. Following are some thoughts that she shared during her conversation:

> *'I started to really hone-in on the disadvantage…. why that was…. and what that looked like for me…. I think that was solidified when I applied for an associate professorship at that university…. I was not successful twice when I applied, and I got quite upset about it the first time around…. I thought... Well, hold on a minute.... Why is it that this White male who has literally barely been at the institution for three years has gotten his promotion this year, and I still haven't….'* (Mopet, Age 50, Lecturer)

Similar experiences are frequently reported by the participants in academia. The barriers especially noted in these examples are indicating biased workplace culture prevalent in the UK universities which mostly favour White employees; thus, excluding Pakistani academics from opportunities of career progression.

> *'…. I've done really well back then… but the trajectory is just not been there…. 24 years, and I'm still not a professor… I'm going for it this year, but I bet I won't get it….'* (Mahpara, Age unknown, Lecturer)

Ulfat works as a Technical Specialist at a telecommunications company. She discussed how her colleagues were unfairly offered high-profile roles within the company, without undergoing an interview process.

'…. I hardly felt like my name was put forth for these funded courses…. Mostly it was the [goray] (Urdu for 'White') … I knew that if I want to progress in my career… I'll have to self-fund…. The employer didn't invest much in people who looked like me….' (Ulfat, Age 42, Technical Specialist)

Other experiences around lack of employer support in offering sponsored training and development opportunities was reported by some participants, thus, putting the burden of career development on the shoulders of the Pakistani women. The participants explained that their employer would tend to sponsor White employees, instead of *hijabi* and/or brown-skinned Pakistani employees. This was salient especially when the Muslimness was visible in addition to the ethnic identity, it would be extremely unlikely that the employer would nominate these employees for such opportunities.

(iii) DEI Practices at Workplace

The challenge of DEI practices at the workplace is a key barrier for British Pakistani women's career progression. 11 participants have specifically described the DEI practices at their workplaces to be superficial in nature; and not very helpful in ensuring fair and equitable treatment for ethnic minority employees. They discussed examples on how the organisational DEI practices have impacted and shaped their working experiences, especially in helping them reach senior roles. In doing so, the participants elaborated on the problematic nature of DEI agendas in their organisations since most of the policies were designed to address gender, disability and ableism, ageism, sexual orientation, pregnancy, while some crucial aspects of diversity like race and religion were often ignored. As a result, this led to increased experiences of racial and religious discrimination at work largely remaining unchecked and under-reported.

Sitara has worked in British public services for over 20 years. She shared memories from the time when equal opportunities legislation was introduced in the UK and how it brought a sense of accountability in the employers during that time frame. She emphasised that this legislation was more useful for women, than for ethnic minorities. This is because it was perceived to promote gender equality in organisations and called for more responsible decisions of hiring and job promotions from the employers (with regards to gender). Following is a quote from her conversation:

> *'The Equal Opportunities Legislation was …. a good beginning for women…. I don't know how good it was for people of colour… The thing about equal opportunities (however flawed it is) they do take away that personal preference in terms of… I'm looking for somebody like this…. I think the Equal Opportunities Legislation was definitely a big step in the right direction….'* (Sitara, Age 65, Personal Development Coach)

Gulalai is a *hijabi* Professor working in a leadership position. She recalled memories of experiencing institutional hindrances when the Athena Swan charter was introduced, and it was not taken seriously in its implementation for quite some time. Following is an excerpt from her conversation:

> *'… it's taken decades to even get them to pay attention to the fact that religion and belief are protected characteristics…. We should be paying as much attention to that as to ethnicity…. We've only just signed up to the Race Equality Charter, whereas gender has been on the agenda for ages….'* (Gulalai, Age 62, Professor)

The participant elaborated further by pointing towards the lack of representation of ethnic minorities in decision-making positions in UK universities. This shows that it is difficult to have DEI policies implemented across the institution to benefit the ethnic minority employees, when it might disrupt the existing White supremacy in the leadership. The tendency in UK universities to prioritise addressing gender inequalities over racial inequalities is discussed in depth by Bhopal and Henderson (2019) especially since the Race Equality Charter was introduced more than a decade later than the Athena Swan Charter. Bhopal (2018) argued that the Athena Swan charter has mainly benefitted White middle-class women in UK universities. This preference of gender over race has given rise to continued inequalities in higher education institutions in the UK, for instance, White women's experiences are given preference over the experiences of ethnic minority men and women, and the same tendency is shown in the lived experiences of many participating women from academia.

> *'The issue is that at institutional level it's not implemented a lot of the time…. A part of the reason it's not implemented is because there isn't that representation of people from marginalised communities in the positions of power…. When they do get there, they're often a lone voice….'* (Gulalai, Age 62, Professor)

Even if the ethnic minority women manage to make it to the decision-making position in their organisation, they are the odd ones, since it is mostly White dominated. The participants in senior roles expressed feelings of loneliness and isolation because there were no ethnic minorities on the top hierarchical level and the rest of their colleagues were mostly White males and non-Muslims. The hiring of these very few women in senior positions may symbolise 'tokenism' as Kanter (1977) suggested, which shows that organisations hire marginalised employees in senior roles to make a good impression, without genuine intention for inclusion

and diversity. This means that even if these women would use their power and advocate for a specific focus within the DEI agenda, for instance, religion (as discussed by some participants), they may not have support from their White peers in leadership roles because it is not interesting enough for the majority leaders. Hence, the notion of interest convergence becomes relevant here, showing that the interests of ethnic minority employees would be met as long as they serve the interests of the White leadership too (Delgado and Stefancic, 2023). Maya discusses how the DEI work is becoming more important than ever; especially that it can lead to increased revenue.

> *'Now I'm working in a Business School and looking at big high-level data from people like McKinsey… They are looking at the value that having more diversity at the top table can actually bring the revenue generation or revenue that's lost is huge, it's billions of dollars in the recent report….'* (Maya, Age 36, Lecturer)

Maya has highlighted a key aspect of mainstream diversity and inclusion work; that it is mostly dominated by White people; and there is lack of representation of ethnic minorities in leadership roles who influence DEI agenda at the workplace. Whereas some participants shared that the inclusive leadership initiatives in organisations are mostly focused on disability and sexuality and even tend to have one or two 'token women' who would hardly have a say in important decision-making. 4 participants from academia confirmed that most of the DEI work in higher education institutions in the UK tends to ignore religion and belief and is often focused on other mainstream aspects of diversity like gender and sexuality.

Some participants shared that they had attended ineffective unconscious biases training workshops in their organisations. They elaborated that the ineffectiveness of these initiatives was mainly due to the lack of intention by the top management such that these programs were

conducted for the organisation to secure more funding by the donors, or in general to make sure that the official requirements were met on paper. Whereas they felt that there was no real change taking place in their workplaces because of these initiatives. In fact, 25 participants had reported about frequent instances of discrimination and microaggressions as discussed in the earlier parts of this chapter.

> *'... there's definitely to be more diversification at the top table, even middle management… I think training isn't sufficient, unconscious bias training… It's not gonna fix the problem….. We need people with actual lived experience, that understand the complexity of that lived experience to help create that pipeline…'* (Maya, Age 36, Lecturer)

The above example resonates with the work of Dobbin and Kalev (2016) where they criticise the unconscious bias training initiatives and highlight the need to bring transparency in hiring and recruitment systems in organisations. The participants shared that the unconscious bias training and other inclusion initiatives did not adequately address the issues concerning religious, racial and ethnic bias. Although organisations are making efforts towards advancing diversity, equity and inclusion, most of the time, these initiatives are race evasive and are not strategically planned with sensitivity towards the distinct needs of the ethnic minority employees in the workplace. As a result, the workplace experiences of ethnic minority women (Pakistani women in this case) can be considerably affected.

(iv) Lost Voices: Lack of Trust in Mechanisms of Reporting Incidents at Work

The lack of trust in mechanisms of reporting incidents at the workplace has emerged as a key barrier of career progression in the interviews of 10 participants. Often the complaints regarding

the problems faced by these women were not taken seriously by their employers, therefore, resulting in their 'lost voices'. The participants have shared that without having solid systems of reporting at work, many day-to-day work-related issues can go unchecked like workplace microaggressions, bullying or discriminatory behaviours from other colleagues. These women have expressed how the ambiguity of reporting incidents, lack of transparency and biases of the HR often result in reproduction of workplace discrimination and differential treatment.

Most of the time, it was felt that the senior management and HR would take sides of the White colleagues, and their stance would be given greater value, especially if Pakistani women at work had lodged a complaint against them. It was noted especially in the responses of the women from academia that the HR and supervisors would typically favour the White colleagues because they would be bringing in more funding or would be involved in more meaningful work. At the same time, there was a common sentiment expressed by the women that it was relatively easier for the employer to let go of them because of their temporary contracts. The permanent positions were held by their White colleagues, and it was more likely for them to stay employed. Wajidaan is employed as a psychologist and discussed the tendency of HR personnel to show favouritism towards White colleagues as compared to people of colour working in the same organisation. She shared that there was no tangible outcome to her complaint of being paid less than her White colleagues, in fact she had to face long delays in the follow-up process which resulted in feelings of frustration and mental stress.

> *'... the HR is not much help when it comes to my ethnicity..... I definitely feel it because I'm Brown... if the HR head is White, their treatment is different.... If they're of a coloured ethnicity, they're much more understanding.... you know what raising a voice does bring you! It's very easy for them to let you go.'* (Wajidaan, 29, Psychologist)

Mahpara works at a local university and shared her frequent encounters with workplace harassment. She described a situation where she was faced with racism from a White female colleague; whom she referred to as 'racist'. This person held an important role in the university, and she was racist towards other ethnic minority women at the university as well. Mahpara shared that there were multiple complaints about incidents of racism and discrimination reported by other ethnic female colleagues including herself, but she felt that the management would take the side of the racist colleague. She recalled that she was even pressured by the management to resign from her job because she was raising these issues at work. She had lost hope in the fairness of the incident reporting processes at work.

> *'... but the school won't do anything… because she's a part of a team of people where their work is prestigious…. and brings in millions…. I told a lot of things to the HR… They said… if you resigned from this job, they'll put you in the redeployment pool... and you can quickly apply for another research post… I was highly disappointed that this HR member had also allowed this to happen…'* (Mahpara, Age unknown, Lecturer)

38-year-old Ayla faced various challenges of work-life balance and prejudiced treatment at her workplace. She expressed lack of trust in the systems of reporting incidents at work. Following is an excerpt from her conversation:

> '*... I just discussed it with my cousins, or sometimes with my husband… but honestly there was nothing I could say to my managers, because that was so obvious there, that it is difficult… especially, when you are from another ethnicity… and then you are married, and you have kids…'* (Ayla, Age 38, Researcher)

In the light of the above examples, it is understood that the participating women often struggled with the lack of transparency in the HR systems and the lack of trust in processes of reporting incidents at work. Their complaints were not taken seriously, and they feared losing their jobs, or gaining bad reputation among their colleagues. They expressed feelings of neglect to their workplace problems due to their intersectional identities and emphasised that often the HR systems would be inclined to favouritism for the White colleagues. Hence, from the responses, it is understood that there is a general lack of trust in the incident reporting mechanisms at work, where the complaints by the Pakistani women are not taken seriously. It is observed that whenever they raised their voices to bring any problems to the attention of the concerned departments, it would result in neglect, or negative consequences, especially if it involved a White colleague in the matter.

4.3. Summary

To sum up, it is found that a large majority of the participants have reported lived experiences of facing institutional and structural barriers to their career progression mostly because of their racial, ethnic, religious and gender identities. Within the institutional barriers, there are associated barriers like various forms of discrimination and microaggressions at work which further branch out to various other related barriers to career progression. These barriers to career progression are presented in detail by drawing upon the example quotes from the interviews conducted with the participants. Upon examining these examples of lived experiences, it is evident that Pakistani women are faced with multiple barriers like experiences of Islamophobia and anti-Muslim racism, alcohol-related socialising, gendered and racialised organisational culture and imposter syndrome. The visible Muslimness of the participants is viewed as problematic by the employers and colleagues, especially for those women who wore the hijab.

Such visible markers of Muslimness have given rise to visible discrimination at work, as well as workplace microaggressions that are more subtle in nature.

At the same time, the role of the employer and organisational processes are found to be an important aspect of career progression of these women which elaborates challenges like prejudiced systems of hiring and recruitment, promotions and opportunities, ineffective DEI practices at workplace and lack of trust in reporting mechanisms at workplace. It is found that these barriers have a crucial impact on the career progression of second-generation Pakistani women. It is important to note that intersectional identities of Pakistani women are of key relevance within these institutional challenges, and there is overlapping of the intersectional identities with the organisational norms and culture and organisational processes at various points. This inter-connectedness and overlapping of these women's intersectional identities is given due consideration while elaborating on the experiences. The following chapter presents the thematic findings of sociocultural barriers to career progression and the coping strategies used to address the identified barriers.

Chapter V - Findings - Sociocultural Barriers to Career Progression and Enhancing Career Progression

Some important barriers of career progression reported by the participating British Pakistani women are social, cultural and family related challenges. These challenges are categorised in four sub-themes including family responsibilities and cultural stereotypes, discriminatory experiences from within the Pakistani community, social and cultural capital and lack of role models. The sub-themes of the sociocultural barriers of career progression are presented diagrammatically in figure 5.1 below.

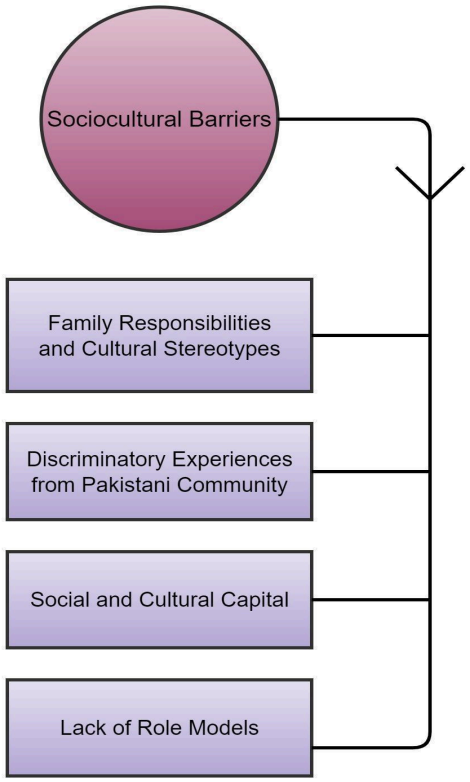

Figure 5.1. Sub-Themes of Sociocultural Barriers to Career Progression

5.1. Family Responsibilities and Cultural Stereotypes

24 participants mentioned experiencing the challenges of family responsibilities and cultural stereotypes. This barrier examines the unequal division of labour at home and the expectation to assume the major share of household and caring duties. For the lived experiences of cultural stereotypes, the participants shared the patriarchal values that they grew up with, and how the family traditions and cultural influences have shaped their way of thinking, and as a result impacted their workplace experiences as well.

Research suggests that women in general struggle with household and caring responsibilities (McKie et al., 2001) yet these issues are more pronounced for ethnic minority women due to the complex interactions of their race, ethnicity, religion and culture (Kamenou and Fearfull, 2006; Evans and Bowlby, 2000). The participants emphasised that family and cultural heritage are interconnected at various levels, because even though these women are living in a different country other than that of their ancestral origin, they are not entirely disconnected from their cultural heritage. This is reflected in the interview responses of most of the participants. For instance, a senior academic Bilquis recalled her childhood experiences, especially sharing responsibilities within her large family, and how it shaped her personality and her career choices.

> *'... being the eldest of the six siblings puts you in a lot of responsibilities, and you are a pseudo-mom from a childhood age… If you're a girl, there are lots of responsibilities placed on you from very early on... I still remember, I had to cook and do other household chores when I was young... I started off when others played with dolls and toys…'* (Bilquis, Age 43, Professor)

In the above example, the participant reflects on how she was burdened with domestic and caring responsibilities from when she was young, and specifically highlighted the role of gender and culture, such that girls are conditioned to be 'nurturers' from their early years. Such circumstances fostered resilience in her personality but at the same time, increased her patience to deal with unequal division of labour (excessive workload at home and at work) without showing resistance. Showunmi (2021) said that oftentimes, the silence of ethnic minority women in British workplaces can be mistaken as resilience. Thus, this behavioural tendency translated into her working experiences as well and contributed to her disadvantage.

8 participants shared insights regarding the traditional cultural norms that are responsible for social conditioning of Pakistani women to be submissive, putting others before themselves (see Aston et al., 2007). The participants discussed that those who do not share the same cultural heritage may view this submissive behaviour as a weakness and these women are likely to be taken advantage of. Former government employee Sitara emphasised that such traditional norms cultural expectations of being 'nice', 'submissive' and 'respectful' would translate into Pakistani women's personality traits and are reflected at the workplace as well; thereby, shaping their career experiences especially in how others treat them.

> *'All of those things are imbibed with our mother's milk… We've been brought up to be respectful…. We've been brought up to profit from the last thing that we have…. That can be misinterpreted by somebody who isn't okay with your culture …. (these) subtle differences in culture are deemed to be good manners and translate into the workplace….'* (Sitara, Age 65, Personal Development Coach)

13 out of 19 married women reported having supportive husbands, and that they had lesser worries about household chores, or their children's pick and drop from schools. Whilst these positive examples were noted, many women continued to feel overburdened with domestic chores and had limited support from their spouses and families. 5 participants shared their lived experiences of disadvantage because of having a more prestigious and higher-paying job as compared to their husbands and how it was considered odd within the Pakistani community. In the patriarchal culture of Pakistan, typically men take pride in being the breadwinners of the family and women are the non-economic contributors of the household. Hopkins and Gale (2009) suggest that in Muslim families, working women may be perceived as a public impression of disgrace that the husband is unable to adequately provide for his family. An interesting example is shared by Malaika, a 39-year-old professional working in an administrative role at a local school. She shared the account of a Pakistani friend of hers, who faced cultural consequences of having a more prestigious and higher-paying job than her husband.

> *'One of my friends… she hasn't worked since 2014, because when she started working… her salary was more than her husband's salary…. That came as a disadvantage for her…. Her husband wasn't willing to support her …'* (Malaika, Age 39, Administrative Assistant)

In this example, the financial independence of the participant's friend had surpassed her husband's earnings, and it seemed to go against the patriarchal family settings. As a result, the husband denied supporting his wife's career and she had to make a difficult choice between her career and marriage.

An interesting dimension of cultural influences reported by the participants is the assumption that women's education and employment should be aligned with the disciplines that further strengthen the same old generational cycle of male dominance. An example is Asma who works as an Associate Professor in the field of engineering. She shared that she had supportive parents, but her relatives were disapproving of her choice of subjects. She recalled experiencing the burden of cultural stereotypes from within her extended family when she chose to pursue studies in engineering; a traditionally male-dominated field of work. Following is an interesting account from her college days, when she was deciding upon which subjects to choose.

> *'…when I chose engineering, my uncles… were both shocked and they thought my parents were crazy… So, my father's brother brought a whole brochure on Computer Science… and according to him … as a girl, you shouldn't really be doing engineering…. because… It's not for women …. Computer science is an upcoming field. You can sit in the house (and do it). Meanwhile my mother's brother… He said to me… maybe she should just do architecture…. Because apparently that's the thing in Pakistan that girls do… They looked at my parents, and they said, you guys are completely out of touch… you are making the wrong decision…..'* (Asma, Age 50, Associate Professor)

Although STEM careers are male-dominated across the UK, posing challenges for women in general (Smith, 2011) yet the barriers for ethnic minority women in choosing STEM careers can be far more intensified (Wong and Copsey-Blake, 2023). Interesting dynamics of culture and gender stereotypes and patriarchal family pressures are shown in the above example where the males from the extended family disapprove the 'foolish choice to study engineering', as it is a field for boys only. Interestingly, Kaur Rana et al. (1998) argued that British Pakistani professional women are pressured by their immediate families, extended families as well as by

the wider Pakistani community while pursuing senior roles. In the above example, both the paternal and maternal uncles showed worry about her freedom to choose; since her parents had allowed her to pick the subjects and career of her choice and asserted that the parents are 'out of touch' with Pakistani culture. These uncles represent the same generation as the participant's parents, yet the parents seem to be more open-minded to the idea of professional education and a promising career for their daughter, regardless of how distant it may seem from Pakistani culture. It is intriguing that despite coming from a low socioeconomic background, Asma's parents, especially her father (who was a PhD himself) made sure to provide his children with good education and careers without giving in to stereotypical cultural pressures. This added massively to the social and cultural capital of the participant as she grew up and depicts interesting dynamics of intergenerational and intra-generational negotiations within families regarding careers of Pakistani women. Similar battles with cultural stereotypes are reported by other participants as they were not easily permitted to pursue male-dominated STEM careers.

4 participants reported facing resistance from their parents and husbands when they had to travel internationally or relocate for work. For instance, a senior academic in a leadership role Mopet recalled the time when she decided to move to Indonesia for a leadership role in a British school there. Her parents were shocked at her decision to relocate, because she was not married (she is still single) and it is against the traditional Pakistani culture to send off unmarried daughters abroad unaccompanied. Following is an excerpt from her conversation:

> *'... I ended up going to that school in Jakarta…. I worked with grade 5… I had responsibility for maths leadership across the school…. That was a tough decision…. my parents were very much against it.... I think from a cultural perspective, that was quite a*

big thing to allow your daughter, who is not going away with her husband… to just to let her go…' (Mopet, Age 50, Lecturer)

In this example, despite the resistance, the participant was able to convince her parents and assumed a leadership role that she was offered in an international school abroad. This is a positive example of agency and determination which the Pakistani women tend to develop, as they are battling the pressures of cultural stereotypes and family expectations, especially while navigating their career journeys. At the same time, this was not the only pattern, as few participants shared examples where they had to conform to the cultural stereotypes and could not uphold their individual resistances against the patriarchal pressures. These cultural expectations often pose an unnecessary emotional burden for the Pakistani women, and they feel restricted to work towards their career aspirations. It was found that, especially for those participants who dealt with more rigid patriarchal families, there were intergenerational negotiations for their career aspirations.

In the light of the above example quotes, it is found that cultural stereotypes and patriarchal family backgrounds tend to influence the behaviours of second-generation Pakistani women in certain ways where they become submissive and polite as they are not expected to raise their voices or disagree with men. They tend to internalise submission towards patriarchy and demonstrate compliance with the status quo since their childhoods. Due to facing such cultural pressures, they learn to assume more responsibilities without resisting male dominance and routine injustices. Such tendencies are likely to make these women perceived as more compliant, therefore, exhibiting higher tolerance against workplace discrimination and microaggressions. However, there are many examples within the participants who are changing the narrative by raising their voices and resisting the male-dominated cultural norms, therefore, the cultural shift

towards non-submissive attitudes, resistance and agency in the second-generation women is evident in the participants as compared to the first-generation British Pakistani women (their mothers).

5.2. Discriminatory Experiences from Within the Pakistani Community

8 participants shared the lived experiences of discrimination from within the Pakistani community. This is a unique niche of discrimination, because so far, the reported discrimination has happened from the dominant population groups (White British and White Europeans) against the ethnic minority population (Pakistani women in this case). Whereas, in this scenario, the discrimination is from the Pakistanis towards the Pakistanis, therefore, making it an interesting nuance of discrimination. Following are some example quotes taken from the conversations with the participating women who shared this challenge.

Waheeda is a businesswoman in the hospitality industry and founded a women entrepreneurship initiative as well. She comes from a high-income traditional Pakistani family and lived in Central London all her childhood. She grew up in the liberal environment of the West in the 80's while adhering to traditional values at home. She recalled memories from her first job where she was working at a local bank in London with Pakistani men in the 1980's. She shared interesting accounts on how she was asked questions from Pakistani male colleagues about her efficiency to perform domestic chores, which resonates with patriarchal culture on one hand, and visibly transpiring into differential treatment on the other hand, especially while there are White female colleagues present in the same workplace.

> *'... if there was a meeting taking place…. we had [Gori girls] (meaning White girls in Urdu), and we had Asian girls…. but they would always tell me and Hina (who were the*

Asian Pakistani girls) to go and make tea…. and sort out the table… all this domestic stuff was always the tasks that were always allocated to us….' (Waheeda, Age 53, CEO)

The above example shows that the Pakistani women at work were treated like Pakistani women at home, and the Pakistani men could not take off the glasses of stereotypical roles associated with Pakistani women. Whereas they treated the White girls differently, and did not associate cooking and cleaning with them, like they did for the Pakistani women at work. The participant continued to elaborate this experience:

'… But we were actually the front desk staff.... we were working with technology…. we were working with money…. high volumes of money, hundreds and thousands of pounds….. So, we weren't dumb… but, when the doors were closed… and the back office was running… we would always be the ones who would be treated as... you know… 'The Domestics'... They would never ask the [Gori girl] (meaning White girl in Urdu) to make them a cup of tea… They won't ask a Gori girl to go to the post office…. But, we would be like the office runners… It was from Pakistani men….' (Waheeda, Age 53, CEO)

These quotes present an interesting example of intersectional discrimination as conceived by Crenshaw (1989) since these women are experiencing compounded discrimination because of their gender, race and ethnicity. Their racialised identities are intersecting with their gender placing them at a greater disadvantage to their White female colleagues. It is peculiar to observe that in this example, the perpetrator of such gender and racial discrimination are not White people or those with dominant racial identities, rather, it is Pakistani men with prejudiced behaviours, and those that they are targeting (very knowingly) share the same national origin, i.e. Pakistani women. The intersectional lens is helpful in understanding this experience as it is

communicating internalised notions of superior/inferior based on racialised constructions, combined with patriarchal values and perceptions of who has more power. Also, bearing in mind the cultural stereotypes, these practices of demeaning the roles of Pakistani women can be understood as negative social sanction and the disciplining of non-conformers. Essentially, it implies that these biased behaviours serve to disapprove of women who do not conform to traditional gender roles and do not fit with the cultural expectations. Therefore, the Pakistani men seem to use their patriarchal powers to enforce conformity, particularly targeting Pakistani women who pursue careers. At the same time, the existence of racial microaggressions is indicated in this example where the ethnic women at the workplace are given less meaningful roles since they are assumed to be less intelligent than their White colleagues (see Rollock, 2023) and often mistaken as the cleaners, secretaries or the boss's wives (Mahony and Weiner, 2020; Otaye-Ebede and Shaffakat, 2024). These experiences are common in the workplace where negatively racialised women are perceived to be fulfilling less desirable, subordinate positions.

It was reported by some participants that the Pakistani women would get an excessive workload as compared to the White women at work, especially when their managers were Pakistani men. The Pakistani women would be expected to stay late and work overtime, whereas, the White females would finish work and go home in time.

> *'We… the [Desi girls] (meaning Pakistani girls in Urdu) would always get the late-night shifts… The [Gori girls] (meaning White girls in Urdu) would go home at 5 o'clock, right….? But if there was work still needed to be done, we would be expected to stay late and finish it off…'* (Waheeda, Age 53, CEO)

Other participants shared similar experiences and how they felt unsupported at work by their male Pakistani bosses. They felt being taken for granted due to having similar ethnicity as the Pakistani male boss, instead of having any advantage of their managers being from the same ethnicity. It is found that the discriminatory experiences were not only perpetuated by Pakistani men, in fact Pakistani women were also reported to discriminate against other Pakistani women. Some of these participants expressed that due to their high career achievements; they were considered a misfit for the traditional image of being a 'good' Pakistani woman. Some women reported that the Pakistani housewives would try to diminish the career achievement of the Pakistani working women and would shy away from fully acknowledging their hard work and talents. An interesting instance is shared by Bilquis, a high-achieving professor who is working in leadership roles in local DEI networks as well. She shared how some Pakistani housewives in her social networks would pass negative comments about her successful career. One of her female Pakistani friends tried to attribute her success as an outcome of having fewer kids, or having a cooperative husband, and not because of her own competence.

> *'.... she once said, your husband is very good, that's why you are successful…. I said, yes, Alhamdullillah [meaning Thank God in Arabic, also typically used in casual Urdu conversations] ... She said, your children are very good… that's why you are able to do all this work… I said, yes, that is correct…. Finally, she said, you have three kids… that is why they are easy to look after…. I just have one kid, that is really difficult to look after…. I just looked at her, and laughed out loud… and I said, yeah, that's true… So (she was trying to prove that) it's not 'you'… everything around you is good…. where you are today, is because your husband is good, and your children are good….'* (Bilquis, Age 43, Professor)

It is evident from the above example that the comments made by the participant's female Pakistani friend are attempting to diminish her hard work and taking away the credit of her success. It appears as condescending and somewhat patronising towards the participant, and the participant could spot it. In response, she just laughed about it and did not resort to defending herself in this instance. Other participants highlighted the prevalent culture of unnecessary criticism in the Pakistani community, especially when others are excelling in their careers. It was reported to be a common practice in Pakistani communities to not acknowledge achievements of Pakistani women and find ways to criticise them for various reasons, so they could go back to their domestic lives. At the same time, it was noted that the Pakistani women who are trying to excel in their careers would feel demoralised by receiving negative remarks from within the Pakistani community, whether males or females. Some of the women reported receiving little to no support from their Pakistani networks for identifying job opportunities, or opportunities of personal and professional development.

Therefore, in the light of the above examples, it is shown that at times, Pakistani women are faced with discrimination and lack of cooperation from within the Pakistani community. This discriminatory behaviour is manifested in various ways by both Pakistani men and women and adds to the plethora of challenges for Pakistani women in their career journeys.

5.3. Social and Cultural Capital

Having social and cultural capital was highlighted as an important factor for career progression by 10 participants. The social and cultural capital and the absence thereof was discussed by these participants by narrating different circumstances, and how it can be an important determinant of enhanced career progression. It was found that the participants who came from higher-income

family backgrounds reported having better social and cultural capital which made it easier for them to secure their first jobs.

> *'I think I am one of those people who are aware of their privilege... Growing up, we didn't have financial problems, and we lived in our own house since my childhood…. I had an advantage cos of my British accent…. although I don't look British… but, the accent made it really easy for me to attend job interviews, and… blend in…'* (Wajeeha, Age 43, Environmental Analyst)

Similar experiences were reported by Sheneela who grew up in a high-income family and attended private school. Although she discussed the disadvantage experienced because of her racial background; on the other hand, she also acknowledged her social privilege, private schooling, the Cambridge-accent of English, and how this shaped up her social acceptance among her White peers in the world of corporate law.

> *'I went to private school…. That's already another advantage that a lot of Pakistanis don't have… That gave me the confidence, and the comfort, and the accent… I sound the way these corporate lawyers and private equity guys…. I sound palatable… So, initially they look at you, you might be brown, you might be a woman, you might be different… but then they hear me talk and they think… oh okay, this one's alright... This one's a Brit... She grew up in Cambridge… We can communicate with her…'* (Sheneela, Age 31, Lawyer)

She mentioned that her distinct English accent (Cambridge-accent as she named it) was noticed by other people and they made her aware of it as a privilege. She also highlighted the high level of achievement that came with her socioeconomic privilege and family support. Such

circumstances made her compatible with Whiteness and it was particularly useful for her to feel confident enough to pursue a new field of work (law) and having increased chances of success. At the same time, it is important to note that despite having social and cultural capital, the above two participants have reported experiences of racial microaggressions at their workplaces during the job interviews and application shortlisting processes.

The following example presents the opposite situation of having limited cultural and social capital where another participant Mahpara found it difficult to navigate her career. She came from a low socioeconomic background and did not have enough social connections or access to information. She shared the following thoughts regarding the lack of social and cultural capital, especially its impact on the early years of her career.

> *'I started my career when I was very young…. it's very hard, particularly when you've come from a poor, Pakistani kind of background…. and you are entering this very White world… so the cultural capital wasn't there…. I didn't have any networks…. now there's a lot of Muslim, South Asian networks you could probably go to… But back then, there wasn't…. I was working with a group of professors, and… they said, oh, this is like Cowboys and Indians… you're the Indian, and we are the Cowboys… and there's too many of us….. You know it was inappropriate language….'* (Mahpara, Age not known, Lecturer)

In the above example, it is evident that the participant felt unsupported due to having limited social and cultural capital. She shared how isolated she felt because she had entered the 'White space' as discussed by Bhopal (2022) and (2024) where the people in power were White and no one looked like her. She received racist remarks from her colleagues and managers, yet she did

not resist, because she was not sure how to deal with such situations. She was very young and felt intimidated by the existing power structures.

> *'... like I said, I started with no culture capital… there were no networks…. a very alien environment…. very hostile environment …. And I think hopefully with the younger generation, it'd be better… because… there's access to the internet, where you can seek advice… even if you don't have it within your own networks… or at work …'* (Mahpara, Age not known, Lecturer)

Similar experiences were shared by participants from low-income families as well. It is interesting to note that despite having limited social and cultural capital, and coming from low to middle socioeconomic families and working in workplaces dominated by Whites, the participants continued with pursuing their career aspirations owing to their self-motivation and resilience. The participant in the above example highlighted that it would have been much easier for her to navigate through her career journey had she possessed some sort of cultural and social capital.

Therefore, the barrier of social and cultural capital is discussed by 10 participants where they share their stories of possessing adequate or limited social and cultural capital and its implications on their career journeys. From the above quotes, it is evident that having social and cultural capital is an important aspect of career progression and the lack thereof may pose challenges like lack of self-confidence, lack of access to information, lack of support from social networks and uncertainty in navigating career-related challenges. While the benefits of having social and cultural capital are notable, on the other hand, it is significant to highlight that possessing social and cultural capital did not ensure equitable treatment at the workplace for

these participants and they continued to experience exclusionary treatment. The unequal workplace dynamics were found to protect the White identities more than the ethnic minority women, even when they possess some degree of privilege (for instance, social and cultural capital).

5.4. Lack of Role Models

Having a lack of role models is a barrier to career progression mentioned by 9 participants. This barrier was mentioned by women who were in senior as well as junior positions in their organisations; therefore, it was experienced by a wide range of the participating women, and also noted in the literature (Kalra et al., 2009). It is important to note that the participants were looking for ethnic minority and/or Pakistani role models, and not just White role models who do not share the same racialised identities with them. For instance, Naima is a *hijabi* woman based at a local university. She encountered the challenge of not having enough ethnic role models whom she could reach out for career guidance and inspiration. Following is an excerpt from her conversation:

> *'... I didn't really know what I was doing…. not really having access to role models…. for career guidance… and not really having access to people that had been through something similar, who could help me navigate the space in the best way….'* (Naima, Age 51, People and Organisational Development Coordinator)

Naima spoke about the under-representation of Pakistani women in higher education institutions in the UK, and that it can be lonely for *hijabi* Pakistani women to be surrounded by those who do not look like her.

> *'Working in higher education I'm yet to meet anyone that's from a very similar background to myself….'* (Naima, Age 51, People and Organisational Development Coordinator)

Sheneela highlighted the absence of role models in the field of corporate law, while highlighting the fact that very few Pakistani people decide to join this specific field of work. According to her, those Pakistanis who choose the profession of law are likely to go into family law or immigration law and hardly any Pakistanis are to be seen in corporate law. In fact, she shared that most British Pakistani people take up typical professions like healthcare, taxi driving, food and catering. She expressed the following thoughts:

> *'...I would look around the room and… There was no one who looked like me…. There were barely any role models who were brown…. And there's no role models for them (the young newcomers in the field) …. This is definitely a huge barrier, and that's incredibly frustrating… I'm constantly looking for one… Not just Pakistani, but brown role models, ethnic minority role models…'* (Sheneela, Age 31, Lawyer)

It is found that once the ethnic minority women are hired in senior roles, they feel lonely, excluded and isolated due to the lack of representation of other ethnic minority women (see Bhopal, 2022). Mahpara works at a local university in a senior leadership position and shared that she has hardly seen any Pakistani women or Black women as her colleagues on the senior hierarchical level. Most of her colleagues are White and she views this loneliness in leadership journey as a major challenge of career progression. While this emphasises upon the importance of hiring more ethnic minority women in senior roles, it also indicates that this limited

representation is the output of institutional and systemic racism which is inclined to favour the existing power structures that serve White privilege.

> *'And certainly, at my level there aren't any BAME women…. Well, there might be… but not the ones that I know that are at my level… because I'm quite senior now… but there are very few of them around…. It's very hard to try and get advice about how to progress, when you haven't got many people who have been in that situation……'* (Mahpara, Age unknown, Lecturer)

In the above example, Mahpara has mentioned another ethnic minority woman whose progress was also blocked at the lecturer level like herself. This is interesting, yet concerning that the only woman of colour that she could relate to has a similar type of progression challenge of not being able to make it to professor level for a long period of time. This indicates the emergence of a pattern of institutional barriers and intersectional identities as a disadvantage for Pakistani academics working in the British universities and is also discussed by Maddrell et al. (2019) and Bhopal (2022). It also indicates that ethnic minority employees are often token-hires (Kanter, 1977) in senior roles in academia to legitimise the DEI commitment of the university. The research by Bhopal (2024a) explains how the notion of interest convergence from CRT is applicable in such scenarios where universities hire a non-White employee in a senior position and then use it to the benefit of the university in upholding White privilege. Not only does it sanction a positive image of the university in its so-called commitment to social justice, it also serves to feed institutional racism.

The similar pattern is evident in experiences of those participants who are not from academia. For instance, Salmah is a clinical hypnotherapist who has shared the frustration of not having

enough role models of Pakistani origin. She elaborated that Indian people are doing much better in the job market as compared to Pakistani people, and this is confirmed by the government statistics (ONS, 2018, 2022). She shared the following thoughts:

> *'... it's because of a lack of role models... If you see the surge of Indian people getting on top of the big companies... the CEO's.... like in Google.... I think the CEO of Pepsi was an Indian woman.... So, they have changed that paradigm in just one generation.... They have done a lot of hard work and were educated... It's not that Pakistanis are not educated, but to get to the top of an international organisation, there is a glass ceiling……'* (Salmah, Age 58, Clinical Hypnotherapist)

In the above example, the participant shared how she viewed British Indians as the 'model minority' who seem more integrated into the leadership in British workplaces. Salmah felt that the Indian employees had more role models from the same ethnic identity, and they are exhibiting themselves as role models for their fellow Indians because they have made it to the top. She gave examples of Priti Patel and Rishi Sunak who held government offices, whereas, for Pakistani women, there is a dearth of role models who they could look up to and seek inspiration. A notable aspect of her conversation was highlighting that Indians are breaking the 'glass ceiling' and securing leadership roles because they engage in alcohol-related socialising and go to the pubs to socialise with the White colleagues, which the Pakistani employees tend to avoid (due to their religious beliefs). Here the notion of 'tokenism' (the symbolic hiring of marginalised groups to give the image of equality and social justice) is important to understand the presence of very few ethnic minority women in decision-making roles (Kanter, 1977; Baxter, 2012). Allen and Allen (2020) noted the example of Baroness Sayeeda Warsi whose parents were Pakistani migrants in the UK and her father was a bus driver. She had experienced exclusion and

was the tokenistic 'diversity hire' in David Cameron's government. Similarly, there are recent examples within the Labour Party of expelling and excluding candidates from Pakistani background due to their pro-Palestine political views. The idea of interest convergence from CRT is relevant here since the Pakistani people seem to hold the positions of power as long as they are compliant and not threatening the existing White-dominant power structures.

Therefore, it is evident from the above examples, that lack of representation of ethnic minority women and Pakistani women in decision-making roles is a vicious cycle that results in having a lack of role models that Pakistani women can look up to. The ones who are beginning to make it to decision-making positions often feel lonely in their roles and still struggle amongst the White majority on the top. These are mostly ‘tokenistic hires’ who are expected to be compliant with the White cultural values and dominant power structures so that they are not threatening White supremacy (see Bhopal, 2024a). This lack of representation is crucial to highlight since it is an output of structural racism and patriarchy while perpetuating Whiteness.

5.5. Enhancing Career Progression

Identifying coping strategies to deal with the challenges of career progression is a key objective of this research. The participants were asked about their coping strategies when they were faced with challenges during their employment journeys and their motivation to continue seeking progression in their careers. The idea was to gauge the perspectives of the participants who had shared the lived experience of struggles in their careers and let this be an opportunity where they are able to describe their own ways to navigate through the career challenges. This discussion evoked a rich set of responses from the participating women, ranging from what worked best for them, to the suggestions to overcome these challenges. The responses are organised into

sub-themes including motivation and resilience, social networks, and coaching and mentoring. It is important to note that the strategies identified by participants were primarily based on their lived experiences of career progression; hence, the intention of this theme is not to present these coping strategies as the solutions or enablers of career progression for British Pakistani women. Instead, these coping strategies and solutions should be read as their lived experiences of navigating the career progression challenges and are diagrammatically presented in figure 5.2.

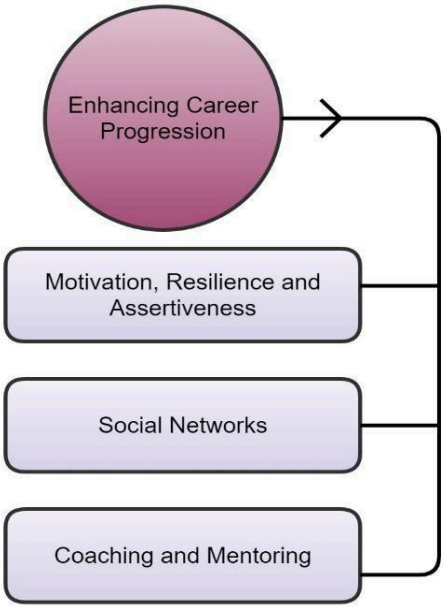

Figure 5.2. Coping Strategies of British Pakistani Women to Enhance Career Progression

5.5.1. Motivation and Resilience

16 participating women shared their accounts of exhibiting self-motivation and resilience as their coping strategies to overcome the barriers to career progression they were faced with. Despite the existence of multi-faceted barriers discussed in the earlier themes of institutional and

sociocultural barriers, these women did not give up and continued with their professional lives by virtue of their resilience and strong work ethic. Following are some notable quotes from the conversations:

Ruby works as a teaching assistant in a local primary school. Although she is qualified as an accountant, she was unable to find the right job for her, due to multiple challenges like racial discrimination at work and excessive caring responsibilities. She reported experiencing restricted career progression most of her life and continued to try and cope up with the challenges by being focused on finding new opportunities and by virtue of her will power.

> *'... You have to sacrifice a lot… you have to give something to get something. You can't complain that you are tired of the work, your will power matters a lot. Once you make up your mind, God gives you the power to do it.'* (Ruby, Age 50, Teaching Assistant)

Mopet is a *non-hijabi* lecturer who experienced various barriers in her career progression for a long time while having unsupportive managers and colleagues. She shared examples about dealing with difficult people at work who would show overt and covert racism towards her, but she tried to ignore any distractions. She elaborated on how her colleagues felt intimidated because of her good on-job performance and developed a sense of competitiveness especially because she was a woman of colour. She navigated through her career journey with her dedication, self-confidence and resilience, even though she faced challenges of masculine and racialised organisational culture for a long time.

> *'.... they had over 100 applications for one post…. I was appointed because of my background work that I was doing nationally on climate work…. My colleague saw me presenting, and obviously that filled the gaps… for them… in order to see what I bring to*

the table... and like I said, honing-in on my craft, knowing what my worth is… and moving forward with that regardless of what's happening in the background…. Inevitably that always becomes background noise....' (Mopet, Age 50, Lecturer)

Most participants shared how the patriarchal culture they grew up in had shaped their personalities to be submissive, less controlling and 'nice'. They had seen their mothers be even more submissive while the men of the family often dominated in the households. Thus, most women felt that they lacked assertiveness except for 3 women in leadership roles who had learnt to be blunt in their communication and exercise the power that came with their positions. For instance, Mahpara is a lecturer who shared her experience of being more assertive and less compliant as she became older. She faced many challenges in her career journey, for example, delayed promotions, racial bullying and harassment at the workplace. In the following quote, she shares her thoughts in this regard.

'... as you get older… I think as a woman you become more assertive and less compliant…. So, I think after about 10 or 12 years in the institution, I started to become a little bit more vocal about what I need….' (Mahpara, age unknown, Lecturer)

The participants shared how they were expected to be less intelligent because of their ethnic, racial, gender and religious identities. This is interesting to observe because it reconciles the most crucial markers of these women's intersectional identities in interaction with the masculine and racialised organisational expectations. The participants shared many examples where they resorted to agency and resilience to deal with stereotypical expectations in the workplace. For a highly accomplished woman of Pakistani origin, Bilquis had expressed the need to act

unintelligent before her male colleagues, whenever she was appointed in a senior role at her workplace, and it happened quite a few times that she was progressing on to senior roles.

> '*It really hurt them to see me as their boss, and I had to try and not hurt their egos so I could get things done. Honestly, I had to use many strategies to make it work… At the end of the day, it all comes down to your self drive and motivation to keep going…'* (Bilquis, Age 43, Professor)

Since most of her colleagues and subordinates would be males, she would find it quite challenging to deal with the resistance from the male ego, which demonstrated itself in various ways. She shared that she was expected to be unintelligent, uninspiring and somewhat dumb, therefore, she did not fit in with the expectation of most of the males at her workplace. There were no ethnic women on the same hierarchical level as herself, and she hardly had any allies at work which made her professional life even more isolating. It is her personal motivation and resilience that kept her strong and helped her cope up with the complex challenges of workplace inequalities. She shared the importance of having personal motivation to never give up and keep trying to find solutions.

> *'... Either I can sit and cry, or I could continue to do what I do... Think about the solutions that we need to have... If you're applying for a job, and you don't get it… then apply again…. Learn from the mistakes…. Don't think that the panel is racist… I think what you could do is take up that information, make sure you pick up on those points and apply again… Keep doing it until you are successful....'* (Bilquis, Age 43, Professor)

Hence, it is observed that the participants are often navigating the challenges in their careers owing to their self-motivation and resilience. The participants who expressed this coping strategy

shared using these skills in their respective ways as and when they would be deemed applicable to their situations. This reveals that while at most times, there are insufficient support systems available at work or at home for the participating women, they continue dealing with their career-related challenges owing to their passion, drive and resilience.

5.5.2. Building Social Networks

The importance of having social networks as a key coping strategy for addressing barriers to career progression was emphasised by 14 participating women. The relationship between women's social networks and career advancement has the attention of researchers (Khattab et al., 2020). However, research focusing on the role of social networks in career progression often does so by drawing on experiences of relatively privileged women (e.g. Khattab et al., 2020). For ethnic minority women, the role of social networks is arguably even more relevant for both accessing the labour market and advancing their careers (Kalra et al., 2009).

Most participants suggested having social networks for enhanced career progression and shared examples when their social networks of friends and colleagues had supported them at various stages in their careers by listening to their problems, offering advice, referring them to employers, and identifying opportunities. These participants seemed aware of the value of having social networks both inside and outside the workplace and utilising these networks for career progression. The idea of having social networks outside the workplace was particularly perceived as a positive strength in the face of workplace exclusion.

> *'I think none of us can do this on our own. We need other people to support us... We need to recognize who did support us…'* (Gulalai, Age 62, Professor)

Many participants seemed very aware of the positive role social networks can play internally within the organisation. They associated their social networks at the workplace with feelings of trust and comfort; and they seemed to place social networks on a high pedestal for their career progression. Participants with more social networking opportunities had more social connections and they even expressed that their social networks helped them cope up with various challenges at work. Mopet shared her challenging career journey and emphasised on the supportive role of her limited social network.

> *'... another key aspect was having my advocate, knowing who I could trust within the workspace…. Obviously, I had a wider network outside of my workspace, but… actually, it is really important to have people within your workspace that you can vent to...'* (Mopet, Age 50, Lecturer)

The above example shows that the participant is emphasising on the usefulness of having social networks inside and outside the workplace and how they can be utilised to the advantage of Pakistani women's careers. The women shared instances when they were dealing with difficult managers or serious issues like workplace harassment and in such problematic circumstances, their social networks and allies inside the workplace helped them by pointing in the right direction (towards the HR support services) and providing information about the systems of support that are available for the employees.

Some of the participants highlighted the importance of having social networks and connections outside the workplace and not being confined to the social networking within the workplace only. This strategy of fostering social networks and connections with people outside the workplace has proved to be a useful networking technique for many participants. They

mentioned networking events like conferences and workshops where they would engage with external contacts that proved very useful for finding new opportunities outside the workplace and earning respect within their workplace as a result.

> *'I've had conversations with colleagues of colour… who have advised me to circumnavigate…. Go external rather than internal… and then the internal recognition will follow, which I think is definitely what has happened…. I've gone moth…. external engagement, high profile conferences, collaborating internationally where I can… building my own network……..'* (Maya, Age 36, Lecturer)

At the same time, the problem of alcohol-related socialising emerged as a major concern for the participants. Although this barrier is already examined in the section on religious discrimination; however, it is important to expand on this aspect of social networking while discussing these women's coping strategies for enhanced career progression. This is because Pakistani women have expressed the need to navigate around this challenge, and still try to be a part of workplace socialising with the aim to remain relevant and included. In the presence of the existing pressures on Pakistani women to engage in alcohol-related socialising, most participants reported that they usually drink Coca Cola or any non-alcoholic beverage when they are in social gatherings and opt for vegetarian or *Halal* options on the menu, if available. Whereas it was reported by one participant that she gave into the pressures of alcohol-related socialising to remain included in the workplace networking. This shows that the majority of Pakistani women are making efforts to maintain their social networks at the workplace and are not willing to negotiate their religious beliefs that restrict them from consuming alcohol. Here, the notion of 'glass chains' as introduced by Arifeen and Gatrell (2019) becomes pertinent which explains that the Pakistani women feel bound by invisible glass chains to their religion and become their 'ethical selves'

while the pull of these invisible glass chains compels them to resist specific opportunities of career progression. This is helpful to understand why Pakistani women often do not engage in alcohol-related socialising for their career progression and may resort to alternate strategies for social networking which is more in line with their religious identities.

It is interesting to note that some of the participants were open to the ideas of developing their social networks and allyship with people from different backgrounds, and different religions. They expressed not being confined to socialising with Pakistani or Muslim people only; rather they showed openness towards fostering social connections with different people regardless of their Muslimness or Pakistani heritage. However, these participants also expressed how important it was for them to observe their boundaries of religion and culture while socialising. For instance, 35-year-old Zaryaab working in a local charity organisation felt that it is important to socialise with her colleagues outside of the workplace, in after-work hours. She sees it as an important aspect of bonding with her colleagues and making allies, leading to more professional opportunities, therefore, even if she does not drink alcohol, still she can be a part of the social gatherings in her own ways. Here, the work of Arifeen and Gatrell (2019) becomes relevant again, as this participant is engaging in after-work socialising, while being her 'ethical self'.

> *'... So, if you are not actually going out with the team socially, in a non-work atmosphere; then you are losing out…. It's important that you might be going for after-work drinks, or you might be going to socials that are being organised… But being seen, being open and involving yourself, (not taking part in anything that you don't want to, of course…) but making sure that you are including yourself in these social activities, this can be very important...'* (Zaryaab, Age 35, Fundraising Executive)

This example can be seen as an important aspect of social networking shared by some participants, i.e. having allies from the White population, both inside and outside the workplace. It was highlighted by these women that having social contacts and allies from similar and dissimilar backgrounds was equally important for feeling well-supported in the face of career challenges. An interesting example was shared by Salmah who works with clients publicly for hypnotherapy sessions. She finds social networking to be a crucial side of business outreach and clientele, yet she shared that most of her clients are women and men who look like her and probably come from ethnic backgrounds too. She shared that she offers services for everyone, regardless of their ethnic and racial backgrounds, however, she has very few White people as her clients. She described her physical appearance as a visible indicator of her racial and ethnic identity, and how this poses an invisible barrier in extending her social networks.

> *'... Now in networking… to get clients, there's an invisible barrier…. She doesn't look like us… her accent is different... In my clients, if you see…. 2 out of 10 would be White people….'* (Salmah, Age 58, Clinical Hypnotherapist)

The above quote shows that Salmah feels disadvantaged in expanding her social networks with those who have a different racial identity. She shared how she continued to work with clients of similar ethnicity and racial backgrounds, yet she is keen to have White clients as well so she can offer her specialist services to those who need, regardless of the colour of their skin. She experienced hesitation in response, while trying to socialise with White people, as they would not immediately connect with her as compared to other ethnic minorities. Nonetheless, this has not discouraged her from attending social events for continued social networking.

Therefore, it is understood that having good social networks inside and outside the workplace proved to be an effective strategy for the participating women to navigate their respective challenges of career progression. In this regard, most participants shared different scenarios where they turned to their social networks for support, both inside and outside the workplace as a coping mechanism. The participants highlighted the compelling need for Pakistani women to reduce their reliance on internal networks only and continue seeking support from social networks outside the workplace as well.

5.5.3. Coaching and Mentoring

The role of coaching and mentoring has been highlighted as an important coping strategy to overcome the barriers to career progression for 12 participating women. Having appropriate guidance, mentoring, situational advice and career coaching are some of the ways which proved helpful for these participants to navigate their employment journeys, while making progress at the same time. Mentoring is recognised as an important coping strategy to address the career-related barriers for ethnic minority women who seek to secure leadership roles (Kalra et al., 2009). It was noted in the responses that the coaching and mentoring provisions in organisations were not easily accessible by the participants, and there was a lot of effort involved in informally identifying and accessing coaching and mentoring outside their workplace. Only 2 women in senior leadership roles had the employer's support to seek mentoring, however, the remaining participants sought coaching and mentoring facilities for themselves without any support from employers, in their own time.

At the same time, most participants described that the coaching and mentoring which they resorted to, was often ignorant of their complex career-related challenges due to their

sociocultural backgrounds. They would often get advice that was more apt with the careers of White women, and did not consider the challenges of intersectional identities of these women. A few women shared that they were shocked about how easy their White mentors had made it sound, like they were really unaware of the basic challenges for Pakistani women. They ended up changing their mentors as a result. Therefore, considering their ethnic identities, the career coaching and mentoring that was normally accessible for these women was not tailored according to their peculiar needs. For instance, a senior academic Gulalai shared the importance of having career coaching for ethnic minority women in academia that would especially address the racial and religious challenges for female academics and how it was largely absent in the UK universities. She shared the following thoughts:

> *'A lot of research, academic progress and progression happens on unwritten rules…. Things that are not necessarily spelt out for (ethnic) people…. You need a mentor to actually tell you this is the way to do it….'* (Gulalai, Age 62, Professor)

A few participants expressed that they would have chosen different careers if they would have access to career coaching and mentoring in the early years of their careers. Beenish works as a Marketing Content Specialist for a local cosmetics company. She had worked in a private consultancy firm specialising in study abroad programmes. She felt like she was not fit for that job, and only did it because her uncle owned the company, and it was the first opportunity that came her way. She shared that not having career guidance and mentoring at the right time was a big setback that she experienced.

> *'Had I had the opportunity of being with a mentor or somebody mentoring me, I would not have chosen that career because that was clearly not for me….'* (Beenish, Age 40, Marketing Content Specialist)

Positive experiences of coaching and mentoring were shared by some participants especially when they were faced with challenges of managing excessive office workload, being assigned unpromotable tasks, inflexible working hours, and dealing with exclusionary behaviours from colleagues. Some participants shared that they had learnt about salary negotiations because of their mentors who pushed them to not settle for lesser remuneration than the prevalent salary scales and encouraged them to negotiate. Although these women felt shy to talk about money because of their cultural tendencies, still they managed to do so because of the guidance of their mentors. Sitara expressed that having mentors who believed in her left a positive impact on career progression by boosting her confidence level.

> *'... if you have a good mentor, who does have confidence in you… (and) he has more confidence in you than you have in yourself, that's a great thing...'* (Sitara, Age 65, Personal Development Coach)

The participants emphasised on the need to have customised coaching and mentoring provisions that would understand the Pakistani cultural dynamics and offer advice in the light of such sensitivities. These participants shared about the ineffectiveness of such coaching and mentoring programs that would not consider the cultural and family related challenges faced by the Pakistani women. The need for culturally sensitive mentoring that acknowledges the exclusionary experiences of women is emphasised by Bhopal (2019) for ethnic minority women

in academia. Similarly, the participants highlighted the serious lack of ethnic minority mentors and role models from the same cultural heritage in the fields of law and STEM.

It is understood from the above examples that having mentoring, coaching and career guidance is found to be an important coping strategy for overcoming barriers to career progression for the participating women. Having career coaching has proven useful for these women to address the problems they have encountered at their workplaces. At the same time, these women reported not finding enough ethnic minority mentors and coaches both inside and outside their workplaces which made it hard for them to get relatable advice and guidance on their career progression, in all stages of their careers. Since the coaching and mentoring provisions within the organisations were not easily accessible for these women, it was usual for them to seek coaching and mentoring outside their organisations, and often from White mentors who would be unable to understand the cultural nuances that might shape their careers.

5.6. Summary

In the light of the above findings, it is evident that there are various sociocultural barriers to career progression for British Pakistani women, out of which the family responsibilities and cultural stereotypes were the most notable challenges. Unequal division of labour at home is found to restrict the career journeys of these women, especially when they are performing family and caring responsibilities, and battling with the workplace challenges at the same time. It is found that the demands of patriarchal culture to be submissive and agreeable made these women more tolerant towards discrimination and racism at work. Not having enough ethnic role models was reported as a key barrier to career progression and often resulted in loneliness at the workplace and insufficient career guidance. At the same time, challenges like social and cultural

capital and discrimination from within the Pakistani community were found to be experienced by fewer women.

The findings also present the key coping strategies adapted by the participants when they encountered multiple barriers to their career progression. By using their self-motivation and resilience, building social networks, customised mentoring and coaching experiences, these women were able to navigate the complex challenges of career progression. Some of the participants successfully made it to senior positions in their organisations by using these strategies and finding their own solutions. The complexity of the barriers to career progression and the coping strategies of the participating women is further elaborated in detail in the following chapter where the institutional and sociocultural challenges are discussed in the light of intersectional identities of the participating women.

Chapter VI - Discussion

This chapter summarises the key findings of this research and presents a discussion on the lived experiences of key barriers faced by second-generation British Pakistani women in their career progression. It captures the essence of the findings by analysing them in the light of existing literature, and theoretical framework, combining it with the researcher's own voice. In doing so, the application of the theoretical lens of Critical Race Theory and intersectionality is specifically highlighted. This chapter also narrates key coping strategies of the participating women to deal with the challenges of career progression in reaching decision-making roles.

6.1. Career Progression at the Intersections of Gender, Race and Religion

The findings of this research suggest that second-generation British Pakistani women encounter complex, inter-connected and multi-layered challenges during their career journeys. Arifeen and Gatrell (2019) elaborate the careers of British Pakistani women managers and cite the argument by Ken (2008) to explain that intersectional identities are not just multi-layered and inter-connected in ways that they can be pulled apart easily like layers. In fact, they explain intersectional identities by giving the example of a cake which is made up of different ingredients like sugar, butter, eggs. Once the ingredients are mixed and the cake is ready, ‘it is very difficult to tell each ingredient apart’ (Arifeen and Gatrell, p.159). The intersectional identity markers of British Pakistani women are just the same, that it is difficult to pull apart one identity marker from the other, thus, they are constantly negotiating their identities in sociocultural and institutional contexts.

Thus, the barriers to career progression for British Pakistani women can be better understood when family and culture related challenges are simultaneously viewed with barriers pertinent to the employers and workplace culture, especially problems like Islamophobia, gender and racial inequalities. Often the challenges are multi-layered and intertwined with each other and there is a wealth of examples in the interview findings which show that it is difficult to pick out and separate one layer of disadvantage from the other.

Many studies highlight the social and cultural challenges of career progression for ethnic minority women and Pakistani women, like family responsibilities, educational qualifications, parental socioeconomic backgrounds, lack of English language skills (for instance Dale, 2002; Dale et al., 2002; Dale and Ahmed, 2010; Aston et al., 2007; Zwysen and Longhi, 2018). Although these variables are significant in their careers, this research has found that the most critical challenges of British Pakistani women's career progression were not related to English language skills, educational qualifications, socioeconomic status, or family responsibilities. In fact, the most pertinent barriers of career progression for these women arise from broader systemic inequalities.

6.2. Empirical Evidence and Existing Literature – Locating the Problem

In order to capture a summary of the key findings, the following table 6.1 is developed which shows the themes and sub-themes from the primary data and its connection to the relevant literature. The researcher's interpretation of the findings are presented alongside each sub-theme to demonstrate how the empirical evidence connects with literature at various points.

Sub-Themes and Codes	Connection to Literature	Researcher's Interpretation of Findings
Organisational Barriers to Career Progression		
Exclusionary Workplace Culture		
Religious Discrimination and Islamophobia	Carr (2015) explained that Muslim communities are living with a distinct form of racism that targets them because of their Muslimness. Ahmed and Gorey (2023) confirm the barrier that Muslim women are faced with three to four times more discrimination in employment as any other minority group. Stevenson et al. (2017) explain how Muslim women at British organisations were made to feel guilty to apologise and feel responsible whenever there were some terrorist attacks anywhere in the world.	The participants with hijab experienced discrimination in hiring, opportunities of professional development, and in job promotions. Their overt identities were always in question since they projected visible markers of Muslimness which made them vulnerable at the workplace. Women who removed their hijab present a notable example here, as it is found that they experienced racism because of their appearance (visible Muslimness), not necessarily their belief, which remained unchanged even after removing the hijab.
Gendered and Racialised Workplace Culture	McGregor-Smith Review (2017) found evidence of inequalities in the workplace for ethnic minorities which sheds light on the impact of their intersectionality on employment outcomes. Woodhead et al. (2022) discuss racism and unconscious bias at work which impacts representation of ethnic minority women in senior roles.	Both overt and covert racism is found in the lived experiences of the participants. Racial microaggressions and covert discrimination is experienced more frequently by these women in workplaces where there are clear anti-discrimination regulations. They are mostly faced with masculine and racialised workplace culture regardless of the field of work, which perpetuates their exclusion.
Alcohol-Related Socialising	Arifeen and Gatrell (2020) shared that there is a prominent culture of alcohol-related socialising in British workplaces and highly educated professional Pakistani women tend to abstain from such social networking and as a result lose out on opportunities of professional development due to the 'glass chains' that they are attached to.	The participants expressed the invisible pressures to engage in alcohol-related socialising which conflicts with their religious identity. Although they avoided drinking alcohol, yet they felt compelled to attend such social events so they could still get promotions and opportunities. It is unfortunate when progression decisions are taken informally based upon the White 'fit' of the employee, instead of having transparent processes.
Imposter Syndrome	Afshar (2012) shared that even when Muslim women are highly accomplished professionals, they struggle with low self-confidence and low self-worth. Murray (2023) explains that the lack of sense of belonging can easily translate to imposter syndrome and can discourage ethnic women from applying for managerial and leadership roles.	It is found that participants often faced imposter syndrome and were discouraged to apply for senior roles. When they are constantly made to feel like they are the 'outsiders' and the 'others', it is hard to avoid low morale and poor self-image, especially when the organisational systems are working against them, all while upholding White supremacy.
Discriminatory Organisational Processes		

Hiring and Recruitment	Li and Heath (2018) discussed that ethnic minority women are disadvantaged in the job market during hiring and recruitment, job promotions and in securing opportunities and are often faced with the prejudice of the employer. Kang et al. (2016) argued that in order to overcome the low response rates to job applications, Asians use the technique of resume "whitening" which involves removing experiences from the resume that signify minority status, and such techniques increased call-back rates significantly. Latu et al. (2015) discussed that sometimes job candidates may have to go through interviews where questions of personal nature may be asked that are loaded with gender and racial biases.	Most participants experienced discrimination and employers' bias in the different stages of hiring, like job applications, short-listing, interviews. Either it was their non-White name, or their visible racial and religious identities, they were hardly spared from hiring discrimination. Some *hijabi* women were rejected after they appeared in job interviews and others changed their names to shorter and more English-sounding names to be compatible with Whiteness, yet they could not avoid racism because of their skin colour. Usually the White candidates with similar qualifications would be hired for those jobs.
Promotions and Opportunities	Safi (2010) highlights the issue that employer discrimination and prejudice is likely to create hurdles in access to fair opportunities at work especially for ethnic minority women. Bhopal (2019) highlights that ethnic minority women academics have limited prospects of getting permanent contracts and reaching professorship and senior management roles in academia.	Regardless of the profession, majority participants of this research experienced delayed or denied promotions and reported racism as the root cause. These women continued to work harder to secure senior roles but the White leadership would promote only White employees who were quicker to climb up the career ladders, upholding White privilege, and excluding the Pakistani women.
DEI Practices at Work	Dobbin and Kalev (2016) argue that DEI initiatives in workplaces are mostly a 'tick-box exercise' and have no real impact in addressing discrimination and bias against marginalised employees. Bhopal (2020a) shared that the Race Equality Charter has failed to address racial inequalities in British higher education and it is merely a tick-box exercise to make the universities appear committed to social justice.	The existing DEI agendas in the workplaces are found to have limited effectiveness in addressing intersectional discrimination and workplace microaggressions. The main purpose of these initiatives is to have a positive image about diversity and inclusion and to secure more funding from the donors.
Lack of Trust in Mechanisms of Reporting Incidents at Work	Bhopal (2020a) explains that in UK universities, racism and exclusionary behaviours at work are often ignored by the managers and the complaints made by ethnic minority women academics are not taken seriously.	It was found that the participants experienced fear of judgement and biased outcomes from the complaints they had made about exclusionary experiences at work.
Sociocultural Barriers to Career Progression		
Family Responsibilities and Cultural Stereotypes	Arifeen and Gatrell (2013) highlighted that Pakistani women are disadvantaged at work because of the patriarchal home environments which expects them to conform to cultural stereotypes and refrain from aiming high for their careers.	Although these women were expected to assume most of the domestic workload, the pressures were way less than their mothers' generation which they managed with their family's support. Due to patriarchal culture which expects Pakistani women to be submissive, they developed higher

	Aston et al. (2007) discussed that the cultural expectations from Pakistani women are very loud where they are expected to fit into the stereotypical caring and domestic roles.	tolerance towards male dominance and having greater workload since their childhoods, eventually building higher tolerance towards workplace inequalities.
Discriminatory Experiences From Within Pakistani Community	Tariq and Syed (2017) share that Muslim women encounter discrimination, not just from White colleagues, but also from ethnic minority Muslim men, which shows how their intersectional identities shape their workplace experiences; especially the intersections of religion and gender.	It is found that some women experienced discriminatory behaviours from their Pakistani colleagues, especially if they were Pakistani men in positions of power. This shows simultaneity of the interactions of gender and ethnicity with patriarchal culture in shaping their workplace experiences. The Pakistani men at work attempted to discipline those women who deviated from the traditional patriarchal culture.
Social and Cultural Capital	Li and Heath (2018) argue that many of the first generation ethnic minorities struggle because of lack of English language proficiency, disrupted social networks and live in deprived local neighbourhoods. Kadushin (2012) discusses that young individuals frequently rely on their parental social connections to obtain work, and these networks seem to be more beneficial for those from a higher socioeconomic background.	It is observed that unlike first-generation, the second-generation Pakistani women did not struggle with English language proficiency. They did not rely on their parental social connections for work because there were none that they could make use of, due to the persistent generational aspect of 'othering' and living in low-socioeconomic neighbourhoods.
Lack of Role Models	Kalra et al. (2009) explain that there is a serious lack of role models for ethnic minority women staff seeking career progression in the UK healthcare sector. Krook and Nugent (2016) and Kele et al. (2022) shared that ethnic minority women are mostly absent from senior positions in the UK.	The lack of having ethnic and Pakistani role models was strongly felt by these women especially because the existing White and non-White women in power do not share the same struggles as the Pakistani women and have limited relevance to these women's career journeys.
Coping Strategies for Enhancing Career Progression		
Motivation and Resilience	Tariq and Syed (2017) highlighted that South Asian women managers in British workplaces use their agency and resilience among other coping mechanisms to overcome the intersectional discrimination and disadvantages that they encounter in their progression to senior roles.	It is found that self-motivation, resilience and agency were common traits of these women which helped them navigate their career journeys despite the plethora of institutional and sociocultural challenges.
Building Social Networks	Tariq and Syed (2017) shared that South Asian women managers use support networks to help themselves in dealing with intersectional discrimination in their careers. Bhopal (2022) highlighted that ethnic minority academics use 'safe spaces' to connect with other academics and seek support from each other.	Having support from social networks was found to be a key coping strategy for these women. They shared the effectiveness of creating networks with colleagues and allies both inside and outside the workplace, in order to seek professional support and sharing opportunities of training and development.

Coaching and Mentoring	Kalra et al. (2019) suggest that ethnic minority staff in the NHS seek formal mentoring in order to make progress to leadership roles. Bhopal (2019) argued that unless the mentoring initiatives in academia are not sensitive to the exclusionary and racialised workplace experiences of ethnic minority women, the existing mentoring initiatives would remain insufficient to address their specific needs of career progression.	The participants used mentoring as a common solution to seek progress in their careers and counter challenges of exclusion. Some positive experiences were reported as a result of coaching and mentoring, however, the need to have mentoring from ethnic minority mentors was strongly felt by the participants for a more customised experience.

Table 6.1. Key Thematic Findings and Existing Literature with Researcher's Interpretation

6.3. Organisational Barriers to Career Progression

The organisational barriers to career progression include challenges related to hiring and recruitment, promotion opportunities, religious discrimination and microaggressions, after-work socialising and gendered and racialised workplace culture. According to the findings of this research, the organisational barriers are the highest reported challenges in second-generation British Pakistani women's careers. It is found that the occurrence of organisational barriers has overtopped the sociocultural barriers, thereby depicting worrying status-quo for these women and employers alike.

6.4. Gendered and Racialised Workplace Culture

The experiences of gendered and racialised workplace culture were reported by 18 women who felt disadvantaged owing to their gender, religion, ethnicity and colour of their skin. These participants shared multiple examples of how they would feel excluded and even inferior because of the gender, religious and racial identities combined, as the workplace culture would largely favour the White colleagues. For instance, most participants reported that they were denied opportunities of professional development and would not receive adequate feedback from

their supervisors. The participants from academia expressed frustration over their delayed or blocked promotions to professorship, while other colleagues (White women and White men) were promoted relatively quicker even when they joined the universities much later than these Pakistani women. Participants from other fields of work expressed how bad they felt about not being selected for promotions and other professional development opportunities of attending conferences, while other White and male colleagues were given preference over them.

These women expressed that their White colleagues seem to be progressing in their careers based on their job performance and fitting-in with the workplace culture, which is accelerated due to their White privilege; whereas the career progression routes and processes for the non-Whites are obscure and in slow-motion. Despite their disadvantage, the Pakistani women keep working excessively to earn these promotions and the vicious cycle of blocked promotion continues year after year. Additionally, most women complained about burnout and exhaustion because they were assigned excessive workload (non-promotable work) and oftentimes inflexible hours as compared to their White colleagues. It was no surprise that these women felt like there were huge expectations from them to work harder to prove their value at work. It is important to note that the excessive workload did not translate into a job promotion for any participant till the time of data collection.

Similarly, the participants shared experiencing frequent workplace microaggressions, such that it seemed to be a part of the workplace culture in British workplaces. These experiences confirm the work by Li and Heath (2018) and Kenny and Briner (2007) emphasising that ethnic minority women are faced with racial prejudice from the employer and are disadvantaged in the job market during hiring and recruitment, job promotions and in securing professional opportunities. The participants reported that the men at work would favour other men (for instance, old boys

club) and would have their insider-jokes that they would not understand; and they felt excluded as a result. These women shared how the male colleagues would casually crack racist jokes about English accents, cousin marriages, chicken tikka and sexist jokes. For instance, it was found that Pakistani women demonstrated guardedness and alertness in their behaviour to protect themselves from racist and anti-Muslim remarks from the White colleagues. Many participants reported feelings of imposter syndrome and lowered self-confidence due to experiences of racism and discrimination at work. These participants were found questioning their self-worth on many occasions. Therefore, it is evident that the exclusionary experiences of the participating women are intertwined with multiple layers of prejudice, i.e. racial and gender prejudice in this case. Such conventional workplace norms and practices are known to amplify the inequalities among employees at the workplace and this is shown in the work by Atkinson (2011) and Acker (2006, 2009) as inequality regimes. At the same time, it aligns with the premise of Critical Race Theory that racism is present everywhere and is deeply embedded in the everyday practices and institutional policies and processes.

While recapping the key findings of this research, it is crucial to highlight that the challenges under discussion are not solely because of gender, race, ethnicity or religion alone; rather the barriers being discussed are a product of more than one identity markers of the participating women. The intersections of multiple layers of identity have been a primary focus in this research, because, for instance, sole emphasis on gender does not adequately explain the career challenges of second-generation Pakistani women, hence the intersections of ethnicity and religion along with gender are being considered as suggested by Opara et al. (2020), Arifeen and Gatrell (2013) and Tariq and Syed (2018).

6.5. Muslimness and Anti-Muslim Racism at Work

According to Allen (2021) almost two decades ago, the Runnymede Trust warned about Islamophobia in Britain that it was getting "more explicit, more extreme and more dangerous" (p.108). Similarly, Dale (2002) cautioned about the dangers of religious prejudice held by the British employers in hiring Muslim women which would result in loss of talent. Even today, the British organisations seem to have made little progress especially in terms of discriminatory hiring and recruitment practices, opportunities of training and development and fair remuneration for Muslim women. There are huge expectations from Muslim women to 'lean in' a bit more and fit-in with the organisational culture of alcohol-related socialising or not seeking leave during the Holy month of Ramadan or for Eid festival (see Dale, 2002). It is concerning that a striking majority of 28 participating Pakistani women have reported encountering similar stereotypical expectations from the British employers, and most of them have even experienced 'code switching' and 'identity flexing' (Opara et al., 2023), to align themselves with the exclusionary workplace culture. This finding is in concurrence with the 61 percent of women of colour in British workplaces who reported changing something about themselves so they could 'fit-in' with the workplace culture, for instance their dressing, hairstyles, and even their names (Gyimah et al., 2022).

The findings of this research confirm that religious identities pose crucial challenges for Pakistani women's career progression as it is argued by Arifeen and Gatrell (2019) and Shaikh (2011). Speaking of religious identity, the lived experiences of British Pakistani women in this research show that visible Muslimness i.e. hijab has serious implications on their career journeys. These women shared feeling disadvantaged and were faced with anti-Muslim racism, discriminatory behaviour and workplace microaggressions because of their decision to dress

religiously and cover their heads which is in concurrence with Carr (2015) who argues that Muslims are 'othered' due to their visible 'Markers of Muslimness' that imply the incompatibility of Muslim women with the 'Western culture'. It was observed in the findings that wearing hijab often attracted negative attention at the workplace and digressed from the prevalent gendered and racialised organisational culture; also shown in the reviewed literature in chapter 2 (Allen, 2015; Bigger, 2006; Fearfull and Kamenou, 2010; Fayyaz and Kamal, 2014).

The participants shared numerous incidents of experiencing Islamophobia and anti-Muslim racism at work and how they were over-scrutinised and made to feel and misfit at work due to their hijab which led to their lack of sense of belonging at work. In this regard, many participants experienced workplace microaggressions, and others reported more direct incidents of bullying and workplace harassment due to their visible Muslimness. As a result, the participants expressed feeling discouraged to even apply for senior positions since they were skeptical of their prospects of being selected for these roles. Many participants shared that they had applied for internal job vacancies which they were very well-suited for, but it mostly resulted in disappointing outcomes because they were not the *right* identity fit. Such disempowering and penalising workplace environments are found to seriously restrict the career progression of the participants.

Allen (2015) discussed how hijab is perceived as a symbol of oppression of Muslim women in Islam, although this shows a problematic and lopsided Western perception to justify the 'othering' of these women. It appears as though the British workplaces hold similar rhetoric regarding the Muslim female employees (Pakistani women in this case). Out of the 30 participants, 14 wore the hijab; and the rest did not cover their heads. Interestingly, two participants reported taking off their hijab at some points in their careers and reported the visible

behavioural shift from colleagues towards their *new* identities. This is insightful because these participants had experienced both dimensions of lived experiences of 'with' and 'without' the hijab, indicating the pervasiveness of prejudice towards visible Muslimness in British workplaces, further demonstrating the implications of intersectional identities. These women expressed frustration about the biased behaviours towards them due to their hijab, especially how they were looked down upon and treated as 'lesser' people by their White colleagues. They noticed visible positive changes in the behaviours of their colleagues once the hijab was removed and this brought feelings of disappointment and hopelessness not just for their careers, but for their lives being Muslim women in the UK, in general.

Moreover, the *hijabi* participants felt that they were not trusted enough, as if their presence was harmful for the organisation's health. Thus, the findings showed that the *hijabi* participants experienced being the 'suspect community' as discussed by Cherney and Murphy (2016) and were treated as being threatening by their White colleagues and employers alike. Such examples and some others as discussed in the earlier chapter resonate with the work by Zempi and Chakraborti (2014) that wearing hijab puts Muslim women in a vulnerable position where they are often subjected to Islamophobic attitudes and prejudiced behaviours in public spaces and appear as vulnerable targets.

On similar lines, the *hijabi* participants shared a wealth of interesting information that exhibited racialised and gendered Islamophobia at work, whether conscious or unconscious; overt or covert; direct or indirect; albeit it was very much evident in discrete forms as 'everyday Islamophobia' reflecting in colleagues' behaviours (see Babacan, 2023) while resonating with Critical Race Theory that racism is an everyday experience of people of colour and may be routinely expressed overtly or covertly. Similar ideas are discussed in the reviewed literature in

chapter 2 that women who wore hijab and dressed more religiously are faced with more job-related challenges as compared to those who do not wear hijab (Wagner et al., 2012; Dale and Ahmed, 2008). The findings of this research confirm the same as the *hijabi* participants were faced with additional perceived Muslim penalty on top of their intersectional identities which is like a hotspot for multiple forms of exclusionary workplace practices. Wearing hijab was taken as a social sanction to treat them as the problematic 'others' in the workplace and their identities were mostly questioned in discreet ways, and this is shown in the excerpts from the conversations in chapter 4. It is important to note that those participants who did not wear hijab and had lesser visible Muslimness were still faced with racial microaggressions and discrimination at work because of their modest dressing, non-White names and declared association with Islam and Pakistan. Hence, it is found that the participating women shared lived experiences of anti-Muslim racism even when some 'Markers of Muslimness' were muted for them (for instance, not wearing hijab). Thus, the intersectional identities of the participants played huge roles to determine their career-related experiences, especially when came into play with prejudiced organisational processes that fail to recognise their biases towards Muslimness.

6.6. Workplace Microaggressions

One of the salient findings of this research is the wide prevalence of 'hidden discrimination' and subtle forms of racism that are regularly projected in British workplaces on everyday basis, especially in the form of workplace microaggressions, as discussed in the reviewed literature in chapter 2. This finding is consistent with Critical Race Theory especially with the notion of permanence of racism, such that it is deeply embedded in everyday practices and systems. Whether it is anti-Muslim racism, or other forms of discrimination based on race or ethnic origin,

the prejudice and bias is unmissable and routinely projected in the British workplaces, regardless of the profession and seniority level of the participants.

The variety of instances shared by the participating women confirms that racial microaggressions are a huge part of the British workplace culture which is severely damaging for their morale and well-being. This confirms the work by Estacio and Saidy-Khan (2014) and McCallaghan (2022) who argue that racial microaggressions negatively affect employee's emotional wellbeing. When the workplace microaggressions were coupled with excessive workload, their impact was compounded because the participants felt the need to perform well even when they were being bullied at work and undergoing extreme levels of stress.

Most examples shared by the participants revolved around experiencing racial bullying, racial slurs, racist jokes and casual rude comments by their colleagues regarding their intersectional identities and cultural heritage which resulted in feelings of anger and frustration. In two different cases, White colleagues had asked the participants if they used cars or camels to commute in Pakistan, which left the participants feeling disrespected and hurt, and at a loss of words to give any explanation. Contrary to this seemingly 'minor' example, there were many other extreme cases of workplace microaggressions reported by the participants as well. Overall, the participants expressed feelings of helplessness, since they were being targeted because of something that is not changeable about their identities. The lived experiences of participants confirmed the sophisticated nature of racial microaggressions which made it difficult to identify and address thereby echoing the work of Smith and Griffiths (2023).

At the same time, it was noted that in workplaces where there were HR systems to check on overt discrimination, the lived experiences of microaggressions had significantly increased as it

was difficult to spot the implicit nature of disrespect, confirming the study by Smith and Griffiths (2023). This indicates the permanence of racist and prejudiced sentiment towards Pakistani women (due to their intersectional identities) whether it is expressed or not, thereby, echoing the premise of Critical Race Theory about permanence of racism. It reveals that whether overt or covert in nature, racism is deeply ingrained in the mindsets and behaviours of the dominant groups, such that it has become a permanent feature of the workplace experiences of these women. Such implicit bias towards Pakistani women can be detrimental especially when the same people are responsible for making decisions regarding hiring and promotions and it is likely that they would prefer '*other*' colleagues over the Pakistani women. These power dynamics can considerably jeopardise the chances of Pakistani women being promoted at work and hired in leadership and managerial roles, and the same is evident in the accounts of many participants. Hence, it is found that existence of workplace microaggressions is a major barrier that poses complex challenges in the career progression of British Pakistani women.

6.7. Alcohol-Related Socialising: The Dilemma of Fitting-In

The expectations of engaging in alcohol-related socialising emerged as one of the main barriers to career progression identified in this research. The British workplaces are perceived to have huge reliance on alcohol-related social networking for continued professional development and career progression. Since this expectation is inherently in conflict with the religious identity of the Pakistani women, therefore, they lose out on numerous opportunities of professional development and career progression as a result. The notion of 'glass chains' is introduced by Arifeen and Gatrell (2019) to describe the personal beliefs and faith-related choices made by second-generation high achieving female Pakistani managers in the UK that result in challenges in their career progression. The idea of 'glass chains' is useful to explain why the participating

Pakistani women did not fit in with the gendered and racialised workplace culture; especially the expectations of alcohol-related socialising. This is because participating women were often found to be very connected and rooted in their religion internally, regardless of their choice to exhibit a visible religious identity outwardly. These unseen glass chains, thus, encouraged these women to remain tied to the tenets of their religion. These unseen glass chains became the basis of their decisions to not engage in activities that were in conflict with the teachings of their religion. Since alcohol consumption is not permitted for Muslims, these women chose to refrain from it and remain true to their 'ethical selves' (Arifeen and Gatrell, 2019) at the opportunity cost of missing out on the socialising and the associated opportunities.

All participants of this research rejected the idea of alcohol-related socialising except for one participant who shared that she began consuming alcohol after joining this job to 'fit-in' with the organisational culture. This is an unfortunate depiction of disadvantage and exclusion where Pakistani women with Muslim backgrounds are expected to show flexibility and negotiate their religious identities for advancing in their careers. This confirms the 'myth of meritocracy' in British workplaces, as Runnymede Trust and Fawcett Society (2022) argue that from a sample of 3000 ethnic minority women in British workplaces, 61 percent reported changing something about themselves to 'fit-in' at the workplace, and similar lived experiences are mirrored in this research. Since the British organisations are perceived to uphold the idea of meritocracy, they like to believe that career progression is based on individual talent, effort, and achievement rather than on gender, race, religion, social class or other identity markers of the employees. Although the employers seem to emphasise that employees would be rewarded and promoted according to their abilities and contributions, yet the evidence suggests otherwise. This misleading approach of the employers diminishes the intersectional experiences of these women

and reinforces the notion of race evasiveness. Thus, anti-Muslim racism is prevalent in British workplaces in covert and overt forms having different manifestations like alcohol-related socialising.

6.8. The Core Problem: Institutional and Anti-Muslim Racism

It is found that racism has permeated the British workplaces to the core in sophisticated ways that are invisible and discreet, and often demonstrated as racial microaggressions while reflecting the key tenets of the Critical Race Theory, for instance, the permanence of racism, social construction of race, interest convergence as well as White privilege. Racism is found to be projected in organisational norms and practices that are discriminatory and exclusionary against Pakistani women and impact their career journeys from hiring and recruitment to opportunities of professional development and job promotions. The following diagram 6.1 represents the researcher's interpretation of the most significant findings of this research.

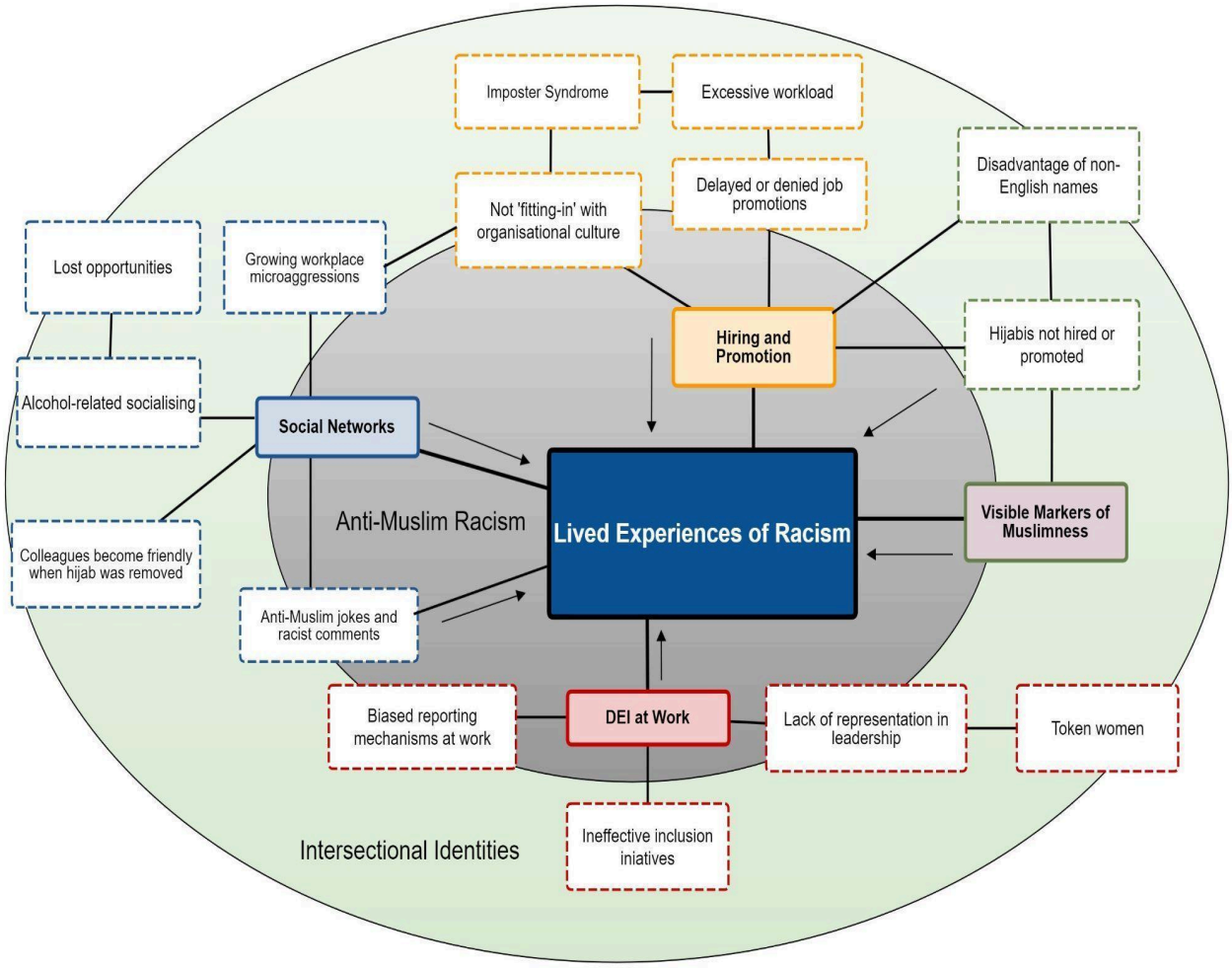

Figure 6.1. Researcher's Interpretation of The Most Prominent Barriers - Source: Researcher

The above figure 6.1 is a collective mapping of the most prominent barriers of career progression drawn from the responses of the participants. This map shows connections between different institutional challenges faced by the Pakistani women, and it is revealed that anti-Muslim racism sits at the heart of these lived experiences. It is important to acknowledge that there are other challenges related to gender, race, ethnicity and social status that are often integrated within these challenges pertinent to racism and together shape the combined effect of intersectional identities and systemic inequalities.

6.9. Pakistani Women at Work and DEI Agenda

The findings of this research demonstrate that the existing state of DEI agenda in British organisations is hardly addressing the real issues of diversity and inclusion. The participants shared their stories of being faced with ineffective DEI policies and practices at work and their lack of trust in the HR departments and in mechanisms of reporting incidents at work. Most women shared feeling disadvantaged during hiring and recruitment, and often the participants experienced delayed promotions and being denied opportunities of professional development. Although some of these challenges are also discussed within the premise of workplace discrimination, it is crucial to show the links of these challenges with DEI as well. This presents a worrying case for the DEI agenda in the respective organisations and makes it imperative to understand the DEI related challenges that the Pakistani women are faced with in today's British workplaces.

Despite the consistent emphasis of the UK government on DEI policies and practices and the presence of Equality Act 2010 and ethnic pay reporting, the practical implementation of DEI in the British workplaces still has a long way to go. The situation in higher education institutions across the UK is no different, especially with the Athena Swan and Race Equality Charter in place (Bhopal and Henderson, 2019). As indicated by the participants, their organisations are doing the bare minimum for the genuine inclusion of ethnic minority women and most of the ongoing work is to 'tick boxes' and having 'token women' at the workplace, with no true intention to include these women in decision-making roles and workplace culture. The problem is the vicious cycle which stems from the top and trickles down to the bottom. Thus, the lack of implementation of equality and inclusion policies has damaging consequences for these women, for instance, biased hiring and recruitment, unexplained delays in promotions, denial of

professional opportunities, lack of trust in HR mechanisms of reporting incidents, and the lack of sense of belonging to the organisation.

A key concern for the prevalent DEI agendas in the higher education institutions in the UK is the tendency to prioritise gender over other crucial identity markers like race, ethnicity and religion as discussed by the participants. Bhopal (2020a) has emphasised on the implications of ignoring race and prioritising gender in DEI in academia and how this upholds White privilege, while reproducing racism and structural inequalities in academia. Over time, the sole emphasis of diversity and inclusion initiatives in the UK universities has been on gender equality as a means to achieve social justice, and the same is portrayed publicly to give the false image of an inclusive and socially just institution all while turning a blind eye to racial inequality (Bhopal and Henderson, 2019). Such lopsided institutional priorities restrict the career progression of ethnic minority academics and give rise to workplace inequalities and microaggressions. The same is voiced by the participants of this research who worked in academia that the DEI approach in their universities tends to be hesitant addressing issues of race and religion, whereas, there has been immense focus on gender, disability and sexuality in DEI in academia. It is understood that the lack of emphasis on race nurtures racism and workplace inequalities due to unaddressed racial and ethnic prejudice in the UK universities, and blocks the career progression of ethnic minority academics as a result. For instance, most of the participants from academia mentioned experiencing differential treatment by their colleagues and supervisors, racial microaggressions, excessive workloads, blocked progression below professorship for years, temporary job contracts, while their White colleagues would be promoted much sooner and would hold permanent positions.

Similarly, in all fields of work, it is found that those who are in decision-making positions at the workplaces tend to favour those people for hiring and promotions, who look like them and are deemed more suitable to fit-in with the organisational culture. Some women shared feeling disadvantaged because of having non-White names and many others shared their disadvantage due to their Muslim appearance and brown skin colour. As accurately expressed by a participant, *'.... he would say, you don't fit the criteria... he is not going to say, I don't like your face....'* As shared by the research participants and confirmed by literature, the decision-making positions in British organisations are mostly occupied by White men and White women. This leaves little room for ethnic minority women that are already struggling with multiple disadvantages to be selected for senior positions; and those who get hired struggle immensely with their career progression from junior to senior roles, such that they are hardly able to make it to the leadership. Therefore, due to half-hearted diversity and inclusion efforts, there is a widespread sense of exclusion consistently experienced by the Pakistani women at work.

Dobbin and Kalev (2016) and Ro (2021) critically analyse the effectiveness of DEI programs in organisations, and it is shown in the findings of this research as well. For instance, unconscious bias training and mandatory diversity training can provoke resistance and reinforce biases against ethnic minority women, rather than mitigate them. The biases and prejudices that are deeply nurtured in the minds and behaviours of individuals, and are profoundly systemic and structural in nature, cannot be washed away in a one-off training program. Grievance procedures, designed to address bias, may instead lead to retaliation against those who raise their voice (Dobbin and Kalev, 2016) discouraging the already disadvantaged employees (Pakistani women in this case) from coming forward and reporting any problems to the HR. Similar issues are highlighted by participants, those who raise their voice against racist bullying and discrimination from other

colleagues experienced delayed and denied promotions and a few resorted to switching jobs. While others would either suspect bad reputation among colleagues or fear losing their jobs because the managers would often take sides of the White employees. These women shared about the expectations of submission and compliance with the biased workplace practices without raising their voice against it. The participants have emphasised on the importance of transparency in the organisational processes, and the need to hire more ethnically diverse women in leadership positions (not just token-hires), so that the monopoly of White leadership can gradually dismantle (unlikely, but worth the effort). The participants suggested that by encouraging transparent mechanisms of reporting racism, organisations can ensure that no acts of discrimination or workplace microaggressions go unchecked, and this in turn may result in ethnically diverse employees feeling more safe and included in the organisational culture, thus fostering greater commitment to DEI initiatives.

6.10. Sociocultural Barriers to Career Progression

Sociocultural barriers to career progression included those challenges that were mainly related to family and culture. This included family responsibilities and cultural stereotypes, discrimination from within the Pakistani community, social and cultural capital, and lack of role models. Out of all the sociocultural barriers discussed by the participants, family responsibilities and cultural stereotypes were the most prominent challenges of career progression.

Most of the participants grappled with family responsibilities while navigating their careers and this confirmed the research by Dale (2002) who argued that domestic duties and marriage have far more influence on the economic activity of Pakistani women as compared to White women. The inter-generational aspect of the findings shows that the experiences of second-generation

Pakistani women are very different from that of their parents in many aspects. These women have the support of their families to seek education and employment and make progress in their careers, unlike the first generation women who were expected to perform domestic roles as the sole purpose of their lives and not engage in employment, especially as they were expected to fit into the role of an '*ideal woman'* and a '*homemaker'* as their primary purpose of existence (Aston et al., 2007). Although such stereotypical expectations were relatively low for the second-generation women, even then, the major share of domestic responsibilities lies with them. Unlike the first-generation women, the second-generation Pakistani working mothers have a helping hand from their husbands and/or family members in looking after their children. Therefore, the patriarchal cultural values are found to be less rigid towards the second-generation women.

The participants reported that the traditional expectations from women to be domesticated are no longer prevalent because the trend of single-income households from the parental generation has shifted to dual-income families to meet the high costs of living. Besides the financial aspect, the parental generation embraced the idea of educating their children to break the cycle of social exclusion and racial disadvantage. These women do not struggle with language barrier nor the transition of settlement after migration. Although many cultural pressures still exist, these women are in better positions than their mothers to negotiate on their terms with their families and have more financial independence.

Many participants discussed that their culture expects them to be compliant and submissive towards male dominance since childhood and they grew up seeing their mothers do the same. It was shared that these cultural influences have made them more tolerant towards injustices and inequalities at their work, without raising their voice. It was found that some participants needed

to have inter-generational negotiations with their parents and extended family members of the older generation to pursue their career aspirations. The negotiations were notably reported when it involved challenging the patriarchal cultural stereotypes; for instance, travelling unaccompanied to international stations for work, choosing STEM subjects/careers that are considered traditionally *misfit* for women. Therefore, Pakistani women were seen battling with cultural stereotypes and unequal division of labour at home, and racist organisational cultures and exclusionary employment circumstances outside of home.

Having access to social and cultural capital is found to be an asset for the career progression of British Pakistani women. For instance, the participants who came from high-income families and had social and economic privileges had relatively smooth entry in the labour market (owing to their posh English accents, private schooling, conducive home environment and having no financial burdens) as mentioned by them. Nevertheless, they were not spared from experiences of racism, religious and gender discrimination at work; even though they had certain social privileges; which means that social and cultural capital can be seen as an advantage and can reduce the struggles to some extent, but it does not guarantee immunity from racism, gender and religious discrimination in the job market. The few women from high-income backgrounds experienced hiring discrimination due to their visible racial and ethnic identities and often these would be the ones who were promoted to decision-making roles because they embodied White privilege in some ways and were acceptable as the 'token hires' in their organisations, who would not jeopardise interests of the White groups, confirming the work by Bhopal (2022, 2024). This finding resonates with the notion of 'interest convergence' from the theoretical lens of Critical Race Theory, that the rights of the minorities will continue to be met as long as they do not clash with the interests of the majority, i.e. White groups.

Zwysen and Longhi (2018) discussed the importance of parental social networks and support from the local community for career advice and identifying job opportunities. The same is explained by Battu et al. (2011) and Dustmann et al. (2016) that social contacts from the community are useful for identifying job vacancies and job referrals for ethnic minorities. No evidence was found in this research to confirm support from parental social networks for career-related opportunities. Similarly, the residence location did not come up as a significant barrier for career progression of the participating women. Having strong social networks is often helpful for the careers of Pakistani women (which is discussed as a coping strategy for enhanced career progression in this research). At the same time, it is found that these networks may not necessarily consist of those who live in the same neighbourhoods as the Pakistani women. There were mixed reactions regarding the experiences of having networks from within the Pakistani community.

Some participants expressed facing discrimination from within the Pakistani community in various forms, which caused challenges in their career journeys. This mirrors the work by Tariq and Syed (2017) where they highlight that ethnic minority women are often discriminated by ethnic minority Muslim men because of the intersectional identities of religion and gender and patriarchal culture. Similar experiences of discrimination and prejudiced treatment were reported by those participants whose co-workers or managers were Pakistani men who would look down upon them at the workplace. Therefore, Pakistani women were found to experience prejudiced and exclusionary behaviours not only from the White non-Muslim colleagues, but from Pakistani Muslim male colleagues and managers as well. This can be an interesting area of intersectionality research to further examine in the future. Additionally, the lack of ethnic role

models was highlighted by some participants as a challenge, although it was not shared as a major barrier of restricted career progression.

6.11. Coping Strategies for Enhanced Career Progression

The findings show that despite being faced with complex institutional and sociocultural barriers to career progression, British Pakistani women continued to find their own solutions to deal with these challenges. It was found that the participants were self-motivated and determined to do better in their careers and by virtue of their agency and will power, they were able to battle with the plethora of challenges. They felt excluded because of the prejudiced behaviours from employers and colleagues and institutional practices that worked against them, yet they used their positive mindsets and self-motivation to not give up in adverse times. They continued working hard and often labelled the experiences of racism and workplace microaggressions as 'distractions' from their career goals.

Bowles et al. (2005) suggest that parents with higher socioeconomic background would pass on soft skills to their children that have positive influence on the job market outcomes. On the contrary, this research shows that even the low-income families and low to middle income families were able to impart soft skills in their daughters, owing to which these participants were able to take their careers seriously and exhibited agency, motivation and resilience amidst career-related challenges they had encountered. As the women recalled experiences from their childhood, most of them shared how their parents had inspired them to work hard and be resilient in the face of hardship.

Many women felt that they lacked assertiveness because of their patriarchal cultural backgrounds and how they had grown up seeing their mothers living domestic lives while submitting to male

dominance. These women felt that they had learnt to be less assertive and more compliant because of the generational dynamics. This, together with the cultural expectations of being the 'nurturer', 'feminine' and 'nice' had made them more tolerant towards the racism and discrimination from their colleagues and other workplace inequalities, without complaining about it. The participants shared that the lack of assertiveness can have implications on their workplace behaviours that are existing sites of White privilege and serve against the interests of Pakistani women.

Additionally, these women utilised their social networks for identifying and accessing opportunities of employment, training and development. They sought social connections with women from ethnic minority backgrounds so they would feel like they are the 'insiders' in those networks and have a shared sense of empathy. These informal networks sometimes proved useful for these women to connect with relevant people from their fields of work, identify opportunities and gain job referrals. Similarly, they often sought mentoring and career coaching from within and outside the workplace in their own time and shared that it was important for them to get relatable advice that corresponded to their unique experiences of exclusion. It was found that the existing coaching and mentoring facilities lacked sensitivity towards unique career experiences of Pakistani women and it was considered valuable to have customised support in this regard. Most women pursued mentorship on a self-help basis, without having employer support. Having customised mentoring experiences could make these women feel more resourceful and well-prepared to perform in senior roles. Formal mentoring is an effective coping strategy that addresses specific career needs of ethnic minority nursing staff (Kalra et al., 2009) and academics (Bhopal, 2019). Similarly, ethnic minority employees may find it useful to seek support from their social networks (Kalra et al., 2009) and academics creating their 'safe spaces'

(Bhopal, 2022) to support their career progression. Thus, such coping strategies proved useful for the participants to seek career advice, find shared empathy and make job-related decisions more confidently.

6.12. Connecting the Dots

While examining the multiple barriers to career progression for British Pakistani women regarding family, culture and employer, it is crucial to the aim of this research to contextualise the findings with respect to the overlapping systems of domination in the broader context, like structural and national processes. The idea is to consider the barriers to career progression in the light of the multiple identities on the ethnic group level, as well as reconcile these with the broader systemic and structural processes. The discussion of findings has brought together empirical evidence, literature and the researcher's interpretation of the findings in line with the premise of Critical Race Theory and intersectionality (as conceptualised in this research) to understand the different layers of challenges, and the institutional and sociocultural contexts. Arifeen and Gatrell (2013) and Tariq and Syed (2018) emphasised upon the need to view the career experiences of second-generation British Muslim Pakistani women from an intersectional lens, which signifies that the complex career journeys of these women cannot be fully gauged by only considering single layers of their identities, or by examining their experiences without considering the interference of the broader context. Thereby, this research generates scholarship that examines the career experiences of second-generation Pakistani women in simultaneity with their intersectional identities and the contextual processes and systems of domination as well, which is a primary aim of this study. Therefore, the findings of this research address the main research questions as follows:

I. What are the barriers faced by second-generation British Pakistani women in securing managerial and leadership roles?

The findings of this research show that British Pakistani women experience a variety of complex institutional and sociocultural barriers in their career journeys, and some of these challenges are more pronounced than the others. These challenges resulted from the interaction of their intersectional identities with institutional, sociocultural and systemic inequalities. It is found that the lived experiences of racism surpass all other barriers experienced by Pakistani women in British workplaces. These lived experiences of racism have extensively surfaced in the findings as deep-rooted anti-Muslim sentiment compounded by the intersectional identity markers of these women, like gender, race, ethnicity and class. Because of their intersectional identities, these women are at greater risk of exclusion. Thus, the 'overt identity' of British Pakistani women is a significant barrier in their career progression since it is in conflict with the identity of the ideal candidate who would uphold Whiteness and protect the interests of the White groups. Consequently, some of the key barriers of career progression experienced by these women are related to hiring and recruitment, promotion, religious discrimination and microaggressions, after-work socialising, gendered and racialised workplace culture and family responsibilities.

II. How do second-generation British Pakistani women address the identified barriers for enhanced career progression?

In order to continue enhancing their career progression, the second-generation British Pakistani women used multiple coping strategies including their self-motivation and resilience. They utilised their social networks for identifying and accessing opportunities of employment, training

and professional development. Creating 'safe spaces' and connecting with other like minded individuals seemed to help these women find a shared sense of empathy and deal with complex challenges related to the workplace, colleagues and family, and continue with their career progression. Coaching and mentoring was considered an important coping strategy for these women in order to feel more well-prepared to perform in senior roles. Thus, they often sought tailored mentoring and career coaching as it was important for them to get relatable advice that corresponded to their unique experiences of exclusion.

The following table 6.2 illustrates the connections between the interaction of the intersectional identities of the Pakistani women with different systems of power within the institutions and sociocultural spheres. It reconciles the lived experiences of the participants with their intersecting identities and the systems of domination in action. This representation is useful to examine the simultaneity of the intersectional identities through some example quotes taken from the most prominent findings, all while keeping the broader systemic inequalities at forefront.

Representative Quote	**Researcher's Interpretation of the Workplace Experience**	**Systems of Domination** (Systemic and National Contexts)	**Intersections of gender, race, ethnicity, religion**
'... one person... said to me (and this was after the London bombings) .... your community...needs to apologise for what's happened... I was like, what!! ..... why would... members of the community need to apologise for something that they haven't done? .... we all know that the Iraq bombings were basically illegal... Are all White Christians supposed to stand up and say we're really sorry that's happened...?' (Mahpara, Age unknown, Lecturer)	This participant experienced racist comments against Muslim community in the wake of the London bombings in 2007. Stevenson et al. (2017) discuss how Muslim women at British organisations were made to feel responsible and guilty to apologise whenever there were terrorist attacks anywhere in the world. Carr (2015) shared the work of Hickman et al. (2011) who describe how Muslim communities are often treated as 'suspect community' and as the 'enemy within'.	Muslim Penalty Anti-Muslim Racism Saeeda Warsi 'Dinner Table Talk'; it is normalised to publicly talk about Muslims in harsh ways, which is still unacceptable for other ethnic minorities	Race and Religion

'We'd sit in a room waiting for students to come. Immediately when they walk into the room, they would see me… brown-faced-woman in a hijab… and they would see a middle-aged White-skinned-woman. They would wait to speak to her… even if she was talking to someone, and I was completely free… They would go to my colleague, and she would say you'll have to ask Naima because I'm just here as a support; she's the person in-charge. They would get startled... Then they had to come and ask me. A part of me really wanted to not to help them...' (Naima, Age 51, Course Coordinator)	This participant is working in an administrative role in a local university and enrolling PhD students. She often faced hate because of her hijab. In this example, the differential behaviour towards the participant is subtle and seemingly harmless in nature. It reflects deep-rooted unconscious biases against her as a Muslim woman of colour (*a brown woman*, as it is her self-ascribed identity). The PhD students are in disbelief that someone who wears a hijab and has a brown skin colour could be responsible for the student enrolment.	Anti-Muslim Racism Occupational Segregation Ethnic Penalty	Race and Religion
'... Even for a sector that is pretty poor on the diversity front, we just have no women at the moment…... I'm actually the most senior woman in my team…They are trying to push me ahead more and accelerate me more than usual, but it is lopsided…. Sometimes it feels like they're doing it because they need to do it for diversity… rather than because it comes naturally to them…. What comes naturally to these White men is promoting the other White men and that's still happening...' (Qaisera, Age 38, Psychotherapist)	The participant shared that her organisation was making efforts to improve workplace diversity and inclusion, yet often it seemed like these actions were an exercise to tick-off boxes of DEI and seek more funding from donors. A visibly macho organisational culture was prevalent in this organisation where women and ethnic minorities were neither hired nor promoted to senior positions. It was mainly White men favouring other White men.	Tokenism (Kanter, 1977; Baxter, 2012) Masculine organisational culture (Old Boys Club) Interest Convergence from CRT	Gender, Race, Ethnicity
'…My cousins also made short English nicknames for themselves, to use in daily life…. They didn't have to use the full-fledged lengthy Pakistani names that we normally tend to have….' (Sitara, Age 65, Personal Development Coach)	The participant shared the experience of adapting local Pakistani names to more English-sounding names for ease of pronunciation and for fitting-in better with the White culture. Literature explains resume 'whitening' because applicants with ethnic names rarely receive interview calls from British employers.	Ethnic Penalty Resume 'Whitening'	Race and Ethnicity
'... Even though a lot of them had sociology backgrounds… and from Oxford… but didn't understand the dynamics of racism…. if you talk about your research, you get people saying, 'you would say that, wouldn't you ...?' as though it's	This participant works in a senior role in academia and wears a hijab. She often experienced race evasive behaviours from her White colleagues who were highly educated and experienced; yet they did not really comprehend that they	Anti-Muslim Racism White Privilege	Race and Religion

only personal… and there's no scholarship there…' (Gulalai, Age 62, Professor)	were being racist and most likely unaware of their White privilege. It is evident that her colleagues would consider her inclination to talk about ethnicity as something personal to her (owing to her identity); and not because there can be scholarship behind it. This depicts a dismissive approach towards narratives of race, racism and ethnicity from the White colleagues, and it can be an isolating experience.		
'…. suddenly I was taken more seriously as soon as I took the hijab off… I felt that people were a lot more accepting of me…. a colleague said to me that, oh, now that you've removed the hijab, you're a lot more approachable, and friendlier…. and … I thought, you racist people…!!! It's not that I've removed the hijab, and suddenly changed my confidence or developed keenness to integrate with others…. I was already integrated with others…. It's your perceptions that have changed, not mine….' (Mahpara, Age unknown, Lecturer)	This participant worked in a senior role in academia and experienced taking off hijab during her job. She shared how her colleagues disliked her Muslimness and made hurtful comments about her hijab. She received differential treatment at work before and after removing hijab. Chakraborti and Zempi (2012) argue that Muslim women at work are faced with criticism and mockery by their colleagues because of their modest dressing. This strengthens the idea that employers are seeking a specific kind of 'fit' which does not clash with Whiteness at work.	Anti-Muslim Racism *[Not reporting this as code switching because participant had undisclosed personal reasons to remove her hijab]*	Race and Religion

Table 6.2. Simultaneity of Systems of Domination and Intersectional Identities of British Pakistani Women

6.13. Overt Identities of British Pakistani Women

Empirical evidence from this research shows that the decisions around hiring, recruitment, promotions and progression are based on the race and the visible 'Markers of Muslimness' of the employees. It is that conventional White, middle-class, non-Muslim 'fit' that employers are looking for and those who are not compatible with that 'ideal mould' automatically fail to progress. Thus, the 'overt identity' of British Pakistani women is a notable finding which is a huge barrier in their career progression. Evidence from this research suggests that the ideal

candidate is compatible with Whiteness and protects the interests of the White groups. Unfortunately the overt identities of Pakistani women are found to be in conflict with that ideal candidate, hence, their career progression to senior roles seems ambitious.

6.14. Empirical Evidence Echoing Critical Race Theory

A key significance of this research is the attempt to integrate Critical Race Theory (CRT) with intersectionality and develop a comprehensive understanding of the barriers to career progression for British Pakistani women. The findings of this research mirror a range of concepts from the Critical Race Theory (CRT) at various points, offering a strong theoretical base for positioning this research. The five main tenets of CRT outlined by Delgado and Stefancic (2023) are already discussed in the literature review chapter. This discussion shows how these tenets are utilised for this study including the permanence of racism, social construction of race, interest convergence, differential racialisation, and counter-storytelling. The following diagram 6.2 shows the diagrammatic representation of Critical Race Theory and its five tenets followed by a discussion on how these concepts are applied to this research.

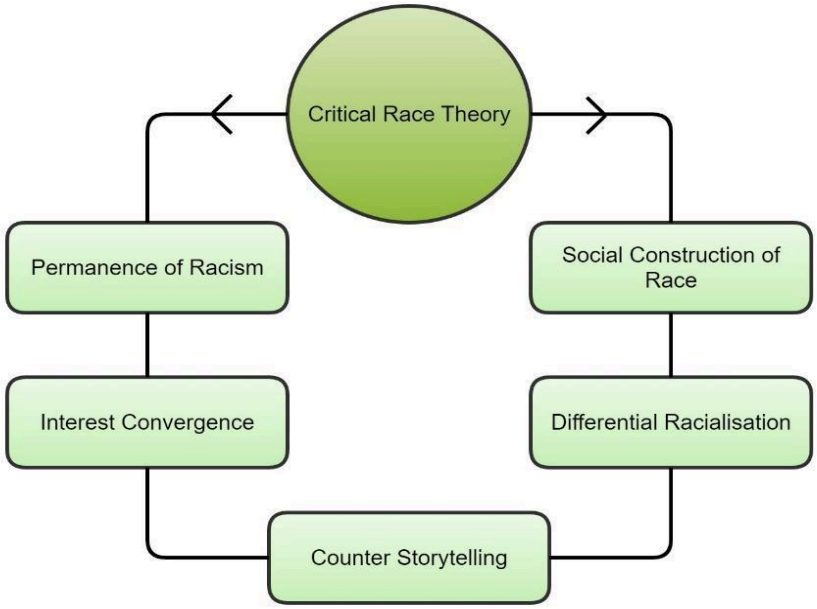

Figure 6.2. Five Tenets of Critical Race Theory, Source: Delgado and Stefancic (2023)

The empirical evidence from this research reveals that racism is a deeply embedded and constant component in the career journeys of British Pakistani women. The in-depth examination of the various institutional and sociocultural barriers of career progression highlights that these women face ongoing discrimination at the workplace mainly due to their intersectional identities. The disadvantage experienced by these women in their career journeys becomes complex and multiplied because of the inter-connectedness and overlapping of their different identity markers, especially with race. Through empirical evidence, it is found that racism trumps over other disadvantages that these women hold in the British workplaces. The critical analysis of the research findings confirmed that racism is a continued internalised dark reality of the British workplaces in the present times which has serious implications on the careers of Pakistani women.

By reconciling lived experiences of racism with the existing literature, this research demonstrates how race is a socially constructed marker of identity that influences the career journeys of British Pakistani women. In addition to the organisational and structural barriers, these women are faced with a unique set of challenges related to their families and patriarchal culture. Most of the key challenges faced by the participants, for instance racist remarks by colleagues, excessive workload, alcohol-related socialising, discriminatory hiring and promotion routes and unreliable reporting mechanisms at work highlight how their racial and ethnic background is used to justify unequal treatment towards Pakistani women while reproducing the systemic barriers that limit choices and possibilities. Such inequalities further perpetuate the multiple challenges experienced by these women both in the organisational and domestic spheres.

Using empirical evidence, this research elucidates how the career journeys of British Pakistani women are unique from the career journeys of White women, or the collective experiences of all South Asian women, Muslim women and ethnic minority women. As discussed earlier, it is a drawback of the existing literature to represent the experiences of Pakistani women to be synonymous with the experiences of Muslim women, South Asian women or ethnic minority women, which can diminish the peculiar sociocultural layers that are unique to the women of Pakistani heritage. This research expands on the premise that different racial and ethnic identities of working women impact and shape their career experiences in different ways that are different from each other and cannot be generalised. At the same time, the empirical evidence acknowledges that British Pakistani women face unique challenges of career progression due to intersecting racialised and gendered prejudices at the workplace, signifying the notion of differential racialisation, where racial identities impact the individual experiences differently.

Along the same lines, this research addresses the premise of counter-storytelling by presenting the British Pakistani women at work the opportunity to share their stories and lived experiences of career progression. These personal narratives of the participants provide crucial counter-stories that challenge dominant discourses from the mainstream literature, which has failed to include the first-hand lived experiences of these women without confusing their voices with other negatively racialised communities. Through empirical evidence, this piece of work has demonstrated the experiences of discrimination and exclusion at work for the British Pakistani women, while offering critical insights into the systemic barriers they face. This further highlights the importance of incorporating and acknowledging marginalised and silenced voices to understand and address racial inequalities in the workplace context.

The findings indicate that career progression of British Pakistani women may occur only when it aligns with the interests of White employees being the majority in the British workplaces. Many of the institutional barriers to career progression illustrate that the experiences of Pakistani women will be taken seriously only when they align with the dominant White organisational culture. For instance, the complaints against workplace inequalities and experiences of racism voiced by the Pakistani women were neglected if the perpetrator was a White colleague, and this practice was evident across all sectors represented in the sample. The Pakistani women may even progress and be hired in the organisational leadership, or in a board position, as long as they can make the organisation look good in the eyes of donors and satisfy the notion of tokenism. Similarly, another example can be these women feeling more included in the organisational culture and getting more opportunities of professional development, if they engaged in alcohol-related socialising which is a White, non-Muslim cultural norm. Therefore, it is found

that smooth career experiences for these women are often contingent upon serving the interests of predominantly White, male-dominated institutional structures in the UK.

The key tenets of Critical Race Theory are mirrored in the findings of this research by illustrating that the career experiences of British Pakistani women are embedded with racism and institutional barriers. This theoretical analysis aligns the empirical evidence with Critical Race Theory, emphasising the systemic nature of racism, social construction of race, the impact of differential racialisation, significance of counter-storytelling and the dynamics of interest convergence. Therefore, the above discussion elucidates the key findings of this research which are critically examined using literature and researcher's interpretation of the findings. In the following chapter, a conclusion of the research along with limitations are presented.

Chapter VII – Conclusion

This research examined the barriers to career progression for British Pakistani women in reaching managerial and leadership roles in British workplaces. In doing so, the lived experiences of 30 second-generation Pakistani women working in the UK were critically examined using thematic analysis. The overlapping and intersecting identity markers of these women including gender, race, religion, ethnicity are elucidated that shape their career experiences. Unlike mainstream literature that often problematizes the cultural aspects of ethnic minority women's careers, this research focuses on the broader institutional and structural challenges that restrict their career progression. Although there is enough evidence that ethnic minority women and Pakistani women are largely absent from decision-making roles in British workplaces, still it is quite a gruelling experience to hear out the voices behind the alarming statistics and reflect on the first-hand lived experiences of workplace inequalities.

To summarise, British Pakistani women are faced with multifaceted barriers to career progression which mainly include institutional and sociocultural barriers. Within these barriers involving organisations, culture and family, there are some challenges that are far more grave than the others. It is found that institutional racism and anti-Muslim racism are the most crucial barriers to career progression for British Pakistani women, out of all other barriers. In the light of the research findings and discussion, it is evident that there is no quick solution for addressing the barriers to career progression; it is, in fact, a continuous journey that takes time and requires patience and collective effort. As individualistic as it may seem, career progression is a combined effort of the whole system, including institutions, colleagues and families. At the same time, it is imperative to highlight that progression is not possible by virtue of individual skills

and expertise, rather, it is a systemic issue and must be viewed as a simultaneous phenomenon of the intersectional identities of these women along with institutional and sociocultural dynamics. It is high time that the identities of the Pakistani women are not viewed as problematic for their careers, rather the underlying systemic inequalities must be addressed. It is also crucial to consider the multiple identity layers of these women including gender, race, ethnicity and religion as inter-connected and overlapping constructs, and not only focus on single identity categories which are key in determining their working experiences. Therefore, the findings of this research depict huge implications of intersectional identities of second-generation Pakistani women on their career progression.

7.1. Contribution of This Research

This research attempts to contribute to literature by generating empirical evidence around examining the career-related experiences of second-generation British Pakistani women who are educated and experienced professionals and have served in managerial and leadership roles. The focus of this research i.e. lived experiences of second-generation British Pakistani women is important, yet under-researched in the mainstream literature of organisational studies, workplace equality and discrimination (Arifeen and Gatrell, 2013, 2019). As discussed earlier, most of the existing scholarship is focused on the experiences of White women, Black men, Black women, Muslim women, migrant women, or first-generation Pakistani women. At the same time Opara et al. (2020) and Arifeen and Gatrell (2013) argue that the voices and lived experiences of British ethnic minority women are entirely non-existent in the workplace equality and discrimination literature. This research builds on notable work by Opara et al. (2020) about the careers of professional women from Black, Asian and ethnic minority backgrounds, Tariq and Syed (2017) about careers of Muslim South Asian women and the studies by Tariq and Syed (2018), Arifeen

and Syed (2019), Naseem (2019), Arifeen and Gatrell (2013, 2019, 2020) about the careers of second-generation Muslim Pakistani women and in doing so, it makes key theoretical contribution to the existing scholarship through rich empirical evidence on the lived experiences of these women. It also goes beyond providing empirical evidence and indulges in intersectional analyses by considering the overlapping of gender, race, religion and ethnicity in sociocultural and institutional contexts. It suggests that the overt identities of British Pakistani women are in conflict with the identity of an 'ideal' candidate who is the right fit that the employers are seeking; i,e, White, middle-class, non-Muslim and male.

While highlighting unfavourable employment situation for ethnic minorities in the UK, the existing literature often elaborates on their education and qualifications (Zuccotti, 2015), parental socioeconomic status (Zuccotti and Platt, 2017), preference of part-time work and motherhood (Howells et al., 2018), family responsibilities (Kaur Rana et al., 1998; Ali et al., 2017), agency and self-determination (for instance Kamenou, 2002; Fearfull and Kamenou, 2006; Tariq and Syed, 2017). While these are important aspects of these women's careers, there needs to be greater focus on examining the broader institutional and systemic inequalities that contribute to shaping their career journeys. Therefore, this research becomes highly relevant and important in this regard, as it intentionally digresses from the traditional approach of considering the individual and ethnicity-related factors of Pakistani women's employment in isolation from the broader picture. It is important as it considers their intersectional identities within the wider institutional and sociocultural dynamics. This brings more life to this research, as the lived experiences of the Pakistani women are considered from a more comprehensive standpoint.

This research attempts to address the gaps relating to intersectional analysis, by addressing the examination of separate identity categories in isolation and contributions to the scholarship by

considering the intersectional identities of British Pakistani women in the institutional and sociocultural contexts. A significant theoretical contribution of this research is that it responds to the call by Opara et al. (2020), Arifeen and Gatrell (2013, 2019) and Tariq and Syed (2018) who problematise the intersectional analysis in its present form. Therefore, this research has focused on the interconnectedness and intersections of the different layers of identities of British Pakistani women, for instance gender, race, religion and ethnicity. It has considered these different identity markers in simultaneity with each other, and not as stand-alone categories existing in isolation. In doing so, this research considers the overlapping interactions of individual identity markers within, and their interaction with sociocultural and institutional contexts all while positioning the disadvantage experienced by British Pakistani women from a comprehensive intersectional standpoint. This approach to intersectionality is insightful to gauge a holistic picture of the barriers to career progression as conceptualised in figure 1.3 demonstrating the dynamic combined system of oppression (Crenshaw, 1991).

This research highlighted the first-hand accounts of workplace microaggressions experienced by Pakistani women working in British organisations in different fields of work; some of whom are in leadership and managerial positions already, and others are striving for those. The workplace microaggressions are experienced by all women in one form or the other, regardless of their demographic differences; thereby demonstrating the seriousness of this phenomenon; such that the microaggressions have permeated through the workplace culture in British organisations, often embodying ani-Muslim racism. Interestingly, the subtle and indirect nature of these workplace microaggressions is easily overlooked and often these do not qualify as acts of discrimination and harassment before the eyes of the senior management or the HR departments. Whereas these workplace microaggressions are loud and clear indicators of racial stereotypes

and prejudice, anti-Muslim hate and discrimination and (often) bullying; all while giving rise to workplace inequalities, exclusion of the ethnic minorities and cornering their interests. The same is evident in the findings of this research, and extensively reported by all participating women in different forms. Since the workplace microaggressions are less visible as compared to overt discrimination; therefore, they are hardly identified due to their sophisticated nature. It is worrying that most of the workplace microaggressions that were reported by the participants of this research were neglected due to the biased reporting mechanisms in their respective workplaces.

Therefore, this indicates a serious problem, that indirect acts of discrimination and workplace bullying are often invisible to the so-called robust HR and organisational incidents reporting mechanisms in place. The racial microaggressions are found to be more aggravated in those workplaces where there are strict checks on visible forms of discrimination and workplace harassment. It is a critical contribution of this research to reveal that British workplaces have normalised racial microaggressions and especially anti-Muslim racism towards Pakistani women due to their enabling and permissive behaviour. In fact, British organisations are subtle enablers of anti-Muslim workplace microaggressions and hidden discrimination against Pakistani women due to their gender, race, religion and ethnicity, i.e. intersectional identities of these women. It is unfortunate to see this happening in today's day and age where the scholarship and industry are beating the drum of equality, diversity and inclusion alike and there are Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set out by the United Nations to safeguard gender equality, decent work and economic growth and reduced inequalities (corresponding to SDGs 5, 8 and 10 respectively). This is a crucial situation which indicates the need for more sensitive policies and practices for ensuring zero tolerance towards all acts of racism, Islamophobia and other forms of workplace

discrimination and bullying so that even the invisible discrimination does not go unchecked by the DEI regulations.

This research contributes to the literature by emphasising upon a vital aspect of Pakistani women's intersectional identities, i.e. religion and its interactions with other identity markers like race, ethnicity, gender. The intersections of religious identity with gender, race, ethnicity are formative for Pakistani women's identities, therefore, these intersections along with broader systemic factors have been a primary focus in this research. For example, Tariq and Syed (2018) argue that sole emphasis on gender does not adequately explain the career challenges of second-generation Pakistani women in the UK and it is important to consider the intersections of gender with ethnicity and religion (see Arifeen and Gatrell, 2013, 2019). Similarly, Opara et al. (2020) highlight that the intersectional identities should not be examined as static and singular identity markers, rather their interplay must be taken into account. Even the DEI agendas in organisations have consistently ignored the intersection of faith; and this is why the problem of Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hate has been conveniently brushed under the carpet in today's Britain. Recently this suppressed hatred has erupted like a volcano of Islamophobia, anti-Muslim and anti-immigration hatred, and racist attacks in the 2024 UK riots.

7.2. Limitations of the Research

There are some limitations of this research which are discussed as follows:

The study has a limited sample size of 30 participants, which is not representative of the entire population of British Pakistani women. The participants may not represent the diversity within the British Pakistani women community, and therefore, this may be an opportunity for future

research. It is important to note that due to data saturation, no more participants were recruited for this research beyond this point.

This study focuses solely on the experiences of second-generation Pakistani women, without considering the viewpoint of the employer. This could be a limitation that the interviews did not involve matched samples with employers. Similarly, this research has not extensively examined the policy-related and legal context that shapes workplace dynamics and career opportunities for ethnic minority women and Pakistani women. Understanding the policies and legal context can be important for a comprehensive analysis. This research does not fully account for contextual factors such as industry-specific challenges, or variations in workplace environments, which can influence career progression differently.

This research encountered challenges due to the Covid-19 pandemic, leading to multiple disruptions and a shift to online methodologies. The aim to conduct in-person data collection was disrupted due to Covid-19 related travel restrictions, lockdowns, social distancing policies and mandatory health-related protocols. This reliance on virtual methods during the pandemic posed a unique limitation during the data collection. Conducting the study in a non-pandemic timeframe would likely have allowed for different data collection approaches, unaffected by the constraints imposed by this public health emergency. Similarly, obtaining online responses from participants proved challenging, primarily because in that timeframe of 2020-2021, people were just starting to transition towards online interactions and virtual meetings were often new to organisations and working professionals. Therefore, those women who had a significant online presence were more accessible; and others were not. In some cases the participants took a long time to respond to the emails sent by the researcher, which led to delays in the data collection process.

7.3. Identifying Methodological Gaps for Future Research

For future research, it would be better to use face-to-face tools for primary data collection, instead of having online data collection methods. This may help getting more organic responses from the participants and there will be a more personal element to the experience-sharing and overall data collection. The further research would benefit by employing mixed-methods research approaches to combine qualitative and quantitative data. Integrating survey data with in-depth interviews or focus groups can provide a richer understanding of the barriers of career progression and facilitate triangulation of findings. Additionally, it would be beneficial to collaborate with community organisations and local networks representing Pakistani British women because such engagement may be helpful in identifying and facilitating easier access to participants. If undertaking quantitative research, it would be useful to develop inclusive sampling strategies to ensure diverse representation of Pakistani women. Researchers must aim to develop a sample that reflects the varied experiences within the Pakistani British women community, including different professions, educational backgrounds, and levels of career.

7.4. Recommendations

Addressing the barriers to career progression for British Pakistani women requires a multifaceted approach at different tiers of the society. This is why this section presents specific recommendations at different levels, based on the findings of this research. This includes recommendations for DEI practitioners, employers and ethnic minority women and Pakistani women in the UK. In the following section, these recommendations are presented for these stakeholders separately:

7.4.1. Recommendations for DEI Practitioners

1. It is recommended that DEI practitioners should encourage and support diversity and inclusion initiatives within organisations across industries, with greater focus on intersectionality within DEI. Implementing programs that foster an inclusive culture and actively address systemic racism, and unconscious bias can contribute to reduced inequalities at workplaces and pave ways for a supportive environment for career progression. It is found that the DEI agenda in its existing form is often more focused on the aspect of gender and sexuality and most of the time, the interactions of race and religion are not given enough priority, especially in higher education institutions in the UK (for instance, see Bhopal, 2020a; Bhopal and Henderson, 2021). Similarly, unconscious bias training in the British workplaces has been criticised for its unintended consequences, such as triggering biases or sparking backlash (Dobin and Kalev, 2016). Often it is merely done to tick boxes having no real impact and the same echoes the findings of this research as well. This is because the present DEI programs in organisations are often focused on direct forms of exclusion and on singular identity categories, while ignoring the overlapping nature of identity markers which present complex challenges of exclusion and inequalities for ethnic minorities, especially Pakistani women at work. It is noted that the concept of intersectionality in its present shape has become a 'tick box exercise' without fully addressing the systemic issues faced by the marginalised groups; especially the negatively racialised groups. Rather than implementing meaningful change, organisations often use intersectionality as a symbolic gesture to proclaim commitment to diversity, overlooking the complexity of individual experiences. Therefore, there is a serious need for introducing more inclusive and

intersectionality-sensitive DEI programs that address these nuances of employee identities and foster transparency and accountability from the organisational leadership.

2. Advocate for mandatory equal pay audits to check existing ethnic and gender pay gaps to ensure transparency in salary structures. DEI practitioners should advocate for the organisations to regularly assess and disclose the data for gender and ethnicity pay gaps, especially in line with the UK government legislation on gender and ethnic pay reporting. This can help identify and rectify disparities in remuneration.
3. Advocate for flexible working policies to accommodate diverse needs of ethnic minority women, especially for working mothers. The existing flexible working policies in organisations are designed and implemented homogeneously for all women, keeping White middle-class women in mind. These policies tend to ignore external factors such as cultural background of the ethnic minority women that may give rise to different needs of flexible working arrangements. Therefore, DEI practitioners and activists can play a positive role to encourage organisations to adopt the existing policies around flexible working arrangements, remote work options, and family-friendly policies especially considering the sociocultural backgrounds of ethnic minority women, thus reducing barriers for these women to balance work and family responsibilities.
4. Advocate for increased funding for mentorship programs in organisations that specifically cater to the unique experiences of ethnic minority women. It is vital to design such mentorship programs that consider the nuances of exclusion faced by the ethnic minority women during their career journeys. The crucial need for introducing formal mentoring programs and support networks at institutional and departmental levels for ethnic minority women in academia is highlighted by Bhopal (2019).

5. DEI practitioners can work together with employers to set and achieve targets for improved representation of religious, gender and ethnic diversity at leadership levels. This can be helpful in promoting a more inclusive organisational culture especially at the top hierarchical levels. From the perspective of Critical Race Theory and interest convergence, the progress for negatively racialised groups will occur only when it benefits the dominant groups. Having greater representation of ethnic minority women in decision-making positions would substantially benefit the organisation's reputation. It can help to generate huge revenues, therefore, the interests of the dominant White groups would be met. McKinsey and Company found that organisations with greater representation of ethnic minorities in leadership roles have much higher profits as compared to those organisations with lesser diversity in their leadership (Dixon-Fyle et al., 2023).

7.4.2. Recommendations for Employers

1. Provide comprehensive diversity and inclusion programs that consider the complexities of intersectional identities of the employees and especially address anti-racism in the workplace. This should include awareness of unconscious biases, cultural sensitivity, anti-racism and strategies for fostering an inclusive workplace. For instance, unconscious bias training initiatives can be successful only when they are implemented as part of a consistent and comprehensive DEI program; instead of being a one-off training session that is beneficial for the image of the organisation (Bhopal, 2020a; Dobin and Kalev, 2016). Such superficial DEI programs are widely used in British organisations today that are barely useful for ethnic minority employees and are unable to address preconceived biases or bring about behavioural change among the employees.

2. Customise the existing flexible work arrangements in ways to accommodate diverse needs of the ethnic minority women, especially Pakistani women. This includes offering options such as flexible hours, remote work, and part-time positions, especially while considering their peculiar cultural backgrounds.
3. Take adequate steps to ensure transparency in the existing hiring and promotion processes in the organisations. Clearly communicate selection criteria in job advertisements and opportunities of promotion and make sure that the selection criteria are qualification and expertise, and not the ability to 'fit in'. It is crucial to establish efficient mechanisms to address concerns about discrimination and biases in hiring and promotion decisions.
4. Make sure that the hiring committees and interview panels have equitable representation of gender, race, ethnicity and religion, instead of having token representation. These diverse representatives should have genuine participation in the decisions on hiring and recruitment, and not merely be a rubber stamp with no real participation in these decisions.
5. Regularly review and address any gender and ethnic pay disparities within the organisation. Implement equal pay practices especially for ethnic minority women, to ensure that remuneration is fair and commensurate with skills and experience of these employees, regardless of gender, ethnicity or religion.
6. Facilitate inclusive and non-alcohol networking opportunities within and outside the workplace. Provide equitable opportunities of participation to British Pakistani women and ethnic minority women in industry events and conferences at par with the White employees. The aim should be to facilitate social networking and building professional connections with like-minded colleagues so they can broaden their support networks and

make allies for improved access to opportunities of professional development and address issues of racism and exclusion (see Bhopal, 2020a). From a CRT perspective, particularly through the lens of interest convergence, having inclusive networking opportunities may align with the interests of both ethnic minority women and the White employees. This is because these events are more than likely to earn a good reputation for the organisation as a diverse and inclusive workplace that provides opportunities to the ethnic minority women. While this would reflect positively on the predominantly White organisational leadership, it may result in opportunities to utilise the under-valued skills of these women, ultimately enhancing organisational performance.

7.4.3. Recommendations for Ethnic Minority Women and British Pakistani Women

This section is important as it directly addresses the ethnic minority women and Pakistani women in the UK, consisting of the population studied in this research. By presenting recommendations, this section meets the research aim of finding ways in which the experiences of career progression of these women can be improved. These recommendations can be widely applicable to ethnic minority women as well as Pakistani women working in British organisations and will be publicly disseminated through social media platforms and podcasts. Following are some recommendations made specially for the ethnic minority women and Pakistani women for enhanced career progression.

1. Acknowledge that even though '*the cards are stacked against you'* as stated by a participant, it is critical to be unapologetically yourself, and not hesitate to reclaim your power within the prejudiced workplaces. It may be done by continuing to raise voice

against injustices, and identifying the individual coping strategies to continue your journey.

2. Actively seek networking opportunities and allyship with like-minded colleagues within the organisation, within and across different departments as well. Establish connections with experienced colleagues who are sensitive to the experiences of exclusion and racism, and those who can share information regarding opportunities of professional development and offer valuable insights for career progression.
3. Engage with community organisations outside the workplace and develop support networks and allies externally. Also, connect with other ethnic minorities and Pakistani women facing similar challenges, share experiences, and seek inspiration and advice from those who have successfully navigated career progression barriers.
4. Become familiarised with resources and support services available within the organisation and the wider community. This may include mentorship programs designed for ethnic minorities, employee assistance programs, and career counselling services.
5. It is important to report experiences of differential treatment at the workplace by following the organisational mechanisms for reporting incidents at work. Although it is found that the experiences of Pakistani women are often not taken seriously at work, this should not silence your voice. Often the silence of ethnic minority women in British workplaces is mistaken for resilience (Showunmi, 2021).

7.5. Future Research Directions

For future research, it would be useful to investigate the industry-specific gender pay gap and ethnicity pay gap for Pakistani women, as well as the underlying industry-specific challenges.

These gaps are crucial indicators of labour market inequalities and have gained attention in data from the Office of National Statistics (see ONS, 2018, 2022, 2023). It would be significant to examine the career progression of Pakistani women belonging to specific sectors, like public and private sectors. Similarly, future research can further examine the industry-specific barriers to career progression for these women (considering their intersectional identities) in different fields of work; for example, specifically focusing on Pakistani women in healthcare, Pakistani women in the field of law.

Examining the career journeys of second-generation Pakistani men could be a significant avenue for future research. It would be interesting to map the career progression of Pakistani men in the UK; especially in securing decision-making roles in British workplaces. Similarly, it would be interesting to conduct further investigation of the career progression of Pakistani women and ethnic minority women in the light of the workplace equality and diversity legislation; especially to critically analyse the practical implementation of the organisational policies regarding diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) in British workplaces. An important aspect can be to gauge the effectiveness of the existing DEI initiatives in organisations in addressing anti-racism in the workplace. It would be useful to evaluate their role in addressing the barriers to career progression, especially considering the intersectional identities of ethnic minority employees and identify the areas for improvement.

7.6. Conclusion

Based on empirical evidence, this research has demonstrated that British Pakistani women continue to face a myriad of institutional, sociocultural and structural barriers in their career journeys, despite the diversity, equality and inclusion efforts in the British organisations. These

women have specific needs of career progression that should not be perceived as homogenous with other ethnic minority groups. In fact, the career progression needs of the British Pakistani women can be understood when the inter-connected and overlapping nature of their intersectional identity markers like gender, race, religion, family status and ethnicity are considered in simultaneity with the broader institutional, structural and sociocultural contexts.

There are many significant institutional and sociocultural factors that shape the career journeys of British Pakistani women; however, institutional racism surpasses all other identified barriers. It is deeply embedded in the organisational structures and processes in the British workplace in such ways that it is evidenced at different stages of these women's careers starting from job search, to hiring and recruitment, professional development, and job promotions. Therefore, this qualitative research found that racism poses a major threat to the career progression of British Pakistani women and becomes intensified with the visible 'Markers of Muslimness'. It is manifested in visible and discreet ways in the British workplaces, especially anti-Muslim racism and racial microaggressions. It is responsible for perpetuating employment inequalities for Pakistani women like discrimination in hiring and recruitment, restricted opportunities of professional development and exclusion of Pakistani women from social networks at work. Ultimately, it is elucidated that the absence of Pakistani women from leadership and senior positions in British organisations is essentially the output of institutional racism. Employers and organisations must accept their crucial responsibility in this regard, especially in confronting the existing racialised processes, structures and workplace culture that uphold White privilege and reproduce workplace inequalities restricting the career progression of these women. As Opara et al. (2020), Arifeen and Gatrell (2013) and Tariq and Syed (2018) indicated, without considering the overlapping of intersectional identities like gender, race, ethnicity, religion and family status

in the light of broader systemic inequalities, the understanding of the career journeys of British Pakistani women remains obscure for scholars and practitioners alike.

7.7. Final Reflection

This research has a piece of my heart and soul. It has seen a pandemic and many lockdowns, the loss of my two father figures, a struggling marriage, a broken computer, inflation, war and genocide, isolation, uncertainty and so much more. Yet, I would recognise this as one of the most inspiring chapters of my life and I would always be grateful that I could embark on this special endeavour and that I completed it. It was not easy, but it was worth it. It has been my safe haven for the last 5 years and I would love to build more on this in the future. During the recent UK riots in August 2024 that have exposed the dreadful hatred against Muslims, Black and Brown people across British society, someone wrote this very powerful message on a street in Birmingham. If I had to conclude my doctoral research in one sentence, it would be this, in a heartbeat… ***The only thing that should be separated by colour is laundry***.

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Appendices

Appendix A - Detailed Demographic Information for Individual Participants

Name	Residence Location	Age (Years)	Marital Status	Role in the Organisation	Highest Qualification	Work Experience (Years)	Served as Manager / Leader (Years)	Parental Socioeconomic Status
Zaryaab	Stafford	35	Married	Fundraising Executive	Masters	12	1	High Income
Majida	London	51	Married	Ground Operations Officer	Bachelors	20	6	Middle Income
Wajidaan	London	29	Single	Psychologist	Masters	6	3	Middle Income
Atiqa	Reading	39	Married	Nursery Practitioner	Masters	10	5	High Income
Naima	London	51	Single	People and Organisational Development Coordinator	Bachelors	30	17.5	Middle Income
Mopet	London	50	Single	Lecturer	PhD	26	25	Middle Income
Ruby	Gloucester	50	Married	Teaching Assistant	Masters	35	12	Middle Income
Sitara	London	65	Divorced	Personal Development Coach	Bachelors	40	26	Middle Income
Gulalai	Leeds	62	Married	Professor	PhD	43	30	Middle Income
Seemi	London	39	Married	Program Assistant	Masters	15	3	Middle Income
Asma	Plymouth	50	Married	Associate Professor	PhD	23	3	Middle Income
Fatima	Plymouth	43	Married	Healthcare Professional	Masters	6	5	Middle Income
Hina	Bradford	41	Married	Artist	Masters	22	10	Middle Income
Zubiya	London	31	Married	Chef	Masters	15	2	Low Income
Basharat	London	39	Single	Global Education Director	Masters	22	10	Middle Income
Nazeeha	Manchester	45	Married	Senior Lecturer	PhD	20	8	Middle Income
Sumbal	Manchester	35	Married	Lecturer	PhD	9	3	Middle Income
Maya	Leeds	36	Single	Lecturer	PhD	17	4	Low to Middle
Sheneela	London	31	Married	Corporate Lawyer	Bachelors	8	1.5	High Income
Bilquis	Sheffield	43	Married	Professor	PhD	25	20	Middle Income
Waheeda	London	53	Divorced	Founder and CEO	Masters	25	20	Middle Income

Malaika	Reading	39	Married	School Administrator	Masters	15	5	Middle Income
Ayla	Scotland	38	Married	Researcher	Masters	8	5	Middle Income
Beenish	Scotland	40	Single	Marketing Content Specialist	Masters	12	3	Middle Income
Qaisera	London	38	Married	Clinic Owner-Consultant Psychotherapist	Masters	7	2	Middle Income
Salmah	London	58	Married	Clinical Hypnotherapist	Masters	20	5	Middle Income
Wajeeha	Manchester	46	Single	Environmental Analyst	Bachelors	20	6	High Income
Tania	Bradford	28	Married	Head of Research and Development	Masters	20	6	Middle Income
Mahpara	London			Senior Lecturer	PhD	25		Middle Income
Ulfat	Reading	42	Single	Technical Specialist Operating Model	Bachelors	20	7	Middle Income

Appendix B - Individual Biographical Profiling of Research Participants

The following biographical profiles are developed by the researcher for the individual participants based on their demographics and lived experiences. The sources of information used to create these profiles include the interview recordings, demographic information collected from the participants and notes of the researcher.

Participant Profile - Zaryaab

'I feel like you have responsibilities at home that you have to juggle.... There may be career breaks…. you take maternity breaks…. so perhaps that creates pauses in your career which will prevent you from advancing as fast as men..'

35-year-old Zaryaab is a good example of a working mother progressing in her career with adequate family support in managing childcare responsibilities. She works in a local NGO and has 12 years of working experience in the development sector. Although she did her primary years schooling in Saudi Arabia, most of her education is from the UK and she earned Masters degree at a local university in London. She was born and raised in the UK, later moving to Saudi Arabia when she was 8 years old and returned to the UK when she was 13 years. She acknowledged that her English language accent (which is not typical British accent), influenced by her time in Saudi Arabia, often prompts questions about her family background and sometimes even restricts the opportunities coming her way.

She is mother to a young baby boy and works part-time, three days a week and has the flexibility to work from home. She emphasised the importance of employer support in making it possible for her to balance work and family responsibilities. She mentioned that her colleagues, including another working mother in the team, understand and accommodate each other's family

commitments. She shares insights into her experiences of being an ethnic minority woman, emphasising that her current workplace is supportive, but she is aware of challenges faced by others, including institutional racism and unconscious bias. Her husband is a doctor in the local hospital and he often tells her about incidents of subtle discrimination and racism towards Pakistani healthcare professionals at his work.

While she was reflecting on her first job in a predominantly White law firm, she shared how she experienced a toxic work culture, lack of support for trainees and job insecurity. Despite these challenges, she credits this experience for teaching her the importance of prioritising mental health and standing up for herself. Discussing challenges faced by women from ethnic minority backgrounds, she highlights cultural perceptions about women's roles and the need to balance work and family responsibilities. She shared that although institutional racism and unconscious bias exist in some organisations, her personal experiences have not been significantly hindered by these factors. She emphasised upon the importance of employers actively promoting diversity to create an inclusive workplace. For the career progression solutions that worked for her, she suggested being involved actively in social networking after-work. She emphasised on the crucial role of family support for women's career progression. She cites examples of friends and family members providing support with childcare and household responsibilities, enabling women to excel in their careers.

Participant Profile - Mopet

'What I did see was that people like me…. people of Pakistani background just didn't exist in the teaching profession….'

Mopet is a 50-year-old unmarried woman, and has 26 years of working experience. She is currently employed as a lecturer at a local university. She belongs to a middle-income family and holds a PhD degree. Her parents belong to the traditional province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in Pakistan, and her grandparents migrated to the UK decades ago. She was born and raised in England and learnt English as her first language. She had a unique experience of learning Urdu during a brief stay in Pakistan, which was challenging but impactful. Her family encouraged her to pursue higher education, and despite initial struggles in the job market, she pursued a teaching career. She started as a primary school teacher in London and faced subtle racism at work but found support from other ethnic minority colleagues. Gradually she managed to secure managerial roles, and also became an Advanced Skills Teacher, specialising in science and mathematics.

Later she joined higher education which brought new challenges for her, including exclusionary behaviour from her colleagues, racist comments and huge workloads. She assumed that everyone else would have the same amount of work to do, but gradually realised that the White colleagues have fairly less workloads while being in the same department and on the same levels as herself. Despite such challenges, she excelled and became an associate professor, contributing significantly to decolonising curriculum and climate education initiatives. However, she was faced with organisational politics where White colleagues would take credit for her hard work and she was denied important opportunities of presenting her work internationally. She experienced racism and her complaints were not taken seriously by the HR despite several tries. She started networking externally and soon she got hired in a new role at a different university where she could focus on her passion, i.e. climate change and sustainability education. She expressed a sense of relief after quitting her previous job and was hopeful about finding a more

supportive environment in the new workplace. She discussed her strategies for coping with workplace challenges which included seeking supportive networks internally as well as externally. In her case, internal networking did not prove useful because most of her colleagues were racist, so she focused more on external networking to find a platform where her work would be valued, and she would be given the due credit. She highlighted the importance of self-motivation and shared that others' negative behaviours often reflect their own insecurities. She suggested that institutions should offer personalised support for ethnic minority employees, such as coaching and mentoring. She also emphasised on the importance of authentic, ongoing check-ins by line managers.

Participant Profile - Ruby

'Then again, I sacrificed… 'this is not the field for me'... Then, I had Areeba and I took a break for two years…. but everywhere, I had to sacrifice my professional life.. and that's just fine.. but this is the way… '

50-year-old Ruby is a married woman with two teenage daughters. She has almost 35 years of working experience and comes from a middle-class family. She has experience working at a nearby institution as a teaching assistant. Despite holding an MBA in Marketing and Finance, she struggled to find a job due to racist hiring and recruitment processes. After the birth of her first child she took a break from her career due to lack of family and husband's support and expensive childcare. She faced difficulties re-entering the workforce after a few years of break and experienced loads of job rejections and struggled alone in the absence of a support system. She changed her field, pursued teaching qualifications, and now works as a Teaching Assistant in a school. She shared numerous accounts of discrimination in job interviews, like being stopped

mid-interview because students reportedly opposed her selection, seeing less qualified White women applicants get selected for the role. Despite her qualifications, she faced challenges in getting promotions and leaves during religious holidays. She felt that the South Asian community did not want to socialise with her, which led to social isolation. She struggled to connect with her colleagues at work because she was 'brown' and they would all be more friendly with each other. She did not understand their jokes, neither did she go to parties and late hour social gatherings. She shared her experiences of encountering discriminatory hiring and recruitment, especially when the interview processes for jobs and promotions seemed biassed, affecting her career growth. She expressed a desire to return to her accounting field but felt hindered by both family responsibilities and potential bias in hiring. The importance of educating daughters and the need for unity and support within the community were emphasised by her. She shared her strategies for managing work and home responsibilities, by better time management and planning the weeks ahead of time, social networking, sacrifice and never giving up.

Participant Profile - Sitara

"We're talking about professional men… educated men… They had in many of the offices; girlie calendars.. topless calendars.. and nobody said, 'Don't do that… I find that offensive...' It was, as I said, quite a different time…. You don't see them anywhere anymore…'

Sitara is a 65-year-old resident of Hertfordshire. She comes from a middle-income family and has worked in the British civil service for over 40 years. She had a difficult marriage at an early age, went through a divorce and raised her child alone. She studied BA honours from the UK and presently works as a personal development coach. She reflected on her experiences with her name mostly being pronounced incorrectly since her school days in the 1960s, which led her to

pick a shorter and easy-to-pronounce name. Most of her family members in the UK had English nicknames and she felt that it was the need of those times and a common practice among the British Pakistani community. In the present times, people are more aware and make an effort to pronounce names correctly as compared to the past. She recalled her school days in North London and university life from Northern Ireland where she encountered derogatory remarks for being a Pakistani woman and had similar experiences later in her professional life.

She talked about her transition from studying English literature to attempting chartered accountancy because her father persuaded her, facing challenges due to a lack of interest in maths. She discussed her experience of working in both public and private sectors, emphasising the impact of equal opportunities legislation introduced in 1973. She acknowledged the negative impact of unequal gender dynamics in the workplace, and expressed the need for women to be financially independent, a value instilled in her by her father. She discussed suffering from imposter syndrome and how her self-confidence was affected due to the masculine workplace culture. She discussed that Pakistani women are generally less assertive than men, especially in salary negotiations and this is why it is extremely important to build self-confidence, assertiveness and employability skills. She felt strongly about the complexity of workplace experiences for Pakistani women because of their culture and family and shared that similar challenges do not exist for women of other ethnicities. She felt that Islamophobia had increased a lot in the last few years and it has weakened the positioning of Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups in the UK, especially limiting them to low-paying jobs and limited opportunities of career progression.

Participant Profile - Gulalai

'... They are exposed to diversity all the time…. but you'll still get the odd person who doesn't experience racism themselves, and comes out with really inappropriate comments about hijab….'

Gulalai, a 62-year-old mother of four, came to the UK with her parents when she was an infant. She belongs to a middle income family and got her PhD qualification from the UK. Being a *hijabi* woman, she works at a local university in a senior academic role and has 43 years of working experience. Her career path was non-traditional, starting with a degree in Arabic and English, followed by various roles in community work and advocacy. Her journey led her through different roles in community organisations, where she gained transferable skills and moved into education and coordination roles. Despite facing challenges, such as initial difficulty in securing employment and experiencing racism, she persevered and continued to build her expertise. Throughout her career, she experienced anti-Muslim racism because of being a hijabi Pakistani woman in academia, and expressed how frustrating it has been for her. Even at the senior leadership level, she is faced with everyday racism and feels isolated because of not having many others around who look like her. She shared the positive impact of having allies and support networks outside her university and emphasised that all ethnic minority women should try finding allies both inside and outside the workplace and building a community of support for career progression. She highlighted the ongoing presence of racism in academia, mentioning instances of inappropriate comments and lack of sensitivity in academia towards race and ethnicity. Her coping mechanisms were not to give up, to believe in the value of her work, and to seek support from external networks. She also discussed the importance of representation in decision-making roles to address inequalities at institutional and policy levels. She shared that there is a general lack of transparency around promotion processes in academia and emphasised

upon the need for transparent and democratic processes in opportunities of promotion, ensuring that ethnic minorities should have a chance to be evaluated fairly, on equal footing as the White colleagues.

Participant Profile - Majida

'Again, there were issues…. even though I was in a senior role, my views were not heard by anyone….. I felt that it was this way because I'm a woman….'

Majida, born and raised in London, is a 51-year-old married woman with 4 children, and she has been a full time mother most of her life. There was no support for her as her husband was a business owner and he had to work full time. Her highest qualification is BA degree and she has almost 20 years of working experience and 6 years of managerial experience. She worked for over ten years in a senior role at a local airport. She started her journey when she was young and primarily screened bags for airport security. Later she got promoted to ground operations officer. Her experience at the airport has been diverse, interacting with people from various backgrounds, and she has maintained friendships with her colleagues for a long time. She had to leave her job from the airport and stay at home as her husband's carer because of his serious illness. Gradually, things became better and she returned to working part-time in a retail store.

Her husband, originally from Pakistan, started a business in 2015, and Majda left her job to manage one of his fast-food franchises in Wembley for 5-6 years. Due to her husband's health issues and in the wake of Covid-19, they decided to sell the business in 2020, thus making her unemployed. She reflected on the challenges of transitioning from being self-employed to working for someone else, specifically mentioning the freedom and pace difference in both. She acknowledges the crucial support from her husband and late mother, who helped her balance

work and raise her four children. She believes that racism at work is a huge barrier for Pakistani women and specifically, language barrier and lack of confidence hinders Pakistani women's career progression. She highlighted the support systems available in the UK, including professional and personal development courses and assistance for career development, comparing it with the support services she perceives to be available in Pakistan. She mentioned some examples of her friends and acquaintances to share that non-White people without UK qualifications are not the preferred employees for British employers. She mentioned that there can be potential challenges for immigrants with foreign degrees, suggesting a need for additional exams or courses to align with UK standards.

Participant Profile - Wajidaan

'People who are not White, I think they are targeted more….'

Wajidaan, a 29-year-old London resident, is from a middle-class family. She holds a master's degree in clinical psychology and has experience working as a psychologist at a nearby clinic. She served as a manager for three years and expressed that her workplace lacks sufficient support, especially from the HR department. She shared workplace issues about low pay, excessive workload, inflexible working hours and not getting her leave applications approved. She felt that colleagues who had been in the workplace longer received preferential treatment, creating a divide between newer and more experienced employees. She revealed experiences of discrimination based on her ethnicity, particularly when she worked alongside white colleagues in a predominantly white environment. She noted disparities in treatment, including longer working hours and less favourable conditions compared to her white colleagues.

She shared examples regarding the reluctance to escalate issues to HR due to perceived ineffectiveness and potential repercussions. She emphasised the need for a more humane work culture that considers employees' well-being, especially during challenging times. She shared her personal experiences that people of colour, especially women, face more challenges and biases in the workplace, impacting their opportunities for incentives and career advancement. She advised young women facing similar challenges to persevere, choose battles wisely, and, when possible, raise concerns to higher authorities.

Participant Profile - Atiqa

'…Most of the colleagues were White and I was one of the very few ethnic minority people there. I never faced any harassment, but I never felt a part of them... I felt like an outsider….'

Atiqa, a 39-year-old mother of a toddler. She works in the field of early childhood education and holds an MBA degree. She has a working experience of more than ten years and belongs to a high-income Pakistani family. She shared about her career journey, starting with a part-time teaching job at a local nursery in 2012. She lost her job due to the pandemic, engaged in freelance jobs to have flexible hours, and self-funded her participation in various childcare courses because the school would not pay for these courses. She struggled with balancing work and family responsibilities with support from her husband. In her previous jobs, she often faced uncomfortable interactions with her White colleagues who made her feel like an outsider. She felt that the reason she was treated differently was because she was the only ethnic minority employee at the workplace (especially because she was from Pakistan). Her colleagues asked her questions like how come your English is so good, about arranged marriages, etc. Her experiences of racism were so subtle in nature that she found it difficult to voice them, and she was not

hopeful in the outcomes even if she did. Eventually, she quit that role because the exclusion was extremely exhausting for her. She felt that her current workplace was better because the employees come from various ethnic backgrounds, so it was better in terms of racial diversity. She was motivated to secure a senior position within the school in the future, however, her applications so far had not yielded positive outcomes. She emphasised that her family and husband's cooperation was crucial for her career aspirations since she always had an extra workload than the rest of her colleagues, because Asian women are perceived to be more hardworking. She shared positive experiences of living in different cities in the UK, as a Pakistani woman who does not wear hijab. She was well aware that her choice of wearing Western attire shields her from potential discrimination in the public places, and she was afraid of the experiences that Muslim women face due to hijab and modest clothing. She concluded the conversation by reflecting on her fear of potential discrimination if she wore more overtly Muslim attire, despite her positive experiences so far.

Participant Profile - Naima

'I have felt many times in my career that they would hire women when the project or the company is about to collapse, expecting a miracle with the woman in lead….'

Naima is a 51-year-old single *hijabi* woman working in an administrative role at a local university. She shared about the hardships she faced after the death of her father back in 1990, who was a chef at a local restaurant. She comes from a middle income family and after her father's death, she became responsible to look after her younger siblings and widowed mother and still supports them both emotionally and financially. She holds a BA Honours degree from a local university. She faced many challenges in finding jobs and making progress to senior roles

due to her hijab. When she was beginning to enter the job market in the early 90s, an interviewer even suggested she remove her hijab if she wished to be considered for that job, to which she politely refused.

She gained working experience in charity organisations, local councils and later she joined London-based universities in administrative roles. She shared numerous incidents of facing discrimination and Islamophobic victimisation throughout her career, inside and outside the workplace especially since 9/11. She faced overt and covert discrimination and anti-Muslim racism from PhD students despite receiving support from her core team at the university. She pursued further education while working, with the aim to be promoted to an academic role but none of her job applications yielded a positive outcome, even after upskilling and gaining further qualifications. She shared experiences of leading the Islam Expo and organising large-scale events to promote public awareness regarding Islamic values. During this, she experienced many incidents of racial microaggressions as well as anti-Muslim racism for being a *hijabi* woman from Pakistan. She received unequal pay as compared to the Muslim men and White colleagues at work, especially while working for an Islamic charity organisation. She felt disappointed about experiencing discrimination from Muslim and Pakistani men at work, and her complaints were not taken seriously by the HR department, which led her to quit that job. After working with various charities and experiencing similar issues, she joined a local organisation, and later, worked her way up to a senior project coordinator role. She noted a general lack of support in her early career, and how the employers had started to focus more on DEI initiatives with no real impact in her recent roles.

Participant Profile - Seemi

'Everyone says that Covid was a weapon of mass destruction and things like that…. I would say that for me it was a blessing in disguise… because the place where I work had no daycare….I could stay at home with my baby and work at the same time….'

39-year-old Seemi is a married woman having two children, working at an international NGO. She has 15 years of overall working experience and three years of managerial experience. She belongs to a middle income family, holds a Master's degree in economics and works with an international organisation. She initially aspired to be a doctor but ended up in her current field by chance. She has two sisters and a brother, all married and having a family. One sister works in Pakistan, the other in Canada, and her brother is based in Australia. Previously she worked at a local bank in customer services and had extremely disturbing working experiences. Her dissatisfaction with working in a bank led her to switch to an international NGO, where she found a more satisfying work environment. In the bank she faced issues with a hostile working atmosphere, sexual harassment, and unfair performance evaluations. The lack of appreciation for hard work and discrimination based on gender affected her motivation. The shift to the international organisation brought relief from public interaction and a more respectful environment. Stringent sexual harassment policies and a focus on work ethics contributed to her positive experience. She faced challenges in managing work-life balance, especially due to the absence of daycare facilities at her workplace. The pandemic allowed her to work from home, easing the childcare situation temporarily. She acknowledges the lack of daycare as the most significant obstacle, forcing her to rely on friends and relatives for childcare support, which is financially challenging. She highlights the prevalence of sexual harassment in the workplace despite policies and emphasises the importance of reporting such incidents. She shares a personal

incident of harassment from a female colleague, underlining that harassment is not limited to one gender. She faced insensitive comments after a miscarriage, further showcasing workplace challenges. She mentioned the existence of groups like DEI groups at her workplace that address such issues but chose a more discreet approach by reporting to her seniors. She points out that Asians working with British colleagues may also encounter racism, adding another layer of complexity to workplace challenges.

Participant Profile - Asma

'... there was pub culture on a Friday….. The teams used to go and they used to meet in a pub….. Now I know that there are some people who wouldn't want to go to the pub, full stop…. but I did. I mean, I did go with my team, if the team asked me to do it….. But obviously, I knew I'm just going to drink a glass of water or coke or something like that…..'

Asma, a 50 years old mother of three children. She graduated with a Bachelor's degree in STEM field, followed by a Master's degree. She has a working experience of 23 years from which she has served three years as a manager. She is fluent in English, her parents ethnic origin is Pakistani and she belongs to a middle income family. The job market was challenging due to the recession in Britain during the early 90's, particularly for engineering graduates. The interview process during that time included on-campus interviews followed by a second interview at the company's location. She faced inappropriate questions about her personal life during interviews, such as marriage plans, reflecting the different norms of that era. Eventually she secured a job with a local telecommunication company after a six-month wait during the recession period. She relocated to London and experienced a more diverse and inclusive work environment, feeling supported and encouraged by her male colleagues and managers. She took a break from her

career after having two children and relocating for family reasons. She returned to academia in 2006, pursuing a PhD while working part-time as a demonstrator. She encountered challenges and lack of support from supervisors during the PhD journey, but eventually secured a lectureship position through the help of her social networks and persistent behaviour. Despite being hearing-impaired, She emphasised the importance of discipline and organisation to manage work effectively, often working in the evenings. She acknowledged the support from her husband although extended family support was limited. She highlighted the significance of discipline and organisation in managing a regimented day. A positive family culture, her parents' emphasis on girls' education and financial independence for women, attributed to shaping her strong work ethic and high career aspirations. She noted changes in the culture of the STEM field over time, expressing that confidence and specific mentoring according to the cultural needs of the minority women are crucial to overcoming potential barriers of career progression especially in male-dominated fields. She discussed imposter syndrome with the importance of instilling confidence in young girls to deal with self-doubt. She stressed the importance of having a personal identity beyond familial roles for Pakistani women's mental well-being. Her decision to pursue engineering was faced with opposition from her extended family, however, her parents encouraged her to pursue the field of her choice. Therefore, her career was influenced by a family culture that encouraged women to break traditional gender stereotypes.

Participant Profile - Fatima

'Their discussions and topics are completely different….. Their slangs are completely different which they don't hesitate to use in social gatherings….. They laugh at each other's jokes and I am the odd one out…..'

Fatima, a 43-year-old married woman having two children, is a resident of Plymouth. She is a healthcare professional and has a Masters degree. She has six years of working experience out of which five years is managerial experience. She belongs to a middle-income family. In 2012, she decided to become a healthcare practitioner, overcoming the challenges of transitioning from humanities to science. Exhausted after her degree, she started providing online healthcare consultations for South Asian communities and this initiative became very successful. Recognising her ability to make a positive impact, she founded an enterprise around healthcare services, and faced criticism from within the Pakistani community, but did not give up. Her journey involves personal and organisational challenges, including managing domestic responsibilities alongside studies, highlighting the lack of support she received from her family and exclusionary behaviour from the colleagues. She faced hurdles due to her accent during a placement, extending her degree completion to four years. Despite the complexity of challenges, she succeeded in securing a part-time role with local healthcare services and continued to work part-time. She emphasises the importance of family support and determination in overcoming personal and professional obstacles. She acknowledges the under-representation of Pakistani women in managerial roles in the UK. She attributes this to racism and discrimination, while talking about the challenges of fitting-in with British culture, especially in social gatherings, where language nuances and topics may differ and alcohol may be involved. Despite these challenges, she encourages Pakistani women not to lose hope, and talks about the importance of focusing on long-term goals. She discussed the importance of having social networks and self-care. She stresses the significance of clarity in personal goals and the determination to overcome challenges for a life-changing outcome.

Participant Profile - Hina

'I am isolated from others because of my caring duties at home for my boys….. I can't stay for late hours, or for office dinners and evening socials….. I think all the social connections are made in those events..'

Hina is mother of two teenage boys and a resident of Leicester. She was born in Bradford and comes from a middle income family. Her parents belong to Wah Cantt which is a small city near the federal capital and relatively less traditional as compared to interior areas of the country. She has an MA degree in Fine Arts and working experience of 22 years. As a professional artist, she worked at a local museum in Bradford for ten years before relocating to Leicester. The move was prompted by her husband who had bought a restaurant in Leicester, requiring her active involvement in managing various aspects of the business. She faced challenges in balancing her career and family responsibilities, but her husband's support played a crucial role in her professional journey. Initially prioritising childcare over her career, she later worked part-time at an art gallery and museum, with flexible hours provided by a supportive manager. She often felt isolated at work because she could not join her colleagues in social events due to family commitments. Although her manager recognised her hard work, she struggled to secure opportunities for training and career development. She acknowledges the lack of strong connections with colleagues, attributing it to her part-time schedule and limited time for socialising. She shared that she was spared from experiences of direct discrimination, because she wore Western clothes in modest designs and no hijab. However, she would avoid happy hours in pubs, or meeting her colleagues in alcohol-related social events. Her experience in the arts field suggests greater tolerance and open-mindedness, with a diverse mix of nationalities fostering mutual respect. She has worked on migration, human rights, and violence against

women, highlighting the importance of family support for Pakistani women facing challenges in balancing work and home responsibilities. She faced discrimination from within the Pakistani community and emphasised upon the need for Pakistani women to support each other, addressing issues of leg-pulling and unnecessary comparisons that hinder progress.

Participant Profile - Zubiya

'The support systems are not strong for us Pakistani women. Many opportunities come their way but they have to leave them behind for their house-keeping responsibilities….. It is built-in by our culture that housekeeping is a job for women... So either they compromise…. or the fear stops them from excelling....'

Zubiya, a 31-year-old *hijabi* woman with three children, is a resident of London. She is a chef and runs a private catering business too. She has a Masters degree and 15 years of working experience. She comes from a low-income family. She started her career with menial jobs and eventually eventually progressed despite routinely encountering racism and discrimination in the job market. She shared feelings of being an 'outsider' because she is a non-White *hijabi* woman from Pakistan and how she was made to feel that she is not equal to the Whites. A few years ago, she got the opportunity to collaborate with a local food corporation which marked the beginning of her progression. She likes to make food vlogs on social media and also teaches culinary art to adult learners. She acknowledges experiencing many challenges during her career, especially derogatory comments from her colleagues and racial slurs. She shared some barriers she faced from the catering industry that it can be very difficult to handle pressure regarding her choice of cooking *halal* foods only and not doing business with clients who would have dietary requirements outside what is permissible for Muslims. She refuses the opportunities that involve

alcohol or pork, and is very strict about it, even if she loses money and opportunity. She discusses instances where her Muslim identity affects opportunities, such as being excluded from events involving alcohol or pork. She emphasises that communication is crucial for women in similar situations, encouraging them to express their opinions and not giving into the pressure. She faced a lot of criticism on making English recipes using *halal* ingredients which was hurtful for her. In her collaborations with food brands, she often faces challenges, especially when companies want her to promote events conflicting with her religious beliefs, for example Christmas, Easter, halloween. She reflects on her family's support, particularly her husband's role in encouraging her and giving her a helping hand with household duties. She shared her coping strategies including having time to talk with friends, developing professional skills, building effective communication skills, and becoming 'thick-skinned'.

Participant Profile - Basharat

'Being a woman of colour in a White dominant workplace is a challenge in itself…. where there are very few people who look like you…..'

Basharat, a 39-year-old single woman living in London, has worked as a Global Education Director at an international NGO in the UK. She is an MSc. in Economic Policy and a Masters in Development Studies. She has 22 years of working experience and served as a manager for 10 years. She belongs to a middle income family and faced internal challenges, such as impostor syndrome, when starting her role, particularly as a woman of colour. She overcame internal challenges through self-awareness, seeking mentoring support, and embracing self-care, and self-acceptance.

She highlighted the challenges of proving herself in a workplace with a microscope on women of colour (over-scrutinising). She acknowledged the supportive workplace culture and proper systems of reporting grievances at work, but mentioned subtle racism through racist jokes, comments about partition, spicy food, etc. and the existence of a strong White workplace culture. She felt that the White people at work did not take her seriously and tried to bring her down in subtle ways. She emphasised that the UK prioritises its nationals in professional opportunities, which may limit positions available to ethnic minority groups. She praised the representation of Pakistani women in leadership roles in Pakistan but acknowledged challenges faced by British Pakistani women. She encouraged Pakistani women to believe in themselves, overcome self-doubt, and trust their abilities for career success. Regarding family responsibilities, she stressed the importance of men supporting women and sharing domestic burdens for equal opportunities. She outlined some effective DEI initiatives in her organisation, like gender and racial diversity in interview panels and women support groups, to promote diversity and inclusion. She expressed her lack of personal experience with discrimination at work but noted occasional stereotypical jokes from colleagues.

Participant Profile - Nazeeha

'Even though I think the way we get discriminated against by most of our own people, it's more loud……. Unfortunately most of this probably also comes from women themselves. Every gossip about women is started by a woman…..'

Nazeeha, a 45-year-old married woman living in Manchester with her family. She works as a senior lecturer at a local university and has a PhD degree with over 20 years of working experience. She has served as a manager for eight years and belongs to a middle income family.

In 2009, she joined a local college as a lecturer and quickly excelled with the support of her manager, leading to a full-time course coordinator role. She did exceptionally well in her roles and earned quick promotions. In a few years, she became the head of the Business School. Later she began her PhD at a local college, facing challenges and health issues during the process. The lack of support from her supervisor and the university led to significant delays. She started to face challenges in her career once she had reached a leadership role. She suffered from imposter syndrome, excessive workload, leg pulling and racist remarks from her managers who would not even recognise that they were being racist. Her health declined and she had to take time off work due to serious burnout and exhaustion. She changed her job and secured a senior lecturer position at another university. She highlights systemic issues in university support for PhD students and discusses the impact of ethnicity and gender on career progression in academia. She also shares the importance of perseverance and family support in her journey. Despite enduring mistreatment and a lack of support, she persevered, filed a formal complaint, and eventually changed jobs for a more conducive research environment. Her journey reflects resilience, overcoming discrimination, and a commitment to pursuing education despite challenging circumstances.

Participant Profile - Sumbal

'I think one of the main barriers to my work and the choices that I made as to where I was going to work, were impacted by my decision to wear the hijab...'

Sumbal is a 35-year-old hijabi woman living in Manchester with her husband and two young sons. She is a researcher and lecturer in environmental economics, pursuing a PhD while managing family responsibilities. She has working experience of nine years from which she has served as a manager for three years. She comes from a middle income family and is faced with

various challenges like lack of family support, juggling childcare, teaching and research responsibilities. Her husband is doing PhD as well and he does not offer any help in sharing the burden of household chores. As a result there are a lot of caring and household responsibilities on her which make her feel overworked and tired all the time. It has taken a toll on her physical and mental health. She acknowledges the unrealistic expectations imposed by societal standards for working mothers and the situation became worse for her during Covid-19 . She shared that her supervisor was flexible but there was no childcare support from the university. She expressed facing discrimination and bias due to her hijab and that she always felt like an 'outsider'. She experienced hiring discrimination due to her Muslim identity and that the White applicants were always preferred over her. She experienced social exclusion because the White colleagues would not like to hang out with her and mocked her hijab behind her back. She appreciated her colleagues' support in the lab but struggled to connect outside in evening social events due to religious constraints and 'mommy duties'. Her students initially displayed some hesitation due to her hijab but later she removed her hijab and since then her students became more comfortable in her lectures. Being a woman of colour and wearing hijab impacted her social interactions, especially in activities like clubbing and evening social events. Despite deeply rooted cultural trauma, she showed a high level of motivation and drive to pursue her career aspirations.

Participant Profile - Maya

'Working in higher education I'm yet to meet anyone that's from a very similar background to myself….'

Maya is a 36 years old resident of Leeds, who worked as a lecturer teaching and scholarship at a local university. She wears hijab and is currently doing her PhD, having a working experience of

17 years and managerial experience of 4 years. She belongs to a low to middle family and her parents came from northern areas of Pakistan from the region of Azad Kashmir having strict patriarchal cultural values. She shared her experiences and challenges growing up in the UK with a dual cultural identity, and how her upbringing was influenced by Pakistani traditions. Reflecting on her upbringing in a large, joint and extended Pakistani family, she discusses the impact of cultural differences, especially as a minority, and the evolving perspectives in the second-generation. Working in higher education, she emphasises the lack of representation from a similar background, highlighting the intersectionality of class and ethnicity. She often suffered from imposter syndrome and had huge family responsibilities which shaped her leadership qualities and drive for social justice. She is the first in her family to attend university, facing financial constraints, and navigating a non-traditional path, including a gap year and summers spent working. Her interest in social justice and human rights led her to a career in teaching, where she faced challenges related to her Muslim identity, especially during the recession. Her diverse experiences, including international work in India, part-time postgraduate degree, and CELTA qualification enabled her to appreciate different forms of capital. She joined the business school at a local university and faced huge challenges of being a woman of colour in academia, navigating structural issues, and inequalities in recognition of her work and limited opportunities. She discusses her atypical academic role, involvement in the Muslim staff network, and the need for greater diversity at leadership levels to address institutional biases. Despite challenges, her growth mindset, involvement in external engagements, and consideration of consultancy after her PhD reflect her determination to overcome barriers and contribute to positive change. Transitioning to the business school, she faced uncomfortable questioning about her identity from her colleagues. She also detailed her efforts to contribute to a senior fellowship program,

facing no response from the core management team. Despite expressing interest in being a reviewer for the program, and was turned down every time without any acknowledgement of her application, yet she persisted for years. She shared her concerns about the lack of diversity in panels reviewing applications, and how their racial biases impact Muslim non-White women in academia.

Participant Profile - Sheneela

'...They won't even apply... because they'll just assume that this is what it is…. quite fairly, by looking at all the White people at the top… and thinking this is not for me….'

Sheneela is a 31-year-old married woman, living in Central London and soon going to be a mother. She is working as a Managing Associate at a local law firm and has eight years of working experience where she has worked as a manager for one and a half years. She belongs to a high income family. She shares experiences regarding the lack of diversity in the world of corporate law and describes the industry as "pale, male, and stale" especially at senior leadership levels. Despite well-meaning diversity initiatives, the actual progress has been slow, with noticeable improvement post-2020, following increased awareness sparked by events like George Floyd's death. She observes increased diversity in junior roles, particularly among trainees, but notes a concerning drop-off as individuals progress in their careers. She has worked at three local law firms since 2014, highlighting her varied experiences within the legal sector. She was proud of her privileged background, having attended a private school in Cambridge, which contributed to her confidence and ability to fit into the corporate environment. She acknowledges the role of her accent in being perceived as more palatable, facilitating her acceptance in the corporate world. She discusses the challenges faced by those with different

backgrounds, accents, or religious practices in the legal profession, particularly in navigating social events centred around drinking. She recognises the evolving efforts to address diversity issues but underscores the need for structural changes to ensure long-term inclusivity and equal opportunities for all. She notes frustration over the expectation to engage in after-hours social events involving alcohol, making it challenging for those who don't drink, particularly British Pakistani women. She mentions the disparity in comfort levels between colleagues who drink and those who abstain, creating barriers for non-drinkers, especially women. She acknowledges the difficulty of balancing domestic responsibilities and work, expressing concern about the upcoming challenges of combining a career in corporate law with impending motherhood. She reflects on the traditional gender roles and expectations, emphasising the mental load placed on working Pakistani women who often handle both professional and household responsibilities. She shares her personal experience of planning to share parenting responsibilities equally with her husband, recognising the challenges that working mothers face. She addresses the issue of missing out on career opportunities due to prioritising family responsibilities, especially when compared to colleagues with different family dynamics. She recalls memories from her childhood, highlighting her parents' traditional family structure, her father being a doctor, and the sacrifices her mother made as a stay-at-home mom. She credits her parents for instilling a strong work ethic and pushing her and her sister to pursue education and careers, acknowledging the pressure to succeed. She offers suggestions to other ethnic minority women, advising them to accept the challenges, seek role models, build a supportive network, and be proud of their heritage while breaking the mould in their careers.

Participant Profile - Bilquis

'...When you apply for a job, they would say, you don't fit the criteria... he is not going to say, I don't like your face….'

Bilquis is a 43-year-old resident of Sheffield and has three children, working as a Professor. Her role involves increasing research with hospitals. She works in senior leadership roles for research organisations as well. She has 25 years of working experience and her parents come from a middle income family in Azad Kashmir in Pakistan. As the eldest of six siblings, she faced early responsibilities and societal expectations, particularly as a girl. Despite traditional views against sending girls to college, her father's influence and guidance shaped her independence and decision-making abilities. She initially aspired to be a doctor but eventually pursued studying health and medicine due to financial constraints and societal expectations. She encountered challenges and discrimination during her academic journey and continues to encounter similar issues in her professional life. She discusses the challenges she faced as a young professor, especially being the youngest in her field to achieve professorship within a short span. She highlights the stereotypes and biases she encountered, at work and also from within the Pakistani community. Men who work with her have mostly been intimidated by her power and straight-forward behaviour, unlike what is expected of a traditional Pakistani woman. She is a good example of having leadership skills and working against all odds with her self-motivation and resilience. She emphasises the significance of creating opportunities for herself instead of waiting for them, creating social networks, utilising technology efficiently, and building employability skills to progress in her career. She shares her experience of overcoming biases and expectations in academia, mentioning the importance of not being seen as a token person in

leadership positions. She advises aspiring women, especially ethnic minorities, to play by the existing rules, use them to their advantage, and persistently seek feedback and improvement.

Participant Profile - Waheeda

'You could never go to them and come up with ideas about how things could run efficiently… If you told them, it would be an ego issue….. So you would always have to downplay your intelligence to fit-in at the time…'

Waheeda is a 53-year-old resident of London, divorced after having two children, and the founder of a women's enterprise. She has a working experience of more than 25 years out of which she has worked as a manager for more than 20 years. She is fluent in English, her parents ethnic origin is Indian and she belongs to a middle-income family. Despite working in the catering industry, her father grappled with conflicting ideas about educating girls. She grew up with a dual identity, navigating the liberal environment of the 1980s while adhering to traditional values at home. Her father's restrictions on her education due to gender became apparent when he opposed her desire to pursue a law degree. After engaging in a banking job and facing discrimination from Pakistani men, she started a clothing business with her sister. She married her first cousin at 19 but struggled with cultural differences and control in the marriage. Working part-time, she faced domestic abuse and eventually started her own catering business for financial independence, leading to further challenges with family involvement. Her deteriorating marriage prompted her to plan her exit strategy, and she achieved success in the business as a means to gain control and break free. Despite these obstacles, she took control of her life, focusing on personal development and transforming her business. The business grew significantly, merging with another brand and becoming the 7th largest food service in the UK.

However, her success brought domestic issues and increased abuse. After her father's passing, she gained the courage to leave her abusive marriage. In the business world, she faced aggression and challenges as the only female leader. Eventually, she was pushed out of her own business, leading to legal battles and financial hardships. After losing her business, she went back to finish her studies, becoming a qualified life and business coach. She founded an organisation to provide support and mentorship for South Asian women facing challenges. The organisation offers a safe space and services, including a domestic abuse advice line. Despite financial struggles, she has built a community and launched projects to empower women. She highlights the growing trend of women in Pakistan using their sexuality to advance in their careers, particularly in the fashion and beauty industries. She acknowledges the clash between Western influence and Islamic values in Asian families. She attributes the absence of women of colour, especially Pakistani women, in managerial and leadership positions to factors like lack of confidence, biassed upbringing, and internal racism within their own communities. She suggests that training, leadership development, and changing behaviour are essential to encouraging ethnic minority women to progress in their careers. Additionally, she discusses the impact of wearing hijab in a Western work environment, stressing the importance of intelligence and adapting to societal norms while maintaining one's values.

Participant Profile - Malaika

'…. and then you get comments from people, who just didn't even realise they were being racist….'

Malaika, a 39 years old is a mother of two young children. She belongs to a middle income family. At the time of the interview, she worked as an administrator at a local school. She faced

challenges in securing employment due to lack of references and initially worked in a call centre before landing a job at a local organisation. She has an Engineering degree and Masters in Business Administration with Finance and Human Resources as major with a working experience of 15 years. Overcoming cultural differences, including wearing a scarf and dietary preferences, she experienced supportive colleagues who accommodated her needs. She worked at a local college in a prison's Education Department as a Finance and Admin Manager in her previous role. Balancing work and family, she took a gap after having children and transitioned to a school job as an Admin Assistant, progressing to a finance role. Discrimination existed, but her positive experiences outweighed the negatives, emphasising the importance of not letting racism affect personal well-being. She faced challenges like lack of spousal support, childcare expenses, and difficulty integrating into the White community. She celebrates various cultural and religious events such as Christmas, Eid, Easter, and Halloween at work and with neighbours, emphasising the importance of reciprocity in cultural celebrations. She highlights the value of honesty and hard work in professional life, sharing personal experiences of being transparent about taking holidays and facing consequences for term-time breaks. She stresses the significance of being truthful even in small matters like being late to work, emphasising that honesty and hard work have been key to their success. She discusses the cultural differences particularly in a workplace setting where a Pakistani woman addresses misconceptions about her culture and religion, advocating for open communication and understanding. She encourages interaction and social gatherings as a means to break stereotypes and change mindsets, sharing positive experiences of colleagues accommodating cultural practices, like fasting during Ramadan. The importance of portraying a positive image of Pakistani women and Islam is highlighted by her advocating for open conversations and dispelling myths about their culture

and practices. She acknowledges the changing trends in Pakistan with more women pursuing education and careers, attributing this shift to increased exposure, education, and supportive partners.

Participant Profile - Ayla

'... it is obvious that some Scottish and British will be preferred as compared to me in any of the training opportunities… or any of the organisational activities….'

Ayla, a 38 years old married woman having two daughters, faced challenges balancing a full-time job with family responsibilities, especially with the lack of supportive measures for new mothers at her workplace. Childcare issues, including the absence of daycare facilities and challenges in breastfeeding at work, contributed to her decision to quit full-time employment. She emphasised the importance of workplace support for new mothers, such as childcare facilities and breastfeeding-friendly environments. Despite being alone in Scotland with her husband, she managed with the help of friends and extended family, but the workload became overwhelming, leading her to wait for a more opportune time to resume full-time work. She prefers to identify as Pakistani. She is working as a Freelance Researcher. She has a Masters in Business Administration degree with majors in management. Her country of qualification is the UK. She has a total working experience of eight years and is working as a manager for five years. She is fluent in English, her parents ethnic origin is Pakistani and she belongs to a middle income family. She highlighted the presence of discrimination in training opportunities and organisational activities, where preference was given to Scottish and British individuals over immigrants like her. Discussing such issues with family and friends was an outlet, but addressing them in the workplace seemed challenging due to the apparent social exclusion faced by

individuals from different ethnic backgrounds. Eating preferences, particularly avoiding certain meats and alcohol due to religious reasons, contributed to feelings of exclusion at the workplace. She noted that individuals who did not mix with their colleagues or had a modest way of living, like her, faced similar challenges, while others who embraced social activities did not encounter such issues. She advised prioritising family while emphasising the need for more flexibility for women in the workplace, including options for remote work, prayer areas, and nurseries or nursing spaces for mothers.

Participant Profile - Beenish

'I feel like the male colleagues at my workplace were always trying to give the image that they know it all..… and even if I got a promotion…. or any work well done….. it was because they had taught me to do so….'

Beenish is a 40 years old single woman living in Glasgow who chose a path aligned with her passion for writing and reading. She became a marketing content specialist with an e-commerce company and worked as a graphic designer and content writer. She has an MBA degree with Human Resources majors and Masters in IT and she faced initial uncertainty about career choices. Despite having multiple degrees, she emphasises the need for a clear focus and mentorship to avoid choosing unsuitable career paths. She acknowledges the lack of mentorship, and emphasised on the importance of guidance and mentoring, especially for young individuals entering the workforce. Balancing domestic responsibilities, including caring for unwell parents, presented a significant challenge, impacting work-life balance. She has a working experience of 12 years and has served as a manager for three years. She belongs to a middle-income family and shared experiencing workplace discrimination, mostly based on her ethnic background. Facing

challenges in convincing parents during her tenure as an education consultant, she found it easier to connect with students than their parents. The absence of training and development programs for professional growth in her workplace is noted, emphasising the importance of continuous learning and improvement. Domestic responsibilities, especially during her father's chemotherapy, strained the work-life balance, with challenges in securing remote work options. Her coping mechanisms involved talking to parents, friends, and occasional cries to manage overwhelming situations. Her father serves as a role model, being resilient, supportive, and encouraging her to pursue her interests, despite societal expectations. She advocates against gender-specific job listings, describing experiences of gender bias and undermining of women's ideas in corporate settings, and emphasises the need for awareness, raising voices against discrimination, and regular audits in organisations.

Participant Profile - Qaisera

'I knew that no matter how hard I worked, or whatever title I earned… I would never be able to blend in and become one of them… '

Qaisera is a 38-year-old resident of London, who is the owner of a clinic and is working as a Consultant Psychotherapist, having pursued this career after taking a break of 7-8 years to be a full-time mother to two boys. Despite a lack of support from extended family, the husband was a significant source of support during her counselling studies. Her financial constraints were overcome with the husband's support, allowing her to focus on studies without external pressures. She worked as a beauty therapist to fund personal therapy requirements during her counselling qualification. She has a working experience of seven years and managerial

experience for two years. She faced many challenges during her counselling course including difficulties with clinical placements, personal therapy funding, and inadequate tutor support. She had to overcome issues with a tutor who neglected student needs, filing complaints that eventually led to the tutor's dismissal. Despite being the only Pakistani Muslim in a class of 27 White English women, she experienced workplace microaggressions but continued to work hard and ultimately earned Student of the Year award. Her motivation to become a counsellor stemmed from her personal struggle with depression and a desire to help others facing similar challenges. She is fluent in English, her parents ethnic origin is Pakistani and she belongs to a middle income family. Her advice to women, especially those with children, is to emphasise the importance of maintaining individual identity and pursuing personal passions alongside family responsibilities. Her dedication to counselling is driven by a passion to assist others in overcoming the lowest points in their lives. Overall, the journey involved perseverance through financial constraints, educational challenges, and cultural differences, culminating in a successful counselling career.

Participant Profile - Salmah

'I felt at a disadvantage because my name was Muslim…. At that point, I felt that the job disappeared because I had a Muslim name…. I don't think it was because I was a woman or a man….'

Salmah, a 58-year-old married woman having three children, is a resident of London and has worked as a Clinical Hypnotherapist and a Teacher. She has a Bachelor's Degree in Applied Psychology and a Masters in Education. She has a working experience of 20 years and has served as a manager for five years. Her parents ethnic origin is Pakistani and she belongs to a

middle income family. Despite her teaching credentials, she faced challenges finding a role in an IB school in the UK, feeling like an outsider. After working as a substitute teacher for a couple of years, she decided to change her career path and became a cognitive behavioural hypnotherapist. Facing invisibility and a lack of community connections in London, she struggled to build a clientele. She attended networking events but felt excluded, possibly due to being a Pakistani woman and not participating in after-hours drinking activities. She pivoted to hypnotherapy in 2018, emphasising her multicultural background and skills. However, she continued to feel on the periphery, struggling to fit into social circles and missing out on networking opportunities. She highlighted her experiences of racism in Dubai and Poland, where she faced challenges due to her Pakistani identity and cultural differences. She earned a Masters degree from Poland and despite her qualifications, she encountered covert racism in the UK prompting her to pivot her career. She expressed the loneliness of being an entrepreneur and the constant need to hustle for clients, emphasising the importance of socialising, which she found challenging due to her non-drinking stance and cultural differences. She emphasises the role of stress in the lives of Pakistani and Muslim women and believes that if the mother is fine, the whole household will be happy. She discusses the impact of accents on career progression, feeling that a British accent is an advantage for Pakistani women in the UK. She highlights the disadvantages for women of colour, especially Pakistani women, in senior leadership roles. She emphasises stereotypes and challenges related to the perception of Pakistani women in the UK, including covert Islamophobia. She shares experiences of ignorance and stereotypes she encountered, including questions about separate buses for women and riding camels in Pakistan.

Participant Profile - Wajeeha

'It feels important to have more connections and networks outside of the workplace, which I am working on and that have proven to be very useful for me….'

Wajeeha is a resident of Manchester, and is a 46 years old single woman with over 20 years of working experience, she has served in a wide range of roles across the charity sector, business and in higher education. She has a Bachelor's degree in Environmental Science, is currently pursuing a Masters in the same field and her country of qualification is the UK. Her privileged upbringing in the childhood included excellent schooling and financial stability, allowing her to recognise her privileges. She has always been a bright student and performed well in her academics. Her academic achievement and early work experiences shaped her self-confidence. She has worked for a local NGO for five years, managing a team as an Environmental Analyst. Overall, she has managerial experience for six years. She faced a predominantly male environment at work but received support from her boss and female colleagues. Engaging in staff training and capacity building enhanced her skills and professional profile. She shared her experience of taking up on a consultancy project outside her regular job; which significantly boosted her career, leading to better networking opportunities. Despite facing challenges, including delayed promotions, Wajeeha's faith, support from her parents, and a proactive approach helped her persevere. She maintained her commitment to prayers, praying in the staff room during lunch breaks, creating a positive atmosphere. She is fluent in English and her parents ethnic origin is Pakistan. She belongs to a high income family. She emphasises the importance of self-confidence for Pakistani women, encouraging them to assert themselves in the workplace. She also emphasised on the importance of having inclusive workplace culture which is not inclined to supporting men or people from certain ethnicities. She suggests organisations

should be more specific in implementing Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) policies, addressing behaviours that may go unchecked and hinder professional development and career progression.

Participant Profile - Tania

'... my sister-in-law and my other family members, they are taking care of my kids and other responsibilities while I'm away... But it's not that easy…. '

Tania is a 28-year-old resident of Bradford, having two children. She is working in the senior management team and is heading the research department at a local business organisation. She has a working experience of 20 years and has served as a manager for six years. She belongs to a middle income family. Her role involves providing research-based solutions to the inquiries from the business community. She found it difficult to manage her work responsibilities from a senior level full-time job, along with domestic duties. She has family support for childcare which is managed by her sister-in-law and other family members, but it comes with its own challenges. She faces discrimination as a hijabi woman in the workplace, and the subtle bias and discrimination affect her opportunities, particularly in socialising and promotions. She mentions the importance of self-motivation, commitment, and not compromising on performance to cope with workplace challenges. She highlights the need for organisations to create inclusive policies that analyse potential cultural and religious implications. She suggests explicitly defining criteria for promotions to ensure fairness. Additionally, employees should be encouraged to speak up against discrimination and assert their rights within the organisation. She emphasises the importance of promoting inclusivity by celebrating diverse cultural and religious events within

the workplace. She acknowledges that progress is gradual but believes that understanding and acceptance of different religions and cultures contribute to a more inclusive work environment.

Participant Profile - Ulfat

'... September 11th happened, and the job disappeared…. I never heard back from the recruiter, even though I tried to contact them several times…'

Ulfat belonged to a middle income family living in Reading. She is single and has elderly parents to look after who migrated to the UK in the 1960s from Azad Kashmir region in Pakistan. Having a HND in computing and Bachelors degree, she struggled to find a job after her graduation because 9/11 had happened and she lost her graduate apprenticeship. After numerous failed attempts to have it back, she started working in data entry for a small company, followed by a first-line technical support role at a local telecommunication company. She was well aware of her disadvantage in the job market being a Muslim Pakistani woman and even though she does not wear the hijab, she shared many experiences of racism and workplace microaggressions because of her modest dressing and racial background. She felt that she lacked experience in specialised areas so she focused on continuous learning, studying self-funded courses, and continued navigating a non-linear career path. She expressed frustration that employers did not provide financial support for the professional development of employees who looked like her (being non-White), yet she did not give up. She felt sad about not getting promoted nor getting nominated for the professional development opportunities that she wanted to attend. All five White colleagues in her core team got organisational sponsorship for a project management course that she was also eligible for, whereas, she was the only one who could not get the

funding approval. She emphasised on the importance of self-study and attending short courses on a self-help basis instead of relying on the employer for opportunities of professional development, especially for Pakistani women. While the clients were happy with her dealing and the account that she was responsible for was thriving, she was never selected to represent the organisation in important international conferences.

She experienced masculine and racialised workplace culture where the White male bosses would favour the White male employees and they would have their insider jokes. The White male colleagues who sent work emails in late hours of the night were considered more hardworking and ahead of the others. She shared some instances of derogatory and racist exchange of comments in the work chat groups, and she voiced her dislike towards racist remarks before her colleagues which negatively impacted her relationship with the senior management. She described her workplace where the Head of Operations, in his 60s, would make sexist comments without facing consequences, making the female employees feel severely uncomfortable. There was a significant gender and ethnic imbalance at her workplace with three women and 30 men and two ethnic minority employees altogether including herself. The lack of transparency in promotions and decision-making processes contributed to a sense of othering and unfairness. She expressed that her modest dressing choices were subtly mocked at by her colleagues in the evening social events which made her feel like a misfit. Despite these challenges, she knew the importance of maintaining good working relationships with her colleagues for career opportunities. She expressed that the cultural events like Eid and Diwali were not celebrated at her workplace, while celebrations like St. Patrick's Day and Christmas were recognised. Reflecting on the changing landscape for Pakistani women in the workforce, she acknowledged persistent cultural stereotypes and societal expectations for women to prioritise family over

career. Cultural barriers may contribute to Pakistani women hesitating to pursue higher roles, as employers may not be receptive to diverse candidates. She emphasises the importance of women speaking up, challenging norms, and pursuing career goals, drawing upon her personal journey of overcoming her low self-esteem and countering the challenges of career progression.

Participant Profile - Mahpara

'I started with no cultural capital.. there were no networks; a very alien environment… very hostile environment …'

Mahpara works as a lecturer at a local university in London. She came from a low-income family and had a difficult childhood. She began her career with notable early achievements, including publishing research prior to her graduation. However, over the past 24 years, her career advancement has not met expectations. Her peers, often from more privileged backgrounds, have experienced faster promotions, while she has encountered significant obstacles, including racism and sexism. Initially, Mahpara faced prejudice, such as a colleague's negative reaction to her hijab and comments about her religious identity. Her case is unique because she removed her hijab in 2006, she was treated more favourably by colleagues. Despite these challenges, Mahpara has become more outspoken, frequently reporting incidents of bias and advocating for systemic change. Although her advocacy has not always led to organisational action, she remains dedicated to promoting diversity and inclusion within her workplace.

Mahpara has also experienced severe workplace bullying from a racist professor who mistreats subordinates. Despite her efforts to address the issue, she was pressured to resign under false pretences by HR and senior staff, who supported the bully to protect their prestigious project.

The lack of support from HR and senior colleagues, combined with a culture of favouritism, has left her feeling isolated.

She points out that ethnic minority women, particularly women from Pakistani backgrounds, face substantial barriers in academia. These barriers include deficits in cultural capital and limited support, which adversely affect career progression. Mahpara emphasises that one of the primary obstacles for ethnic minority women in academia is the prejudiced perceptions of their abilities. She recounts an instance where a senior academic discouraged her career advancement due to her background and limited publications, illustrating broader systemic biases and the influence of impostor syndrome.

Appendix C - Preview of Participants' Lived Experiences of Barriers to Career Progression

The following table shows one representative quote for each participant to capture a preview of their lived experiences of barriers to career progression. For further information on the individual lived experiences and more insight into the background of the participants, a comprehensive section on biographical profiles is provided in appendix B.

Pseudonym	Field of Work	Example Quote from the Interview
Zaryaab	Civil Society Organisation	'… If you are not actually going out with the team socially and engaging, in a non-work atmosphere; then you are losing out….'
Majida	Retail	He was like, 'Oh well, with this face and fit, you're not really gonna get anywhere…'
Wajidaan	Health and Medicine	'… They were White, so they were closer to my supervisor… They joined the same day I joined, so it can't be time… They would sit there and talk if we had a break time… I would find myself away from them because they would have their own little group and their own little laughs going on…'
Atiqa	Early Childhood Education	'In the past when I was working… in a local school, most of the colleagues were White and I was one of the very few ethnic minority people there. I never faced any harsh remarks or any harassment, but I never felt a part of them. I felt like an outsider, even though I was very friendly.'
Naima	Academia	'… Especially when 9/11 happened, I was at work that day…. When it happened, everybody was told to go home…. I felt everybody was staring at me…. Nobody knew who the perpetrators were at that time… but there was this chill in the air…. Everywhere I walked, I felt like everyone was staring at me… and giving me these angry looks...
Mopet	Academia	'...I intrinsically believe that I would have been treated in a very different way if I were a White colleague doing that work. As I progressed through that university… I realised that I was completely taken advantage of in those first few years where a ridiculous amount of teaching workload was given to me… That was unacceptable…'
Ruby	Early Childhood Education	''Every Christmas the senior managers would go around and give everyone a bottle of champagne… There was no thinking about Muslim colleagues or people who don't drink ...'
Sitara	Government	'… My cousins also made short English nicknames for themselves, to use in daily life. They didn't have to use the full-fledged lengthy Pakistani names that we normally tend to have…'

Gulalai	Academia	'I think it's always been there, and it always will be there…. people probably watch their words a lot more because of who I am, and my background…. I do get opportunities to educate people a lot… it's (Islamophobia) actually on the increase…. I think Islamophobia is not on the decrease at all really….'
Seemi	Civil Society Organisation	'They check in on me more…… They are trying to push me ahead more and accelerate me more than usual…. but it is lopsided…. Sometimes it feels like they're doing it because they need to do it for diversity…. rather than because it comes naturally to them….. What comes naturally to these White men is promoting the other White men and that's still happening…'
Asma	Academia	'… there was pub culture on a Friday… The teams used to go, and they used to meet in a pub… Now I know that there are some people who wouldn't want to go to the pub, but… I did go with my team, if the team asked me to do it.. But obviously, I knew I'm just going to drink a glass of water or coke or something like that…'
Fatima	Health and Medicine	'... I don't feel comfortable… I can't understand what they are talking about, I feel a bit lost… Their discussions and topics are completely different… Their slangs are completely different which they don't hesitate to use in social gatherings… They laugh at each other's jokes, and I am the odd one out. I just give a fake laugh… because I am unable to laugh at them naturally... I just do it to be a part of that group…'
Hina	Artist	'Sometimes I made the effort to be a bit more involved in their group…. But they were never open to having me in…. I felt like everyone was very formal and just had work-related conversations with me…. Even if I had group tasks to do together with them, I would still feel a bit sidelined…'
Zubiya	Hospitality	'… recently when I attended that pasta workshop…. they were pouring wine for everyone…. but they didn't pour it for me… or asked me if I wanted some…. They were drinking alcohol but instead they offered me a non-alcoholic drink…. I didn't feel any kind of hatred from them…. They respect us, but I lose some opportunities because of my identity….'
Basharat	Civil Society Organisation	'Being a woman of colour in a White dominant workplace is a challenge in itself…. where there are very few people who look like you… the White British have their own sense of humour… local and insider jokes that I don't understand... I pretend to understand their jokes and laugh about it whenever I am around…'
Nazeeha	Academia	'…They don't understand that if you're a woman of colour, you're gonna have to work ten times harder to get to that place….'
Sumbal	Academia	'.... as much as the university says that they hire people on merit, it's not like that…. I just want them to put a disclaimer that positions will be offered to natives first, and then 'the outsiders'… not having any disclaimer like this… and saying that you are hiring people on the merit; it's a bit unfair…. this is an invisible discrimination…. '
Maya	Academia	'Racialisation isn't necessarily to do with what you believe… it's what you look like…. People have been victims of Islamophobic behaviour because it's the Muslimness… the image of what a Muslim is, that is targeted… not necessarily your belief…'

Sheneela	Law	'I guess, people will see your CV… They probably see your surname and think, oh! Pakistani surname... hmm... Will they fit in? We've got a kind of sort of a joke-y team around here. We like to go out... We like to booze... Will this person fit in? They might call you in for an interview because your academics are good, but then… It's sort of that fit that they are looking for and that fit is someone who's basically similar to them...'
Bilquis	Academia	'… I think it is always about power…. power as in who has got the upper hand…. and people would use you… Sometimes, it's your religion, your faith, your face, your language, your money, etc. People find any of your weaknesses, and they exploit you…'
Waheeda	Entrepreneur	'… I always felt that the way they would explain to you was, as if you were stupid… You didn't understand because you were a girl… especially the older men in their 40s and 50s… you could never go to them and come up with ideas about how things could run efficiently. If you told them, it would be an ego issue… So, you would always have to downplay your intelligence to fit in at the time…'
Malaika	Civil Society Organisation	'… we had a Christmas meal in a pub, this was back in 2013… One of my managers…. (because I said, 'I'm not coming').. he came up to me…. and asked me why I had refused… I was like, I'm not refusing to come to a pub… It's just that you don't have any options for vegetarians, and I don't eat fish…'
Ayla	Civil Society Organisation	'...honestly there was nothing I could say to my managers, or in my workplace… because that was so obvious there, that it is difficult… especially, when you are from another ethnicity… and then you are married… and you have kids…'
Beenish	Civil Society Organisation	'Had I had the opportunity of being with a mentor or somebody mentoring me, I would not have chosen that career because that was clearly not for me….'
Qaisera	Health and Medicine	'... I took it further….. I put formal complaints in. It's gonna sound mean, but I'm actually glad to say she did get fired from the course because she didn't care about the students….. That's what I think was a massive, massive hurdle I had and I struggled with the complaints back and forth…'
Salmah	Health and Medicine	'… They'll meet at pubs, and I don't drink… That's when they make friendships over a drink, not coffee. I'm happy with a cup of coffee, but this whole evening thing, the going out and that whole drinking… I think, is the biggest drawback because I don't do that deliberately. I would like to avoid places where alcohol is served…. that whole thing of socialising after hours, happy hour, that I don't do... That's where the real networking is for Indians as well as [Goras]…'
Wajeeha	Civil Society Organisation	'… despite my hard work, and my timely project deliverables, I was not promoted for a long time… there were new hirings in the organisation and those people were promoted to senior officer roles within a few months… I was still there, kind of stagnant at my place… Often I felt like I was doing more work than the rest… Those who were getting more promotions were all White… We knew why things were the way they were….'

Tania	Civil Society Organisation	'… Being the only coloured woman in the SMT (senior management team), I was expected to be compliant and grateful to sit with the Whites on the same table. I was invited to the office meetings but.. I didn't have a say in important matters… and then in business conferences, I was shown off like a trophy….'
Mahpara	Academia	'…. I've done really well back then… but the trajectory has just not been there…. 24 years, and I'm still not a professor… I'm going for it this year, but I bet I won't get it….'
Ulfat	Telecommunication	'He would send emails at 11 o'clock at night or 1 o'clock in the morning… He got promoted because he seemed to be working late… He would be there longer… I actually felt that was a bit unfair for me… that was favouritism because I was working equally as hard as him…'

Appendix D - Themes, Sub-Themes and Codes in NVivo for Institutional Barriers, Sociocultural Barriers and Coping Strategies for Enhanced Career Progression

Theme 1 - Institutional Barriers

Sub-Theme: Exclusionary Workplace Culture

Codes	Files	References
Religious Discrimination and Islamophobia	25	104
Gendered and Racialised Workplace Culture	18	75
Alcohol-Related Socialising	13	52
Imposter Syndrome	8	15

Sub-Theme: Discriminatory Organisational Processes

Codes	Files	References
Hiring and Recruitment	15	36
Promotions and Opportunities	13	34
DEI Practices at Work	11	24
Mechanisms of Reporting Incidents at Work	10	26

Table 4.1. Theme of Institutional Barriers, Sub-Themes and Codes in NVivo

Coding Description for Theme 1 - Institutional Barriers
These barriers relate to organisations and employers that may cause challenges in the career journeys of these women

Code	Researcher's Interpretation of the Code
Exclusionary Workplace Culture: The workplace norms and practices that tend to exclude these women. These involve visible and discreet workplace experiences of unfair treatment as a result of prejudice of the employer and colleagues	
Religious Discrimination and Islamophobia	The feeling of prejudice, exclusion and disadvantage at the workplace due to religious association. The visible and discreet behaviours towards Muslim women (in this case) that exhibit hate and dislike towards Muslims
Gendered and Racialised Working Culture	The perception of how workplace culture can be inclined towards favouring the dominant gender (men in this case) and favouring people from the dominant race (White men and White women in this case)

Alcohol-Related Socialising	The social events that have alcohol consumption involved, mostly after-work hours in the evenings to informally hang out with colleagues and managers.
Imposter Syndrome	The perception of not being good enough and having self-doubt as a result of exclusionary experiences at work

Discriminatory Organisational Processes: The formal processes in organisations that have important roles in enabling (or obstructing) career progression of these women

Hiring and Recruitment	The perception of fair (or unfair) treatment by the recruiters and employers in job hirings
Promotions and Opportunities	The extent of getting opportunities of promotion and progression in the organisation
DEI Practices at Work	Workplace policies and practices that are developed and implemented to ensure diversity, equality and inclusion in the organisation
Lack of Trust in Mechanisms of Reporting Incidents at Work	The perception of not trusting the existing systems of reporting incidents related to unfair treatment at work and registering such complains, with the fear whether they would not be taken seriously

Table 4.2. Description of sub-themes and the codes for institutional barriers

Theme 2 - Sociocultural Barriers

Codes	Files	References
Family Responsibilities and Cultural Stereotypes	24	42
Discriminatory Experiences Within Pakistani Community	8	19
Social and Cultural Capital	10	25
Lack of Role Models	9	19

Table 4.3. Theme of Sociocultural Barriers and Codes in NVivo

Coding Description for Theme 2 - Sociocultural Barriers These are the challenges related to family, social and cultural aspects that may cause barriers to career progression	
Code	Researcher's Interpretation of the Code
Family Responsibilities and Cultural Stereotypes	Culturally, the major share of domestic workload and caring duties are supposed to be performed by Pakistani women, often with limited support from spouse and family members. There are traditional expectations associated with these women to conform with the prevalent patriarchal norms.
Discriminatory Experiences from Within the Pakistani Community	The feeling of discrimination and prejudice from within the same community of Pakistani people
Social and Cultural Capital	The advantage of having social, economic and cultural privileges like high-income socioeconomic status, good schooling, social networks, native English accent, no financial struggles
Lack of Role Models	Having little to no women of colour in leadership positions leading to lack of role models for seeking inspiration

Table 4.4. Description of Codes for Theme 2 - Sociocultural Barriers

Theme 3 - Enhancing Career Progression

Codes	Files	References
Motivation and Resilience	16	22
Social Networks	14	17
Coaching and Mentoring	12	13

Table 4.5. Theme 'Enhancing Career Progression' and Codes in NVivo

Coding Description for Theme 3 - Enhancing Career Progression This theme is associated with the coping strategies adapted by the participants for addressing the above challenges for enhancing career progression	
Code	Researcher's Interpretation of the Code
Motivation and Resilience	The importance of self-motivation in Pakistani women's careers and how resilience was helpful to navigate the challenges they faced and continue working towards their career goals
Building Social Networks	The role of friends, family, colleagues, acquaintances, and other social contacts in creating enabling environment for career progression of these women
Coaching and Mentoring	The importance of having coaching and mentoring and such facilities of guidance for supporting their careers

Table 4.6. Description of Codes for Theme 3 - Enhancing Career Progression

Appendix E - Summary of Participants Demographics

The participants of this research were aspiring second-generation Pakistani women working in different sectors across different parts of the UK. These women were living in different cities and represented an assortment of women coming from rich and poor neighbourhoods and family backgrounds. Despite the high or low socioeconomic status of their families, the parental support towards the education and careers of these women was noteworthy which had a positive impact on their drive and self-motivation to excel in their careers. The notable thing about these women was that they were all continually trying to do better in their personal and professional lives and had inspiring and heartwarming stories to tell. It was hard to not be moved by the accounts of their struggles and resilience against family and work-related problems.

The participating women were employed in different fields such as healthcare, academia, NGOs, telecommunication, retail, business and law, and were at different stages of their careers. Some of these women held leadership and decision-making roles, others held senior or middle management roles and no women were below managerial levels. All women were highly-educated, professional women who had served in managerial and leadership roles. 4 women had experienced leadership and managerial roles for a span of between 30-40 years and 14 women had between 20-25 years of managerial and leadership experience. Most women (25) came from middle-income families, 4 were from high-income families and only 2 women came from low-income backgrounds, which is contrary to the argument by Connor et al. (2004), Modood (2005) and Richardson (2015) who suggest that ethnic minority graduates in the UK mostly belong to low-income socioeconomic backgrounds.

All participants were university-educated, with many holding PhD degrees, and reported having parental and/or husband's support for higher education. This echoes with Connor et al. (2004) and Heath et al. (2008) as presented in Zwysen and Longhi (2018) that the possible reason first-generation migrant parents persist on the pursuit of higher education for their children (second-generation Pakistani women in this case) is perhaps a strategy to combat widespread racism and discrimination against ethnic minorities which is a major barrier commonly experienced by the participating women. These women continued to work hard throughout their careers, despite dealing with complex challenges of racism, gender and religious discrimination and the simultaneity of these. Thereby, it was observed that the women entered the job market with higher education qualifications and would be well-qualified (sometimes over-qualified) for the jobs they pursued. Naseem (2019) suggests that despite having university qualifications, second-generation Pakistani women in the UK are disadvantaged due to their distinctive identity markers like gender, ethnicity, religion and class which negatively impact their career trajectories; especially in accessing employment as well as their long-term career progression. These identity markers were found to play major roles in shaping the career journeys of the participants. The findings reveal significant implications of intersectional identities of second-generation Pakistani women on their career progression.

Appendix F - Tables for Demographic Information of Participants

The following tables provide a summary of the key demographics of the participants. The participants came from many different fields of work; and the largest representation was from academia and higher education which was 30 percent of the participants. 26.7 percent of women worked in non-governmental organisations (NGOs). 13.3 percent of women came from the field of health and medicine. 6.7 percent women worked in the early childhood education sector and 23.3 percent of women worked in other sectors, including retail, government, art, law, entrepreneurship and telecommunication. This diverse pool of participants coming from different fields of work adds to the richness of data and is shown below in table 1.

Field of Work	**Participants (N=30)**
Academia	9 (30.0%)
Non-Governmental Organisations	8 (26.7%)
Health and Medicine	4 (13.3%)
Early Childhood Education	2 (6.7%)
Retail	1 (3.3%)
Government	1 (3.3%)
Artist	1 (3.3%)
Hospitality	1 (3.3%)
Law	1 (3.3%)
Entrepreneur	1 (3.3%)
Telecommunication	1 (3.3%)
Qualification	
PhD	8 (26.7%)
Masters	16 (53.3%)
Bachelors	6 (20%)

Table 1 - Field of Work and Qualification of the Participants

All the participants were university qualified and had different levels of highest qualification. Out of 30 participants, 53.3 percent women had Master's degree as their highest qualification and 26.7 percent of the women were PhD qualified.

Marital Status	**Participants (N=30)**
Married	19 (67.9%)
Single	8 (25.0%)
Divorced	2 (7.1%)
Parents Socioeconomic Status	
Middle Income	24 (80.0%)
High Income	4 (13.3%)
Low Income	2 (6.7%)
Age Group	
> 27 years and at most 40 years	15 (50.0%)
> 40 years and at most 55 years	11 (36.7%)
> 55 years and at most 65 years	3 (10.0%)

Table 2 - Marital Status, Socioeconomic Status and Age of the Participants

As shown in above table 2, almost 68 percent of the participating women were married and 25 percent were single. 80 percent women reported that they came from middle income families, 13.3 percent women reported coming from high income backgrounds, and 6.7 percent women reported their parents' socioeconomic status as low income. Most of the participants (50 percent) are between 27 - 40 years of age, 36.7 percent participants are between 40 - 55 years old and 10 percent participants are between 55 - 65 years of age.

The following table 3 shows the overall working experience of the participants. It is found that 5 women had overall working experience of more than 30 years. 13 women had overall working experience of 15-25 years.

Number of years	Number of Participants	Percentage (%)
> 5 years and at most 15 years	12	40
> 15 years and at most 25 years	13	43.3
More than 30 years	5	16.7

Table 3 - Overall Working Experience of the Participants (in percentages)

The following table 4 shows the time spent by the participants in managerial and leadership positions. Out of all women, 22 women had up to 10 years of working experience in managerial and leadership roles. A total of 4 women had spent between 10 to 20 years in managerial and leadership positions and one participant had 30 years of senior leadership experience in academia. The minimum time spent in managerial or leadership roles is reported to be one year by one participant.

Number of years	Number of Participants	Percentage (%)
At most 10 years	22	75.9
> 10 years and at most 20 years	4	13.8
More than 20 years	3	10.4

Table 4 - Managerial and Leadership Experience of the Participants (in percentages)