

Doing Daughterhood In Pakistani Families: Continuity And Change Across Three Generations Of Women

Henna Nisa

A thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Cardiff University

July 2026

Abstract

In this study I delve into the dynamics of daughterhood across three familial generations of Pakistani women; grandmothers, mothers, and daughters, examining the interplay of continuity and change in their lived experiences. Employing a creative approach to narrative interviews and using Reflexive Thematic Analysis, my research explores the gendered expectations faced by thirty Pakistani women living in the UK. The research highlights how familial, cultural, and religious attitudes associated with burden and honour shape the ways in which women understand and respond to expectations of daughterhood. Women from all three generations articulated a shared understanding of their roles within a knowledge system that frames them as the carriers of familial honour whilst simultaneously positioning them as familial burdens. Key expectations and pressures included being domestically skilled as a prerequisite for married life, having arranged cousin marriages, bearing children early in their marriages accompanied by a societal preference for sons, and regulations on their clothing in line with notions of modesty and tradition. My analysis highlights the diverse ways daughterhood is done, negotiated and at times undone across the three generations of Pakistani women. Although expectations associated with burden and honour continued to shape women's lives, these expectations were engaged with differently according to the social, historical and familial contexts in which women lived. First-generation women often described burden and honour as embedded within everyday family life and gendered expectations, while second-generation women navigated these expectations within the changing circumstances of migration, education and employment. Among third-generation women, expectations associated with burden and honour continued to influence decision-making, but were frequently reinterpreted through engagement with religion, education, and work. Together, these accounts illustrate the diverse and uneven ways daughterhood is experienced, negotiated, and understood across generations. My study is the first study of its kind in the UK that explores the experiences of daughterhood across three generations of Pakistani women.

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Acknowledgements & Dedication

Alhamdulillah

All praise be to God for granting me strength, wisdom and resilience throughout this journey. "And your Lord says, 'Call upon me; I will respond to you'" (40:60).

A reminder to myself to always trust in God's plan and the power of prayer.

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to those who have supported me throughout the journey of this thesis. I would like to thank ESRC Wales DTP for granting me a scholarship and making this journey possible. I would like to thank my supervisors, Professor Sin Yi Cheung and Professor EJ Renold, for their unwavering guidance, support and encouragement. Your insights and expertise have been invaluable, and I am grateful for your patience and understanding throughout this process. I would also like to extend my thanks to my progress reviewer, Professor Dawn Mannay, for her constructive feedback and support. I am also deeply grateful to Dr Max Richard Ashton for his help and feedback. Together, your guidance has helped elevate the quality of my work.

A special thank you to my participants for trusting me with their precious stories and talking to me so openly about their struggles, desires and fears. I aim for this research to be a stepping stone in making a difference to the lives of marginalised women.

I would also like to thank my family and friends for their encouragement and understanding.

This thesis is dedicated to every daughter that was ever told '*no you can't*'.

I hope my work inspires you to believe you can.

Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Why Pakistani daughters?

As a Pakistani daughter, growing up in a Pakistani family, I struggled to accept a lot of what I was being taught by my elders about what I can and can't do, and as my curiosity increased so did my frustrations. Why wasn't I allowed to play outside? Why wasn't I allowed to go on school trips? Why wasn't I allowed to wear *English clothes*? Why wasn't I allowed to join after school clubs? Why wasn't I allowed to go over to my friend's house? Each time I questioned these rules I received the same blunt response... "*because you're a girl*". I found myself feeling stuck in a constant state of comparison, failing to understand why my brother was able to do all the things I couldn't. As I moved through high school and had my first proper insight into what an education offered, I couldn't help but feel like I was just living in the moment, doing my best, with no real prospects. After all, my mother and my aunts were all housewives who had never been to college or university. Even amongst our extended family and wider community, there was no female figure that offered an insight into an alternative reality; one that didn't involve getting married young and having children. And so, like many of the girls around me, I navigated through high school with no real sense of purpose. Fast forward to roughly fifteen years later, and here I am writing an introduction to my PhD thesis, with no marriage or child in sight. I'm not sure when my frustrations transformed into ambitions, but all I knew was I had to achieve what had not been done before, **because I'm a girl.**

My personal experiences have inspired my academic projects to date. My undergraduate dissertation explored the educational experiences of British South Asian women in the UK and how they negotiated identity conflicts. My masters project explored the educational experiences of British Muslim students and how they resisted and negotiated social pressures that conflicted with an Islamic lifestyle. I have maintained a keen interest in how belief systems shape the way people think and behave, as well as how they are treated.

What stuck with me was seeing the women in my life being treated less favourably compared to the men around me, being denied opportunities such as an education and employment, sacrificing personal ambitions to fulfil familial duties and expectations, and dealing with the challenges of daily life in a way that marginalised them from the rest of society. What was interesting to me was that Pakistani women seemed to be sidelined when it came to opportunities and achievements, however they were on the frontline when it came to family respect, honour and judgment.

I was all too familiar with the stories and gossip about so-and-so's daughter who had tarnished her family's reputation, because of something controversial, such as a love interest, a job, her clothes, a divorce, an outspoken opinion. I found that this recognition of being a 'daughter' never went away. I learned that that the good and bad behaviours of a Pakistani woman have an eternal tie to her family, and she is remembered and referred to as a daughter before anything else. In this sense, for Pakistani families, daughters can either make or break your status in the community. Accordingly, the community's perception carried a lot of importance in Pakistani culture, and many decisions were shaped by the question of "*what will people say?*"

Given my own challenging of the status quo, I wanted to situate my own experiences and views with the experiences and views of other Pakistani women. I wanted to gain a deeper understanding of how Pakistani daughterhood may be evolving and what may be driving this change. Taken together, these experiences, familiarity, and knowledge inspired my research interests and thesis topic. I wanted to explore and understand where the ideas of what was good and bad for a Pakistani daughter came from, what this meant for their everyday lives, and how this shaped their attitudes and behaviours.

1.2 Significance of the study

The perceived inferiority of women in comparison to men is noticeable throughout history and across nations. From female foeticide and infanticide, no rights to vote, unequal pay, deprivation, abuse, discrimination, harassment, honour killings, FGM, rape, acid attacks, forced marriages, and child marriages, many women have been and are subject to violences, discrimination and inequalities. Over the centuries and across nations, the mistreatment and suffering of women, from their cradle to their grave, has become a universal phenomenon (Nayak et al. 2003).

Existing research on Pakistani women shows that within Pakistani cultural and familial narratives, there exists an assumption that a daughter is an existential burden. This is largely due to economic factors, whereby she will not contribute to the household income but will cost the family instead, social stigmas regarding her life choices, and cultural expectations on her priorities and responsibilities (Agboatwalla, 2000; Javed and Mughal, 2019). Research has also shown that due to the expectations placed on daughters and the importance of community values, daughters carry the potential to place the family in challenging as well as humiliating circumstances and those actions carry more serious consequences for women than for men (Talbani and Hasanali, 2000). The behaviour of Pakistani women reflects on their family (*ghar wale*) as well as their community (*biraderi*) (Lyons, 2002). Therefore, stricter social controls are placed on Pakistani girls to manage potential risks of humiliation and dishonour (Bolognani, 2009). It has been suggested that this representation arises from their positioning in Islam as guardians of faith and honour as well as the patriarchal interpretation of Islam that is justified as culture (Keddie, et al., 2019). This has been found to transcend onto a strong sex preference in children in Pakistani families with a desire for sons over daughters (Muhamad, 2009; Hussain et al., 2015). This sex preference for sons and attitudes towards daughters has also been found to have serious consequences for Pakistani women in terms of their status within their families and communities as well as their personal health and well-being as they adopt different social roles, such as mother and wife (Winkvist and Akhtar, 2000). These attitudes are also found to be prevalent

in South Asian Media, such as Pakistani dramas and films (Awais et al., 2021; Khan, 2021). Popular sayings within South Asian cultures, such as '*Betiyan bojh hoti hai*' (Daughters are a burden) and '*Betiya to hoti hai parai*' (Daughters belong to someone else) (Jatrana, 2003) are used in storylines to showcase the stereotyping, sexism, discrimination and challenges associated with being a daughter in South Asian communities.

The question remains as to whether Pakistani daughterhood has changed over time and what this means for Pakistani women today. Do the presumptions of inferiority and dishonour still exist? Where do these beliefs come from and how have they changed? How do Pakistani women, belonging to different generations, negotiate these expectations? How have changes in the economy and division of labour impacted Pakistani women's experiences of daughterhood and family culture? How has migration and contemporary British society shaped the ways in which Pakistani daughters are socially controlled?

1.3 Focus of the study

To address this gap in literature, I decided to focus my study on three generations of Pakistani women living in the UK. I chose to look at three generations because to understand continuities and change I felt it would be worth exploring the experiences of women from different generations who are at different stages of life. I felt that an intergenerational study would provide useful insights into how elements of family culture may work to shape the experiences of women across different generations and how social, political, cultural, and personal expectations may influence how certain practices and attitudes are navigated and passed on through generations.

My literature search also revealed that a study of this nature was missing in scholarly research with Pakistani women specifically since 1989. Afshar (1989) had carried out research with Pakistani Muslim immigrant women in West Yorkshire, UK, who belonged to three-generation households. Her study used qualitative, interview-

based methodology, with a sample size of a dozen households, to understand how the experiences of racism and cultural conflicts between younger and older generations have impacted the women's social and economic aspirations and opportunities. Although this study explored three generations of Pakistani women with an intersectional lens that considered religion, class and nationality, the study centralised the experiences of racism, ethnicity, labour, and employment.

My study focuses on the experiences of daughterhood among 30 Pakistani women aged between 15 and 86. The analysis centres on descent relationships within families, specifically grandmothers, mothers and daughters, with generation understood primarily as a familial position. At the same time, migration history remains important. The first generation comprises women born in Pakistan who later migrated to the UK, the second generation includes both Pakistan-born and UK-born women, and the third generation is made up of UK-born women. Where relevant, I used nativity-based distinctions (such as British-born and Pakistani-born) to explore differences within these groups. In this way, I used generational categories to capture both relational position and temporal context, allowing my analysis to attend to variation within as well as across generations.

In social science research, daughtering has been conceptualised as a set of social practices that shape kinship and family relationships (Kara and Wrede, 2022). It also involves role expectations, through which daughters interpret, perform, and evaluate their roles within families (Alford and Harrigan, 2019). Building on this work, in my study I conceptualised daughterhood as a process of negotiation rather than a fixed role. The women in my study engaged with expectations in different ways, at times reproducing them, at times adapting them and at times challenging them within the constraints of family life. In this sense, daughterhood is shaped through ongoing interaction between expectation, experience and interpretation.

These expectations are closely tied to power relations within families, particularly those structured through gender and patriarchy. Daughters often navigate multiple responsibilities across roles such as sister, wife, mother, daughter-in-law, student, and employee, with each shaped by overlapping expectations linked to family,

culture and social context. These experiences are not uniform, but are shaped by intersecting factors such as gender, class, ethnicity, and migration, highlighting the importance of an intersectional approach to understanding daughterhood.

This study explores how daughterhood is understood and lived through the narratives of Pakistani women across three generations. It examines how expectations associated with family, culture and religion shape women's experiences, and how these are engaged with over time in changing social contexts.

The research question guiding this study is:

How is daughterhood understood and lived across generations and over time by Pakistani women living in Pakistani families?

This question enables an examination of how expectations within Pakistani family contexts shape experiences of daughterhood, as well as how patterns of continuity and change emerge across generations. In doing so, my study considers how shifting social conditions, including migration, education, and changing gender norms, create different possibilities for how daughterhood is interpreted, negotiated, and lived.

1.4 Contribution to wider research

By taking an intergenerational approach, my study contributes to existing knowledge by expanding our understanding of how gendered patterns and familial expectations are sustained and reinterpreted over time, rather than assuming a straightforward progression or change. Focusing on Pakistani women living in the UK, the study explores how expectations shaped by family, culture, and religion influence how daughterhood is understood and lived. In doing so, it maps patterns of continuity and variation across three generations, highlighting how daughterhood is continually shaped through the interaction between inherited expectations and changing social conditions. My research also contributes to the field of creative, narrative and visual methods, gender studies and family research, as these methods have not been carried out in academic research with Pakistani women of three generations before.

1.5 Methodology overview

My study adopts a qualitative, narrative-oriented approach to explore how Pakistani women interpret and make sense of daughterhood across generations. I used narrative-style interviews to create a space in which participants could share their experiences in their own terms, allowing them greater control over how their stories were told. This approach was particularly important to me given the potentially sensitive nature of the topic, and the recognition that participating in research may have been an unfamiliar experience for some participants, particularly those from older generations.

To support engagement and facilitate reflection, the interviews were complemented with visual and creative methods. These methods provided alternative ways for participants to express their experiences and contributed to a richer understanding of how expectations associated with daughterhood are interpreted and lived. In analysing the data, I used reflexive thematic analysis (RTA), which emphasises the researcher's active role in interpreting patterns of meaning rather than treating them as inherent within the data (Braun and Clarke, 2021). This approach aligns with the aims of my study, allowing for an exploration of how expectations linked to gender, family, culture, and religion are produced, maintained, and negotiated within participants' accounts.

My analysis is informed by an intersectional lens, recognising that experiences of daughterhood are shaped by the interaction of gender, ethnicity, class, migration, and generation. In this study, I use the concepts of gender, patriarchy, and resistance to understand how expectations are organised within family life and how women engage with them in different ways. Rather than assuming fixed roles, my analysis focuses on how expectations are interpreted, reproduced, and at times, reworked within everyday practices (see chapter 2 section 2.7 for discussion of key concepts used in the thesis).

Although my study does not adopt an explicitly indigenous methodological framework, it is informed by principles that resonate with decolonial and indigenous

scholarship. Indigenous methodologies and indigenous knowledge systems are most commonly associated with research involving Indigenous peoples in settler-colonial contexts, where they seek to centre community knowledge, relationality, and culturally grounded ways of knowing that have historically been marginalised by Western research traditions (Bhattacharya, 2022; Dawson et al., 2017). These critiques draw attention to the ways dominant Western frameworks can overlook or misrepresent the experiences and knowledge of racialised and marginalised groups, including migrant and diasporic communities (Evans-Winters, 2019; Manning, 2018). While Pakistani women in the UK are not an Indigenous population in this sense, the broader critiques developed within indigenous and decolonial scholarship remain relevant to my study. As a Pakistani researcher working with Pakistani women, I was alert and attentive to these concerns, particularly in seeking to represent participants' experiences in ways that were accessible, respectful, and grounded in their own perspectives.

While practical constraints meant that I did not adopt a fully indigenous methodological approach, my research incorporates elements that align with these principles, including the use of narrative interviews, visual methods, and an emphasis on participants' voices. These approaches enabled participants to share their experiences in ways that reflected their lived realities, while also allowing for an analytic interpretation of patterns across the dataset. In this sense, my study sits at the intersection of reflexive thematic analysis and approaches that prioritise culturally situated and relational ways of knowing, without claiming an Indigenous methodological position.

Importantly, this methodology supports the central aim of my study: to examine how daughterhood is understood, negotiated, and lived across generations. By focusing on patterns of expectation and interpretation, the approach allows for an exploration of both continuity and variation in how women engage with gendered expectations.

1.6 Structure of thesis

Chapter 2: Literature review

In this chapter I review relevant literature to situate my study within existing research on family life, daughterhood, and gender in South Asian contexts. I begin by examining how 'the family' has been approached within sociology and anthropology, with particular attention to family roles, responsibilities, values, and traditions. This provides a foundation for understanding how family life shapes the expectations through which Pakistani women make sense of daughterhood.

I then consider the historical context of Pakistani migration to Britain, highlighting the complexities of family formation through economic migration, family reunification, and transnational marriage practices. This literature demonstrates how family relationships are shaped across spaces and generations, and how these contexts influence expectations around gender, marriage, education, and work.

Building on this, I then explore research on Pakistani and Muslim women, particularly how they engage with religion in relation to decision-making within family life. Existing studies illustrate that religion can function both as a framework for maintaining expectations and as a resource through which women interpret and negotiate their roles in areas such as marriage, employment, and education.

Drawing on the literature reviewed, I then clarify the key concepts that guide my study, including generation, daughterhood, gender, patriarchy, and resistance, through which the importance of intersectionality is also presented. I understand these frameworks as interrelated and context-dependent, rather than fixed categories. This framework guides my analysis in the empirical chapters that follow, where daughterhood is examined through the themes of Burden and Honour.

Overall, this review demonstrates the need to explore daughterhood as a complex and changing experience. By focusing on how expectations are interpreted, reproduced, and negotiated over time, the chapter establishes the basis for

examining how Pakistani women understand and live daughterhood across three generations.

Chapter 3: Methodology

In this chapter I highlight the methodological approaches that were used to attend to my research aims and research question. I draw attention to the life-history approach in narrative interviews, participatory productions in research, and composite narratives in presenting findings, and discuss why and how they were utilised in my research design, data production and analysis. I discuss the usefulness of creative and visual methodologies within my narrative approach for exploring the lived experiences of daughterhood for Pakistani women. The chapter also provides examples of the various methods used; object elicitation, mapping, and collage making. I outline my use of reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) and composite narratives to interpret and present participants' accounts, focusing on how patterns of meaning are actively developed through my engagement with the data. I also reflect on my positionality as an insider researcher and consider the methodological and ethical challenges involved, including how shared cultural understanding and familiarity with the research context shaped both the production and interpretation of knowledge.

Chapter 4, 5 & 6: Empirical chapters

The empirical findings are presented across three chapters. In the first two chapters I develop the key analytic themes of Burden and Honour, examining how these shape participants' experiences of daughterhood across different stages of the life course. In these themes I draw together patterns of meaning identified through my analysis, highlighting how expectations linked to family, culture, and religion organise women's roles, responsibilities, and everyday practices.

Across these chapters, my analysis explores how expectations are experienced in relation to being born, being raised, marriage, divorce, motherhood, education,

employment, and self-presentation. I pay particular attention to how these expectations are understood and negotiated within family contexts.

In the final empirical chapter, I bring these themes together through the use of composite narratives. In the narratives I synthesise participants' accounts to illustrate both shared patterns and variation in experience, allowing for an examination of continuity and change across and within generations.

Chapter 4: Burden

In this chapter I examine how burden is experienced and understood within Pakistani family life. I focus on expectations that position daughters as responsible for maintaining family wellbeing through care, domestic labour, and support for others.

Participants' accounts highlight how these responsibilities are linked to broader expectations around gender and family roles, including pressures associated with marriage and motherhood. This includes the significance attached to having children, particularly sons, which I found was often associated with family continuity, recognition, and value within the household.

Within this chapter, I also explore how religion and cultural expectations shape understandings of women's roles, particularly in relation to responsibility and endurance within family life. Across the three generations, my analysis considers how participants engage with these expectations, showing both continuity and variation in how burden is understood and lived.

I have structured the chapter into four interrelated dimensions of Burden: Anticipatory, Reproductive, Relational and Emotional.

Chapter 5: Honour

In this chapter I examine how honour shapes expectations of daughterhood within Pakistani families. Participants describe how daughters are closely associated with maintaining family reputation, particularly through behaviour, relationships, and self-presentation.

My analysis demonstrates how honour is linked to expectations of obedience, particularly in relation to marriage, domestic responsibilities, and dress. Arranged marriage emerges as a key practice through which family relationships and reputation are maintained, alongside expectations that daughters prepare themselves for marriage from an early age.

I also explore how religious values are drawn upon in shaping expectations around modesty and behaviour. Rather than operating in isolation, honour is shown to be intertwined with broader patterns of family responsibility, shaping how women understand and navigate their roles across different contexts.

I organised this chapter into four sections that illustrate how honour operates as a regulatory framework: understanding honour, marriage and family honour, domesticity and respectability, and dress, modesty and belonging.

Chapter 6: Continuity and Change

In the final empirical chapter, I bring together the empirical findings of Burden and Honour to examine how expectations of daughterhood are maintained and reworked across three generations. Using composite narratives, I synthesise participant's accounts into cohesive narratives that reflect both shared experiences and variation within each generation (discussed in Chapter 3, section 3.15).

I use composite narratives to illustrate how women engage with expectations in different ways, including moments where expectations are reproduced, adapted, or challenged. In addition to dominant patterns, my use of composite narratives and

analytical discussions also highlight variation within generations, demonstrating that experiences are not uniform.

Through this approach, I show how expectations associated with daughterhood remain recognisable across generations, while also being interpreted and negotiated in various ways. Rather than suggesting a linear progression, my analysis highlights uneven and context-dependent shifts in how daughterhood is understood and lived over time.

Across these chapters, I provide a coherent analytic framework for understanding how daughterhood is shaped across generations within Pakistani families.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

In this chapter I summarise the empirical findings of my study, demonstrate how my research question was answered, and outline how my study has contributed to existing literature. I begin by reflecting on my personal experiences in the research journey and the writing of my thesis, and how this impacted my decisions surrounding the research project. I then go on to provide a summary of each chapter in the thesis, outlining the decisions I made, what they achieved, and what could be done differently in future research. In acknowledging the scope and limitations of the study, including the theoretical and methodological challenges, I make recommendations for future research with Pakistani women. I then go on to discuss the contribution the study makes to the existing literature and various areas of research concerned before providing a final reflection to conclude my thesis.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents relevant intellectual debates and theoretical frameworks that have helped frame my research. It is structured into six sections. First, I explore 'the family' and how it has been approached and understood by academic scholarships in the fields of sociology and anthropology. Here, I draw on studies that address issues such as family roles, identities, values and responsibilities to help situate my focus on daughterhood in the field of family research. I then go on to provide an outline of Pakistani migration to the UK and Pakistani marriage practices to help explain how Pakistani kinship obligations have been found to often marginalise women. Next, I explore the gender specific examples of women in the family as I hope to demonstrate the need to explore the complex and shifting reality of what it means to be a woman in the family. I then move the discussion onto the role of Islamic identity in Muslim women's lives and how it shapes their experiences of family, school, society and their personal identity. I then address the key theoretical concepts and frameworks that have helped inform my design, methods and analyses throughout the research process: Gender, Patriarchy, Resistance, Intersectionality, Generation, and Daughterhood. As I integrate various areas of research carried out with Pakistani Muslim women into my discussions, I highlight how the intersection of religious, cultural, familial and gendered expectations have been noted to shape opportunities for women, as well as creating some serious challenges. I outline how existing conceptualisations have enabled me to tease out issues relevant to my research interests and how the concepts are useful in answering my research aims and question. Finally, I address the gap in knowledge my study contributes to. By structuring my chapter in this way, I hope to illustrate how my work is situated in the field of family research, demonstrate the relevance and importance of my research topic, and highlight the contribution my study makes to the wider fields of sociology and anthropology.

2.2 Defining the Family

The concept of family is multifaceted and can vary in terms of definition, size, structure, norms and values. Families vary across cultures as well as within cultures and different members of the same family may understand and define their family differently. Early sociological approaches defined the family as a key social institution responsible for social control and socialisation (Murdock, 1949; Parsons, 1955). Over time, however, sociological perspectives have shifted to recognise the diversity and changing nature of family life, with increasing attention to how families are shaped by broader social, economic and cultural transformations (Giddens, 2013; Smart, 2007). Following from these early theories, during the twentieth century the family was approached through a functionalist approach, a social exchange approach and a symbolic interaction approach, i.e. this meant that the family was being explored on a macro and micro level (Naldini, 2017).

The women's movement in the 1970s opened new ways of researching and understanding the family from the feminist standpoint. Feminists critiqued the dominant functionalist standpoint, which perceived the family as consisting of a heterosexual couple having biologically related children who all live under the same roof, and where there was a clear division of labour with women being assigned to the home and the family and men as the 'breadwinners', also known as the Nuclear family (Oakley, 2018). Feminists argued that this standpoint fails to recognise the dis-functional elements that a family can entail as well as the gender relations and power relations that structure and regulate the family. The division of labour for example, has been critiqued by feminists who argue that such roles reinforce gender inequalities and limit individual potential (Naldini, 2017). This is something which I aimed to explore in my study as I tried to better understand the ways in which gendered expectations within Pakistani families shape Pakistani women's experiences and power in decision making.

Although functionalism usefully highlights the functions families may perform, its privileging of the nuclear family as a universal and dominant structure overlooks the diversity and fluidity of contemporary life. Family forms and family structures change

in response to broader socio-economic shifts (e.g. migration, recession, and the division of labour). This includes same-sex couples, single parent households, cohabiting partners, reconstituted families, births outside of marriage, and families formed through reproductive technologies (Chambers and Gracia, 2021). These arrangements extend beyond the nuclear household to encompass wider networks of care and support, including extended kin and step-relations (Leopold et al., 2024), as well as non-cohabiting partners and chosen ties (Smart, 2007; Finch, 2007). This challenges narrow definitions of the family as a bounded, co-residential unit.

The functionalist approach also tends to overlook differences in race, class, religion and other forms of inequality that shape family life. Contemporary sociological work emphasises the importance of intersectionality in understanding how intersecting inequalities shape lived experiences of family life and structure women's positions within households and kinship relations (Collins and Bilge, 2016). Defining the family is further complicated by the fact that people sharing a household are not necessarily related, while individuals living alone may still be embedded in meaningful family relationships. This highlights that 'household' as a physical space and 'family' as a set of social relations do not necessarily overlap (Smart, 2007).

Despite variation in how the family is understood, sociological definitions often continue to invoke an underlying idea of 'the family' as a recognisable category (Naldini, 2017). Furthermore, concepts such as kin, kinship and family practices have been used to explore relationships and responsibilities beyond the nuclear unit, emphasising that family life is actively created through everyday practices of care, obligation and belonging rather than defined solely by biological or legal ties (Finch and Mason, 1991; Morgan, 2011).

As well as differences in gender, race, class, sexuality, and religion, the generation to which one belongs is also an important element to consider in attempts to understand the family, its transformation and its impact on society as well as individual experience (discussed in section 2.7.2). I situate my research along this intersectional standpoint, as my study aims to explore the continuing and

differentiating experiences of daughterhood in Pakistani families across three generations of women.

2.3 Pakistani Families

As we have seen above, defining what the family is in general terms can be very difficult due to the difference in nature of genealogical and co-habitation relations. The case for understanding Pakistani families does not appear to be much different. Lyons (2002) provides a definition based on household as opposed to genealogy and argues that in Pakistan there are two notions of Pakistani kinship. One of them is the co-resident kin (*gharwale*), which may also entail grandparents, uncles and cousins, who all live in the same household. The second is the extended kinship group (*biraderi*), which includes all those non-resident kin who are related through blood. Both are characterised by specific normative expectations and obligations, which consist of hierarchical, gender, generation, and specific kin relations as well as providing mutual support to one another compared to non-kin. Rahman and Witenstein (2014) also report that traditional family structures in South Asian families are characterised as patriarchal, hierarchical, extended and inter-dependent.

In Pakistan, it is common for kin members to live very close to one another, in joint family households or as neighbours. This family practice has travelled into the UK and many British Pakistani families are neighbours to their extended families, often with married sons living next door to their parents (Abbas, 2000). The culture has been found to have a collectivist approach to family life over an individual action approach (Lyons 2002). In essence, this means that the problems of one member are the problems of every member and are solved together. Lyons (2002) notes how it is deemed antisocial if help is refused from family and friends in the Pakistani culture. This points to the significance of family relations within Pakistani culture. This may appear to be a strong and supportive structure between kin but due to the collectivist nature of families, the humiliation of one member is also regarded as the humiliation of the whole group, i.e. all *gharwale* and *biraderi* (Lyons, 2002). This can have serious consequences for the family and its family members, especially when

Pakistani women cause the humiliation and tarnish the family's honour as we will see further in this chapter.

2.4 The migration of Pakistani families to the UK

It is useful to outline the migration patterns of Pakistani families in Britain to further appreciate the significance of Pakistani family relations and kinship ties, which have been found to extend transnationally. In doing so, I aim to highlight how the family is valued as a cornerstone of Pakistani society and culture.

The formation of Pakistani families in Britain was shaped by state definitions on what a legitimate family was and who was able to migrate accordingly (Harriss and Shaw, 2010). From the 1960s onwards, state policies increasingly privileged the heterosexual nuclear unit while making extended kinship ties more difficult to sustain through migration (Shaw, 2000). As Brah (1996) argues more broadly, diasporic family practices are shaped through racialised state processes rather than simply reproduced as 'tradition', highlighting how migration, regulation, and inequality structure everyday family life. Harriss and Shaw (2009) extend this insight by showing that family structures among British Pakistanis are actively organised in relation to immigration and welfare categories such as 'spouse' and 'dependent', meaning that family formation is negotiated through, rather than prior to, migration.

Harriss and Shaw (2009) outline Pakistani migration in four distinct yet overlapping phases. In discussing each phase, I draw on relevant literature that help illustrate the significance of family relations in Pakistani culture and how familial and cultural expectations shaped family practices within the UK, with a focus on the experiences of women within families.

2.4.1 Phase 1: Labour migration & early Pakistani settlement in Britain

Pakistani men, in the 50's, 60's and early 70's, were largely motivated by the promise of higher wages in the UK compared to what they were earning in Pakistan.

Young Pakistani men, often bachelors, would come to Britain either on their own or with male kin and were the pioneer migrants who began the investments for their families abroad. These early migrants identified themselves as responsible for their kin's well-being back home in Pakistan, and so as breadwinners they were obligated to raise their economic status abroad. This exposes a gender dimension where men were the breadwinners and women were financially dependent on them. To add to this, Harriss and Shaw (2009) explain how decision making in relation to migration was structured by patriarchal authority in the sense that senior male kin (fathers, uncles, grandfathers) would select which younger male kin were to migrate and they would also take responsibility to sponsor and facilitate their migration. Khan (1977) notes how this uprooting and resettling of other fellow countrymen was achieved through a strong sense of kinship and the accommodating nature of the *biraderi*. In some cases, men would make the autonomous decision to migrate given that an opportunity arose. As Shaw (2000) demonstrates, these patterns were underpinned by gendered expectations around authority, responsibility, and family roles, shaping how migration decisions were made and experienced across households. While separation had emotional consequences for all involved, women's perspectives were frequently marginalised, despite the particular responsibilities they often carried, including sustaining households and maintaining family life in the absence of partners or male kin.

It is important to note that Pakistanis have continued to migrate for economic purposes. Many Pakistanis now come to the UK on visitor or student visas with the hope of gaining valuable qualifications and securing employment. However, Harriss and Shaw (2009) point out that these migrants are often from higher social classes and seek to maintain their family status, unlike previous migrants who were poor and seeking to enhance their family status. Luthra and Platt (2017) have also noted that recent Pakistani immigrants arriving to the UK are much more highly skilled than earlier cohorts. There are also now a small number of female migrants who come to the UK to study or work. This remains limited however, due to the constraints on Pakistani women's role in the public sphere as well as challenges in the labour market. Harriss and Shaw (2009) found that some Pakistani women who

did migrate to the UK experienced difficulties and vulnerabilities as their gender limited their opportunities for migration and settlement. They highlight that Pakistani women faced negative judgment from fellow Pakistanis as they were living independently overseas without male kin watching out for them, and their chances to remain in the UK were also constrained as they did not have many encounters with other men in the UK who they could potentially marry and settle down with. Luthra and Platt (2017) found that Pakistani women, along with more recent student migrants, had greater educational attainment and English language proficiency compared to previous cohorts of migrants. It has also been noted that second-generation Pakistani women perform better than first-generation women in the labour market (Government, 2023). However, Luthra and Platt (2017) highlight that despite the surge in recent years of student migration, Pakistani women continue to have relatively low levels of economic activity and labour force participation compared to their UK born counterparts.

While the above findings highlight generational variation, they do not account for the intersectional inequalities that continue to shape labour market outcomes. Through an intersectional statistical analysis, Miaari et al., (2018) found that strong ethnic and religious discrimination exists within the British labour market. Penalties facing non-White women were larger than those experienced by the majority White women. Muslim women were likely to face greater disadvantages than other non-White women in the UK due to discrimination on the grounds of both colour and cultural racism. White-British Muslim women were likely to face lower levels of discrimination in the labour market, primarily because of their whiteness, language fluency and familiarity with the local system. Muslim women without degrees and with shorter periods of residency in the UK were likely to face greater levels of labour market disadvantages than Muslim women with degrees and longer periods of residency in the UK.

However, it is important to acknowledge that other possible explanations may exist. These could be women's choice and preferences not to seek certain jobs based on cultural or religious grounds, such as gender appropriateness and interactions with

opposite sex. Traditional values, patriarchal norms and male-dominated familial cultures often restrict women's entry into the labour market, resulting in low female work participation rates for Pakistani women (Sadaquat and Sheikh, 2011; Khan et al., 2023). My study extends the understanding of these complexities as it explores how some Pakistani women have been able to develop strategies to negotiate these gendered power relations to overcome cultural and familial barriers to employment and education.

2.4.2 Phase 2: family reunions & the arrival of Pakistani women in the Britain

The second phase of migration in the 70's was the family reunion phase where Pakistani men who were now settled in the UK were able to bring over their wives and children. Pakistani women and children were some of the latest to arrive in the UK compared to other immigrant populations. In her fieldwork with couples in transnational marriages, Shaw (2006) found that in their accounts, women stressed their agency in migration and involvement in the decision to reunite with their husbands. She notes how it was common for Pakistani women to live with their in-laws after marriage and so there was little pressure on husbands to bring over their wives when they migrated to the UK. Many Pakistani women wanted to get away from this situation as they experienced conflict with their in-laws and felt unhappy. They also felt that being separated from their husband was bad for their marital relationship and that their children needed to be disciplined by their fathers. Azim (2006) notes that as fears surrounding stricter immigration policies increased, men were compelled to bring over their female kin and reunite with their families.

Shaw (2006) also highlights that Pakistani men were known to be having affairs in the UK with British women and many Pakistani women had an insecure start to married life. Since divorce was considered a dishonour to the family, women remained in unhappy marriages (Mohammad, 2015; Azam et al., 2021). In some cases, families were worried that due to these affairs, men may become distracted from fulfilling their obligations to provide for their kin back home. And so, senior kin

came to the UK to keep them in check. This served as a motivation for many women to migrate to the UK so that they could maintain family integrity. On the other hand, some women were able to negotiate with patriarchal structures more than others. Some women were challenging and persuading their husbands to bring them to the UK and some drew upon women-centred networks to help them to migrate. Women were also known to engage in transnational fostering as an obligation to wider kin so that they can have a chance of a better life in the UK (Shaw, 2006). Again, this points to the significance of *biraderi* amongst Pakistanis.

The above two phases suggest that gender relations have largely served to help men's migration whilst constraining women's. However, despite family rules being structured by patriarchal practices, men and women have been able to reinterpret these gender relations through migration. This is explored further below.

2.4.3 Phase 3: Bringing Pakistani brides & grooms to Britain through transnational marriages

Since the reunion phase, Harriss and Shaw (2009) state that many new migrants coming to the UK have been due to second and third-generation British Pakistani men and women marrying back home (Pakistan), particularly their first or second cousins, who then join them in the UK. Shaw (2006) explains that arranged transnational cousin marriage has become a key symbol of cultural difference within Britain, where it is linked with attitudes of cultural, social and biological harm. On the contrary, transnational cousin marriages are sought after in Pakistan due to the strategic and emotional aspects of *rishta* (connection) whereby families can claim high status and power for having links overseas (Shaw and Charsley, 2006). Many British Pakistani parents can face great pressures from kin back home to marry their children into their families. Harriss and Shaw (2009) emphasise that Pakistani parents used cousin marriages to remain committed to bringing kin overseas and fulfilling obligations of offering them a better life. Shaw (2006) notes how this type of marriage can strengthen the ties between kin as it demonstrates solidarity. She found that transnational marriages were also highly sought after for both men and

women, as spouses from back home, were perceived to be simpler and to possess good traditional and religious values, unlike British boys and girls who were regarded as being culturally confused. Spouses from back home have been regarded as being less troublesome, more family oriented and more practicing regarding their religion, than those in the West (Charsley, 2006; Shaw, 2006).

In her study of British Pakistani women and Pakistani national men, Charsley (2007) found that girls preferred marrying a man from Pakistan because they knew too much about their cousins who lived in the UK. In this sense, distance was chosen over locality when cousin marriage was available in the UK. Charsley (2007) notes that Pakistani girls were traditionally raised to adjust within marriages given the idea that compromise is essential in marriage and that girls should be the ones willing to do it. She found that for this reason, British Pakistani boys preferred distance due to the perception that British girls would not be willing to adjust in their marriages as expected. In this sense, it can be argued that British Pakistani girls were regarded as rebellious and autonomous, and men were likely to marry from back home to avoid potential conflict due to the eroding of gender differences. It is worth noting here that transnational marriages can also be the result of deviance, perhaps more so for men than for women. Bolognani's (2009) study of deviancy amongst Pakistani youth in Yorkshire highlights that damage to the family's reputation caused by a son can be retrieved, however damage caused by a daughter is seen to be more serious and diminishing of their *izzat* (respect/honour) in the community. Women are seen to be the carriers of the family's honour and therefore deviant actions carry more serious consequences for women than men. She found that girls who deviated from cultural and family norms were expelled from the family home and parents often covered this up with excuses to others that their daughter is studying or working away from home. Boys on the other hand were sent to Pakistan as a form of rehab or to get married. Some resorted to spiritual help. For this reason, social controls were found to be stricter for girls, and they had less freedom than their brothers, as families would prefer to avoid having to expel their daughters, as this also tarnished their honour within their community.

Bolognani and Mellor (2012) found that men from Pakistan were not considered to be suitable husbands for the British Pakistani women in their study. Many women expected that Pakistani men would be uneducated and would not have fluent English skills, and so they would either be unemployed or have low-paid jobs when they arrived in the UK. In turn, this would mean that they would be unable to fulfil their religious duty of providing for their wives. This was also perceived to be the case for working class British Pakistani men who were regarded as being lazy, dangerous and backwards. Charsley and Bolognani (2017) note how the idea of the “freshie” is used as a stereotype for newly arrived migrants. These labels can create boundaries within the community, with recent migrants sometimes seen as lacking the cultural knowledge and social advantages associated with being raised or settled in the UK. This suggests that women’s marital preferences are influenced not only by what they want personally, but also by family expectations, social pressures, and concerns about status within transnational family networks. In this sense, whether Pakistani women marry men from the UK or Pakistan can have significant implications for gendered power relations, as these decisions are embedded within broader hierarchies of class, migration status, and belonging.

Harriss & Shaw (2009) found that many women desired to marry a man from Pakistan as it meant that they would escape living with in-laws after marriage where they are likely to experience conflict and unease. Instead, when they return to the UK, women could stay with their own parents until their husbands’ visa applications had been accepted. This emotional closeness offered them support as well as agency and power once their husband arrived and lived with his wife’s parents. Charsley (2005) has explored this culturally unusual experience of *Ghar dhamads* (son in-laws who are residents in their father in-laws’ home/imported husbands) and states that they are a figure of ridicule in South Asia and perceived to be men who cannot assert their authority in the marriage because of clashes with their father-in-law. Mohammad (2015) states that by marrying a man overseas, women can avoid being the outsiders, and the disadvantages are transferred to the imported husbands, as they remain in their home, and can negotiate more equal gender relations. Mothers have been found to use this perceived freedom from mothers-in-

law as an incentive to convince their daughters to marry back home. Harriss and Shaw (2009) note that the central role of mothers in arranging marriages for their children is another way in which women exert agency over the migration process. This is interesting because it suggests that as women enter different roles and positions within the Pakistani family, their power and influence also shifts. My thesis extends this further as it explored the experiences of grandmothers, mothers and daughters and how expectations are negotiated as they move through different familial roles.

Another motivation found for transnational marriage was control over finances. In her research with 35 women and 25 men of Pakistani Muslim heritage, belonging to second and third-generations, who were raised in Birmingham UK, Mohammad (2015) found that transnational marriages provided women with a valuable chance to engage in public life after finishing their compulsory education as women who married back home were able to seek employment as they worked to start the visa application for their husbands. The women expressed that their independent financial contributions allowed them to assert great control in their marriages which not only elevated their status within their families but also empowered them to resist disempowerment. This dynamic, however, must be understood alongside tightening immigration controls, particularly the introduction of the Minimum Income Requirement (MIR) in 2012, which requires UK-based sponsors to meet a fixed income threshold (initially £18,600) before bringing a non-UK partner to Britain, with the aim of ensuring that families are financially self-sufficient and not reliant on public funds (Migration Observatory, 2016). These policies can both support and limit women's involvement in paid work. While visa requirements may encourage women to work, they can also increase expectations that they contribute financially to the family.

Charsley (2006) points out that transnational marriages do carry some risk, whereby spouses can be left abandoned once a visa is granted and an economic purpose is achieved, or being left without a spouse if a visa is denied. The most significant effort made by Pakistani families to try and minimise the possibility of these risks is

cousin marriages (Charsley, 2007). It is also worth noting that even though transnational marriages may offer some Pakistani women greater power and status within their marriages, this is not to say that those Pakistani women who marry locally do not have access to the same bargaining power. As we have seen above, Charsley (2007) found that British Pakistani women were perceived to be less compromising and more autonomous than women born and raised in Pakistan, and Bolognani and Mellor (2012) found that the Pakistani women in their study preferred not to have transnational marriages as they wanted husbands who would be able to financially provide for them. As mentioned earlier, Charsley and Bolognani (2017) note that the immigrant husband is often perceived to be weak and the stereotypes associated with 'freshies' may also be framing Pakistani women's desires to not marry 'back home' (i.e. in Pakistan). This is important because it highlights the differences in experiences and preferences of Pakistani women and challenges the notion that they are a homogenous group.

As well as the hope for more traditional and religious spouses, escaping oppressive mother-in-laws and achieving economic independence, Shaw (2006) outlines other reasons that may motivate Pakistanis to have a transnational cousin marriage. These include but are not limited to keeping property or land within the family, strengthening ties with kin, cousin love marriages, obeying parents and trusting their judgement, and reducing emotional and social risk. This last point of emotional and social risk in transnational marriages links with the point made earlier, where Shaw (2006) and Charsley (2006) have argued that there is a possibility of the visa application being rejected and there is a risk of manipulation whereby Pakistani women are used as means to an end in the sense that their husbands divorce them once they are granted citizenship in Britain. If the marriage does end up in divorce, it is difficult for women to re-marry as common attitudes within the Pakistani community depict the woman as the cause of the problem and there will also be uncertainties surrounding the willingness of a man to marry a woman who is divorced and has children. For these reasons, many women choose to stay in an unhappy marriage, whilst others remain divorced and do not want to marry again (Mohammed, 2015; Azam et al., 2021).

Due to the prominent attitude within Pakistani culture that makes re-marrying difficult and ignites the risk of reputational damage, parents are under pressure to find a good spouse for their daughters and kin are often seen as a safe choice as they trust the character of their kin and the judgment of extended kin. Mohammed (2015) has noted how from childhood, daughters are encouraged to be adaptable. They are told they must compromise and adjust to please their husbands and in-laws from a young age to preserve the family honour. Moreover, they are often actively discouraged from feeling settled in the natal home to enable a smoother transition through the dislocation. She notes that within Pakistani familial culture, there is a perception that cousin marriages mean that girls would be able to adjust easily, or not have to at all, given the similarities and bonds between the families. Mohammed (2015) also notes that, as daughters-in-law, Pakistani women will often find themselves in marginalised positions, vulnerable to abuse and violence and it is believed by Pakistani families that this vulnerability can be diminished if they marry their cousins.

Another common practice to reduce risk in marriages is an exchange of opposite-sex siblings, known as *watta satta*, which translates into giving and taking, i.e. brothers and sisters also become each other's brother and sister in-laws. The Pakistani community perceive this practice as a safeguard from divorce. However, this practice does entail risks because there is the danger that if one child's marriage is compromised the other child's marriage can also suffer. In this sense, it can potentially ruin marriage and kinship ties (Umair et al., 2023).

At the same time, emerging evidence suggests that these practices are changing. Findings from the 'Born in Bradford' study indicate a decline in cousin marriage among British Pakistani populations, with a notable reduction in consanguineous unions over time, particularly among younger, more educated, and UK-born individuals (Small et al., 2024). This suggests that cousin marriage has traditionally been used to reduce uncertainty and keep decisions within the family, but attitudes towards it are increasingly being questioned and renegotiated across generations.

The studies mentioned above suggest that marrying a man from Pakistan offered British Pakistani women a sense of power and autonomy within their marriages as they can access employment and remain within their parental homes, and marrying British Pakistani men offered Pakistani migrant women an opportunity to secure a better future for themselves through improved financial stability and escaping living with their in-laws in Pakistan. However, studies have shown that within transnational marriages, whether British Pakistani women marry men from Pakistan or vice versa, domestic abuse and violence is still a common experience, and many Pakistani women still find themselves to be at a disadvantage.

UK immigration policies can intensify unequal power dynamics within relationships and trap Pakistani women into vulnerable situations where they may face threats of deportation or economic deprivation (Mirza, 2016). Ali et al., (2021) has noted that extended family influence also contributes to tensions and violence within marriages as couples lack privacy and the husband's family can cause conflict within the home. The wife's family on the other hand is generally found to play a more passive role with minimal interference in their daughter's marriage, expecting her to adjust and endure. Migration may also disrupt traditional gender roles, particularly in the case of '*ghar dhamads*', where they have no local family to support them and are almost dependant on their in-laws, leading to frustrations and tensions within the marriage (Charlsley, 2005). Chowbey (2017) argues how Pakistani men may refuse to contribute financially and abuse the women's resources, for example, by exploiting women's customary marriage gifts such as *dahej* (dowry) or *haq meher* (mandatory payment or gift as stipulated in Islamic law). Unmet spousal role expectations within the marriage can also lead to conflict and escalate into intimate partner violence (Ali et al., 2021).

These findings suggest that domestic violence is found in both transnational and national marriages, indicating that neither form of marriage inherently guarantees ease, status, or power for women. These findings further highlight the subordinate position of women within Pakistani families despite their efforts to negotiate power relations.

2.4.4 Phase 4: The obligation of transnational family care

As we have seen, the importance of obligations to kin is a significant element of Pakistani family culture. Harriss and Shaw (2009) have found that for this reason, many of those Pakistanis settled or born in Britain may find themselves trying to bring over elderly kin who have fallen sick or need special care and attention. However, they may face legal barriers when trying to do so due to the state's legal definition of what a legitimate immigrant family is and who is granted visas. In this sense, there are conflicts and contradictions between state definitions of family and Pakistani perceptions of responsibility to relatives. In some cases, migrants may be required to return to Pakistan to fulfil their obligations of care. This can create conflict between kin in the UK as well conflict back home if younger kin fail to provide a duty of care to the vulnerable and elderly.

Regarding care of the elderly, disabled or terminally ill members of the family, Moazam (2000) highlights how nursing homes are unknown in Pakistan and female family members are expected to care for members of the family. More recent research, however, suggests that these arrangements are changing. Ud-Din et al. (2024) have found that the traditional family structures in Pakistan have shifted in the last few years, and this has meant a rise in old age homes in Pakistan. Their cross-sectional study consisted of interviews with 25 residents of a care home in Lahore, Pakistan. Participants consisted of 68% male and 32% female. Of these 25 participants, 40% were living in a joint family system before residing at the old age home, 60% were living in an extended family system, with only 20% who used to live in nuclear family system. They found that there were multiple reasons that caused the elderly to live in care homes, such as having no family members to look after them or having unsupportive families that would not help with their physical health issues. Thus, the elderly had lost their authority within their family structures and their deteriorating health caused them to take admission in old age homes. These findings illustrate that a significant change has occurred over the last 20 years and traditional Pakistani family duties and kinship values appear to be eroding as demonstrated by the rise of elderly family members in care homes in Pakistan. This

is significant because it poses the questions as to whether the role of women within Pakistani families is changing as family structures and kinship obligations appear to be shifting. Further research in this area is needed to explore whether these shifts are also apparent in the UK and what this means for Pakistani women where familial and cultural expectations assign them the role of primary carers.

By outlining the history of migration of Pakistanis to the UK, this chapter has so far illuminated the significance of Pakistani familial relationships and community ties. It has also drawn attention to how familial practices, such as transnational and cousin marriages are used as strategies to maintain and strengthen kinship ties. At the same time, research shows that these practices are shaped by ideas about gender and family roles, which can affect women's choices and opportunities. However, women's experiences are not all the same. Some studies show that these arrangements can limit women's independence, while others highlight how women find ways to negotiate or challenge expectations. In some cases, transnational marriage has given women opportunities to work and take part in public life, especially when visa rules require a financial contribution. This suggests that transnational marriage can create opportunities for women, but these depend on wider family, social, and economic circumstances.

The literature also suggests that certain cultural and familial attitudes, such as the undesirability of divorced women, women as carriers of family honour, women as susceptible to abuse and violence, and men as the breadwinners, shape Pakistani familial practices, especially regarding marriage and kinship obligations. My study provides further insights into the significance of the Pakistani family as it explores how patriarchal familial expectations shape the lives of Pakistani daughters.

2.5 The role of Pakistani women in Pakistani families

So far, the literature has pointed to the significance of family, kin and community in Pakistani culture. Central to maintaining these ties and upholding community values

is the role of Pakistani women. Pakistani women are found to be shaped by strong familial expectations that are deeply rooted in patriarchal traditions and cultural traditions. Hamid (2010) notes how these are attached to notions of obedience and respect of elders, of sexual innocence and ignorance, as well as purity, faithfulness and honesty. Marriage is given central significance in their lives and Pakistani women spend the early years of their lives preparing for marriage and the remaining years maintaining their marriage, in line with cultural expectations. Religious teachings also depict marriage as fulfilling half of one's faith in Islam and as the beginning of sexual relations and childbearing. Accordingly, the behaviour of Pakistani women is heavily regulated in order not to disrupt these belief systems and expectations. In the following sections I outline how Pakistani women are perceived and shaped by familial and cultural expectations, and what this means in terms of their autonomy regarding familial practices and decision making in their personal lives.

2.5.1 Carriers of Honour

Pakistani women are perceived to be the carriers of the family's honour and therefore expected to maintain modesty, sexual purity, and adherence to family preferences, especially in terms of marriage (Metlo, 2012; Fatima, 2019; Keddie, et al., 2019). Consequently, any actions that go against familial and cultural expectations carry more serious consequences for women than they do for men, and it reflects poorly on all their relatives (Lyons 2002; Bolognani 2009). Nazish (2018) notes that many Pakistani women are subjected to gender-based violence in Pakistan, such as domestic abuse and acid attacks, and thousands are murdered every year in the name of honour, also referred to as *karo-kari*, because they are believed to have brought shame to a family, a village, or a community (Patel and Gadit, 2008; Hadi, 2017; Nazish, 2018; Jamshaid and Ayyaz, 2022). Women are therefore bound by the practice of *purdah* (veiling), which operates as a mechanism to ensure their protection and respectability. *Purdah* establishes a physical and symbolic distinction between men and women by segregating their activities and roles within Pakistani society (Haque, 2003).

Moghadam (1992) explored patriarchy and the politics of gender in Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan in the 1980's. She noted that in all three countries women had a low status compared to men. This was measured by sex ration, literacy levels, educational attainment, labour force participation and fertility rates (p. 36). Men were entrusted with safeguarding family honour through the control of female family members and patriarchy was strongest in rural areas. Moghadam (1992) reports that these countries are developing countries undergoing industrialisation and that their societies are characterised with modernity and tradition, often existing in contention with one another. During these periods, women become signifiers of tradition as gender relations are called into question. What this means is that women become markers of progression, political objectives and are linked to tradition and religious orthodoxy in patriarchal societies.

Jafar's (2005) analysis of women, Islam and the state in Pakistan also echoes these findings. In Pakistan, efforts have been made to extend the literacy of women and their employment, and this has benefited many middle- and upper-class women who have entered professions. However, Jafar (2005) notes that many women who live in rural areas remain disadvantaged; this is particularly significant given that a large proportion of the population of Pakistan resides in rural areas, where inequalities are often more pronounced (Afza and Rashid, 2009). Formal women's education is not supported in these areas due to the fear that daughters will lose their modesty, read vulgar literature and in turn ruin their potential of becoming good housewives. By placing social controls on them and implementing *purdah* they are less likely to disobey their parents (Moghadam, 1992; Haque, 2003).

This regulatory framework of honour has also been found to operate within Pakistani communities living in other parts of the world in connection with migration (Patel and Gadit, 2008). Doğan (2013) has noted that in the UK, honour killings predominantly effect South Asian and Muslim communities, but cases are also found within Hindu and Sikh groups. Like Bolognani's (2009) findings in her study of deviancy amongst Pakistani youth in Yorkshire UK discussed earlier, it was found that social controls were stricter for Pakistani girls than they were for boys due to

the fear of dishonour and judgement from the community. Jain (2023) discusses numerous cases within the UK, where British Pakistani girls have been murdered by their family members as they were seen to have tarnished the family's honour and respect (p. 12-15). Sharifa Bibi, aged 18, was one of these victims in 1991. Sharifa was already married to a man in Pakistan and when she arrived back in the UK she developed a relationship with Hashmat Ali. Her two brothers murdered her and her lover after they came to know of their relationship and boasted that they had killed their 'bad' sister. Shafilea Ahmed, aged 17, also fell victim to this crime in 2004. She was killed by her parents for refusing to accept a forced marriage. Like Sharifa Bibi, Rukshana Naz, a 19-year-old mother of two, was married to her cousin in Pakistan but rekindled a romantic relationship with a high school lover when she arrived back in the UK. She became pregnant and refused to abort the baby despite pressures and warnings from her family. She was strangled by her brother whilst her mother held her down and encouraged her son to finish the job. Shaida, age 24, was stabbed multiple times in her head, chest and stomach, by her father who found her secret boyfriend hiding in her bedroom as he came home from the mosque one evening. She later died in hospital. There are many more examples like the ones above, whereby women have been brutally murdered by their kin for sinning against cultural values.

Noor (2004) notes that both western and Pakistani media portray acid attacks and honour killings as the most common form of violence against women, however there are other forms, such as control, verbal abuse, harassment and assault by in-laws, sexual abuse, marital rape, forced marriages and physical battering, that are equally traumatising and highlights the perceived inferiority of women in Pakistani societies. It is also important to highlight that although western media tend to confine honour crimes to Muslims and Islamic countries, cases are found all over the world, in families belonging to a variety of religions and ethnic groups, and honour crimes are not based on religious teachings but rather deeply rooted cultural values (Doğan, 2013; Jain, 2023).

2.5.2 The undesired child

A strong preference for sons is found to exist within Pakistani communities and the birth of a son is celebrated, whilst the birth of a daughter does not bring the same joy (Hussain et al., 2015). As well as the perceived risk of humiliation and dishonour a daughter can bring to the family (Muhamad, 2009; Hussain et al., 2015), Agboatwalla (2000) notes that this sex preference for sons is due to the perceived socio-economic benefits a son may bring to his parents. Whilst daughters are seen to be useful in helping mothers with chores and be caring, they also cost the family, as they are unable to earn money and essentially leave to create their own family unit. Pasha (2024) highlights that Pakistan has been ranked 151 out of 153 countries by the Gender Parity Index and that boys are 15% more likely to go to school than girls as they are seen as financial assets by their parents.

A woman's position within her family and community can also depend on her producing sons. As a newly married woman, having a son as a first-born child elevates her status. Where a son is not produced, women will continue to have children until the desired sex of child is produced, even if the desired number of children has been reached. Failing to give birth to a son can result in threats to a marriage whereby the husband will seek a second wife, and his mother will often initiate and encourage this decision (Muhammad, 2009). Azam et al. (2021) have noted how polygamy, or in fact polygyny (Husain et al. 2024), is widely accepted in Pakistan, from both a social and religious standpoint. They have argued that the true Islamic purpose for allowing men to marry multiple women is often used as a pretext to mask the cultural reasons for wanting a second wife, such as the first wife's inability to produce sons, as well as issues such as the wife's infertility, forced marriages and cousin marriages. They argue that the preference for sons is a harmful cultural practice as it "places the burden of a child's gender on the woman's shoulders, even when science suggests otherwise" (p. 247).

This sex preference in children also extends to the regulation of the body, as women feel pressured to keep producing children to enhance their position in the household. Generally, in Pakistan, parents do not know the sex of their children before delivery.

And even if they do learn that the sex of the foetus is not what they had hoped, they will continue the pregnancy, as abortion is not only illegal but also considered immoral. The threats of divorce or polygamy against women based on their reproductive capabilities can be seen as reflecting a patriarchal Pakistani society whereby men, and in some cases women, exercise their dominance and control over women's bodies, and due to the subordinate position of Pakistani women, they have limited control over their reproductive practices and health (Winkvist and Akhtar, 2000). Interestingly, Muhammad (2009) found that an exploration of different regions, social class and educational attainment levels showed a strong preference for sons remains unchanged in Pakistan. It would be interesting to explore whether this is also the case for Pakistanis living in Britain, where parents can find out the sex of the child and abortion is not illegal.

Exploring changes in attitudes and practices is critical as it enables us to understand what forces are shaping and facilitating changes in women's familial and cultural experiences and give us an insight into how this may reflect in wider society. How are Pakistani women responding to inequality and are they able to resist social controls and have higher aspirations for themselves compared to generations before them? What happens to cultural expectations as Pakistani families migrate and establish communities in the West. My study provides further insight into these questions through its exploration of changes and continuities across generations and the influence on Pakistani women's decision making.

2.5.3 Domesticated daughters & dutiful daughters in-law

As well as maintaining the family honour and reproducing sons, Pakistani women have been found to have family caring responsibilities and domestic duties placed heavily upon them. This often means women are confined to the private sphere of the home, where they are expected to cook, clean, raise children and care for family members, whilst Pakistani men are traditionally expected to go out and work and be the breadwinners for the family (Ashraf and Ali, 2018). Consequently, their educational and career aspirations, along with personal ambitions are expected to be

sacrificed. These established patriarchal norms create a foundation for the gendered expectations within Pakistani families.

Pakistani daughters are raised and groomed to be adaptable, compromising and obedient to maintain family honour, and this is extended into their married lives (Charsley, 2007; Mohammad, 2015). Pakistani women are typically tasked with fulfilling domestic duties, and from a young age their chores and caregiving responsibilities seek to prepare them for married life. Mohammad (2015) uses the Hindi/Urdu terms '*apna*' (ours/belongs to us) and '*paraya/e*' (those who are outsiders) to highlight how from birth, daughters are raised as '*paraya dhan*', meaning the wealth of another. Therefore, they are seen as guests within their own home (*maike*) and their rightful place is with their in-laws (*sasural*). Similar findings are apparent in India, as Zare (2014) explains that daughters in India are not invested in by families as they are seen to belong to their future husbands and in-laws. She refers to a familial attitude that depicts investment in daughters as "watering a plant in another's courtyard" (p. 111). She goes on to explain that this narrative results in the neglect of daughters in terms of their education and careers and the focus tends to be on their marriage.

The sex preference in children alongside the perceived status of sons and daughters has been found to be reflected in differences in how children are treated within Pakistani families. In their study that explored gender stereotyping in *Pakhtun*¹ Pakistani families, Hussain et al. (2015) used in-depth interviews with 24 students and teachers from three universities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan. They found that female participants reported feeling inferior and discriminated by their families. They reported that their brothers and other male members were served food first and they had the authority to decide on how to dress. Daughters and female members on the other hand were directed on how to dress, didn't have a say in their educational choices, and didn't have a say in the selection of their life-

¹*Pakhtun* is an ethnic group mostly living in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa having distinct lifestyle under the umbrella of *Pakhtunwali*.

partners. These distinctions extended onto divisions of labour whereby daughters were confined to the domestic sphere and discouraged from outdoor activities and sons were expected to handle farming, business, and shopping for the family and to abstain from feminine activities such as cooking, washing, and taking care of younger family members.

Similar to the work of Talbani and Hasanali (2000), Bolognani (2009) and Hussain et al. (2015) discussed above, stereotypical gender socialising and divisions within families have been found by Giuliani et al. (2017) in their cross-sectional study of Muslim immigrant adolescents from Morocco, Egypt and Pakistan living in Italy. They found that Pakistani girls were expected to adhere to traditional domestic roles and Pakistani boys were expected to become breadwinners. They both expressed feeling pressured to preserve cultural and religious practices and Pakistani girls in particular faced strict rules regarding dating. There was a strong focus on arranged marriages and obedience to parents was seen as crucial.

In the US, Rahman and Witenstein (2014) explored parental conflict between South Asian American college students and their parents. Guided by cultural values conflict theory, independent t-tests on data gathered from questionnaires found that South Asian boys experienced more conflict in terms of their education, whereas girls experienced it in relation to socio-cultural issues. This seems to resonate with the findings above; however I would like to point out that most of the participants in Rahman and Witenstein's (2014) study were of middle class Indian heritage (83%) whose parents were educated and therefore I believe it is misleading to present their findings as representing South Asian American students. They state that their participants were of 1.5 generation (immigrated to the USA before age 13) and second-generation (born in the USA) but make no reference to the intra-group differences in their analysis of results, such as the immigration wave and generation that is being referred to.

Regarding caregiving, Moazam (2000) has noted how caring responsibilities within Pakistani families are usually a shared responsibility amongst the female members of

the family. Shaw et al. (2005) note that, as they earn and grow into adults, Pakistani sons are expected to provide financial support to elderly parents as well as their unmarried siblings. However, they highlight that whilst the son is expected to offer financial support, this responsibility is very often not required until after the father retires or passes away, and that it is the son's wife (the Pakistani daughter-in-law) who is expected to provide the day-to-day care.

Shekhani (2024) argues that caregiving is a gendered duty and expectation within Pakistani culture. In her study with ten women living in Karachi, Pakistan, she researched the lived experiences of daughters and daughter-in-laws regarding caring for elderly family members. She found that although they both felt caregiving was their responsibility, they had different motivations as to why. The daughters in her sample provided care to their parents as a form of role reversal, repaying them for what they had done for them in their childhood. On the other hand, daughter-in-laws were more motivated by social expectations and kinship obligations towards their husbands whereby they would look after his parents as an act of duty. Both groups of women referred to religious perspectives about the elderly and caregiving, such as the elderly being a "blessing" and being able to take care of them as being a "matter of good fortune" (p. 7). The women reported that due to the challenges that came with caregiving, such as having other household chores, child-care, work commitments, and the physically demanding nature of the role, this had a knock-on effect on their relationships with other people, including their children and husbands. In line with Moazam (2000) and Shaw et al. (2005), Shekhani (2024) also found that despite living in joint families and having adult men present, the primary responsibility of care fell upon women in the family.

In her study of 82 French-Canadian, Italian and Haitian daughter-in-law's, Guberman (1999) found that, like Pakistani families, the elderly were regarded as deserving high levels of respect and this translated into family members being obliged to care for them. Also, grandparents often helped in looking after children and so caring was a form of reciprocity. Guberman (1999) also notes that couple dynamics are powerful in shaping carer roles within the family. Husbands often assumed that it

was their obligation to look after their parents as they have been living with them for a long time, especially in cases where they were the only child. However, this obligation was found to be commonly passed onto their wives, and they did little if any of the caregiving work, as if it was part of the marriage contract for their wives to look after their parents for them. The women in the study expressed how they felt they had very little choice but to meet this expectation as they were dependent on their husbands. Many of the daughters-in-law and their husbands drew upon well-established cultural norms of gender appropriate behaviour and followed a very strict gender division of labour.

The division of labour within Pakistani families is found to be shaped by cultural values, economic circumstances as well as familial expectations. Traditional gender roles often dictate how tasks are divided within families with men typically seen as the providers and the means for financial support, whilst women are tasked with caregiving and household chores. It seems that many women in Pakistan remain dependent on men, uneducated and unemployed. To add to this, the carer role can be part of an oppressing system in a family, where women have little say or room for negotiation and consequences of going against the husband's kin's demands can result in domestic abuse. We have seen that within Pakistani families, women are expected and encouraged to be submissive, obedient and compromising, which can also mean enduring the suffering and abuse they encounter from husbands and their in-laws, to save face, maintain honour and avoid the undesired outcome of divorce. These ideologies seem to travel with Pakistani migrants to the west and this is reflected in education and employment patterns as we find that majority of first-generation Pakistani women in the UK have been uneducated and unemployed for most of if not all their lives. In this sense it can be argued that the division of labour and destabilising of patriarchy hasn't really touched early generations.

It is important to note that I carried out research with Pakistani women living in Britain, some of whom had a migration history. Therefore, the context of familial relationships was of particular importance, as this required consideration of transnational dynamics to better understand the experiences of earlier generations

of women and how these may have changed following migration. My aim was to explore whether, and how, these obligations and family practices had continued or discontinued for women across three generations.

Afshar (1989) had carried out research with Pakistani Muslim immigrant women in West Yorkshire, UK, who belonged to three-generation households. Her study used qualitative, interview-based methodology to understand how the experiences of racism and cultural conflicts between younger and older generations have impacted the women's social and economic aspirations and opportunities. Interestingly, she found that younger generations experienced more intense racism compared to earlier generations of immigrants. She also found that despite having greater access to education and economic opportunities, strong cultural ties and the family obligations meant that the younger generations' experiences of labour and income were heavily shaped by the family, just as it was for their mothers and grandmothers. Afshar (1989) noted that the women in her study felt that their labour and their income were both for the well-being of the family and employment was seen as secondary to marriage and child rearing. However, she found that the women who belonged to wealthier families within the sample were found to be more challenging of traditional family expectations as they identified more closely to their White counterparts. On the other hand, women who belonged to the very poor families also disrupted traditional family demands, however this was out of necessity.

Although there has been a rise in female-led households and women's participation in the labour market in the 21st century, Chant (2002), writing in a broader global context, notes that women are now paying a bigger price than the past as they now carry a double burden of labour and responsibility. She notes that, "an increase in women's participation in the labour market is seen to have marked the termination of traditional patriarchal family conventions that seem to subordinate women" (p. 546). The destabilisation of traditional gender arrangements has given women a change in social status and more bargaining power within the home. However, this is not necessarily the case within the workplace and overall society. Women

prospects are constrained due to prejudices in the workplace. Like the women in Afshar's (1989) study, Chant (2002) highlights that women going into employment may be motivated by necessity (poverty) as opposed to fulfilment and the choice of working and type of job they have may even be controlled by their husbands. Naldini (2017), drawing primarily on European contexts, similarly notes that women are taking up employment positions and activities previously restricted to men, while few changes have occurred in men's lives. Housework continues to be unequally divided between men and women, and women are putting in the 'double shift' once they get home from work. Wang (2018) notes that younger British Pakistani girls are adamant to pursue their education and careers and have higher labour force participation than their mothers and grandmothers. This question sits at the heart of my research. I explore why younger generations of Pakistani women are achieving higher levels of education and employment and what factors have contributed to these changes. Have the domestic experiences of their mothers and grandmothers influenced their aspirations and shaped how they make decisions about marriage, motherhood, education, and careers? Or do the opportunities available through growing up in Britain play a greater role, enabling different outcomes regardless of gendered family and cultural expectations?

Despite being interested in changes across generations, it is critical to acknowledge that certain practices can remain unchallenged. For example, Nazish, (2018) notes how mothers and grandmothers may contribute to the sustaining of patriarchy. She states that despite elder generations of women having experienced abuse and violence themselves, they often push younger generations into the same cycle by discouraging them from fighting against patriarchal norms to maintain family ties. She argues that from a young age, Pakistani women are taught that they are the ones who must make all the sacrifices, not boys. And so, the cycle of abuse for women continues. In this sense, it can be argued that despite the nature of their relationship, be it through blood or marriage, many Pakistani women are found to be passing down patriarchal belief systems that in turn are shaping the attitudes and behaviours of younger generations of women. The term 'neopatriarchy' has been coined to explain how family members such as mothers-in-law and sisters-in-law,

can also perpetuate and sustain patriarchy within families (Habiba et al., 2016). My research aims to deepen understanding of why gendered inequalities and patriarchal expectations continue to shape the lives of Pakistani women, while also exploring the factors that contribute to change. In doing so, I examine both the processes that sustain existing patterns and the circumstances through which women challenge, negotiate, and reshape them across generations

2.6 The religion vs culture debate

Pakistani Muslim women have been found to draw on their religion of Islam to exercise their agency in decision-making when it comes to familial practices such as getting married, as well as negotiating their experiences of pursuing their education and careers. Rozario (2012) points out how young people are pursuing a more authentic form of Islam, free from the influence of patriarchy to non-Islamic practices, and the secular values of the West that are perceived as immoral. In an era of rapid change, Islam offers young women a sense of stability by presenting a framework for marriage and family life where their rights as women are recognised by God. Not only are these models more aligned with true Islamic principles, but they are also perceived to be more compatible with urban modernity than the religious practices of previous generations (Alexander, 2000). Consequently, British Pakistani women can draw on their religious identity and their social position of a 'Muslim woman' to assert their autonomy, contest patriarchal systems within their families and marriage, and advocate for gender equality. By referring to Islamic textual sources women are demanding and exercising their God-given rights to employment, education and choice in a spouse (Charsley, 2005). The religion versus culture paradigm has been found to be used in disputes with parents' decision making as well as when seeking potential spouses. The role of religion and its intersection with gender, ethnicity and family status in Pakistani women's lives is explored further in this chapter (see section 2.7.1). It is worth noting here that these findings do not account for non-Muslim Pakistanis who may or may not draw on their religion to exercise agency in their decision making and this is an area that would benefit from further research.

2.7 Key conceptual frameworks

In this section, I outline the key concepts and theoretical frameworks that guided this study. I review how these concepts have been understood in existing research and explain how I define and use them throughout the thesis. In particular, I discuss gender, patriarchy, generation, daughterhood, and intersectionality, and consider how they help to make sense of Pakistani women's experiences across different generations.

2.7.1 Conceptualising Gender, Patriarchy and Resistance

Gender, patriarchy, and resistance are key concepts in feminist sociology, but there is ongoing debate about how they should be understood and applied. Rather than fixed categories, feminist scholars increasingly view them as shaped by social, cultural, and historical contexts. Research has also highlighted that experiences of gender and power vary across different groups of women and are influenced by factors such as culture, class, age, and family circumstances. Drawing on South Asian and Pakistani feminist scholarship, I explore how gendered expectations are experienced in different ways and examines how women respond to, negotiate, and challenge these expectations in their everyday lives. In doing so, I highlight the relevance of these concepts for understanding daughterhood and the experiences of Pakistani women across generations.

Gender

Early sociological approaches often explained gender through sex role theory, which assumed that men and women naturally occupied different but complementary social roles (Parsons, 1951). However, feminist scholars challenged this view, arguing that gender is shaped by social and cultural processes rather than biology alone. Oakley (1972) distinguished between sex and gender, highlighting how societies create and maintain ideas about femininity and masculinity. Connell (1985) further demonstrated that gender is linked to power relations and social institutions,

while later work showed how particular forms of masculinity can help maintain gender inequalities (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005).

Interactionist approaches shifted attention to how gender is produced in everyday life. West and Zimmerman (1987) argued that people actively *do* gender through routine social interactions. Small, everyday actions and expectations can accumulate over time and contribute to wider inequalities in areas such as employment, pay, and recognition (Valian, 1999). Similarly, Butler (1990) argued that gender comes into being through repeated behaviours, such as ways of speaking, dressing, and acting, which can make gender appear natural and fixed when it is continually being reproduced through everyday practice.

Feminist scholars have also argued that gender cannot be understood in isolation from other aspects of identity. Intersectionality, introduced by Crenshaw (1991), highlights how factors such as race, class, religion, ethnicity, migration, and generation interact to shape people's experiences. Rather than treating these factors separately, an intersectional approach considers how they work together to create different opportunities, constraints, and inequalities. Collins' (2000) concept of a 'matrix of domination' further illustrates how multiple forms of inequality are interconnected. Although intersectionality has been applied in different ways across disciplines (Anthias, 2012; Blackman et al., 2008), its central contribution is to connect wider social inequalities with lived experience.

An intersectional approach has been particularly important in research with Black and minority ethnic women because it recognises the diversity of women's experiences and rejects the idea of a single, universal experience of womanhood (Konstantoni and Emejulu, 2017). This perspective is especially relevant to understanding the lives of Pakistani women in the UK. Their experiences are shaped not only by gender and family relationships but also by cultural values, religious expectations, experiences of racism and religious prejudice, migration policies, and socioeconomic circumstances. From this perspective, identity is neither fixed nor singular but shaped through the interaction of multiple social positions and contexts.

This insight is crucial for understanding the lives of Pakistani women in the UK, and ultimately the women in my study, whose gendered experiences are shaped not only by family relations but also by their cultural values, religious expectations as well as wider influences of racism, religious prejudice, migration rules and socioeconomic inequality. I argue that a Pakistani woman's identity is not fixed or singular, rather it is constantly evolving as it is relational and contextual.

Studies of South Asian and British Pakistani women demonstrate the value of this approach. Charsley (2006) shows how transnational marriages are shaped by the interaction of gender expectations, migration processes, legal requirements, and family strategies. Similarly, Qureshi (2020) highlights how marriage and remarriage decisions are influenced by immigration policies, racialised inequalities, and family expectations. These studies suggest that marital practices cannot be understood through culture alone but must be viewed within broader social and political contexts.

Research on education also highlights the importance of considering multiple influences. Dwyer's (2000) qualitative study of young British Pakistani Muslim women in two secondary schools in London explores how girls negotiate expectations around family honour (*izzat*), community surveillance and wider social stereotypes. Drawing on interviews and school-based research, she shows how these overlapping pressures shape everyday decisions, including dress, friendships and educational aspirations. Research by Shah and Iqbal (2011), focusing on Pakistani girls in the British education system, similarly highlights how schooling choices are shaped by a combination of cultural values, religious beliefs and broader social conditions, including experiences of marginalisation. Talbani and Hasanali (2000) show that young women do not choose between "tradition" and "modernity" but develop layered identities, adjusting their behaviour according to context. Gender thus appears not as a fixed attribute, but as something negotiated in relation to family, community and wider society.

Similar patterns emerge in employment research. Tariq and Syed's (2018) qualitative study of second-generation Pakistani heritage Muslim women in the UK workplace

uses interviews to explore barriers and opportunities in employment. They show that women's experiences cannot be understood through gender alone, as religion and ethnicity also shape how women are treated and the opportunities available to them. For example, participants described how workplace expectations, discrimination and career progression were influenced by how their identities were perceived. Similarly, Shahbaz et al.'s (2025) interview-based study of first-generation South Asian women in the UK examines how women experience intersectional forms of discrimination in professional settings. Their findings highlight the importance of support networks, particularly those based on shared cultural understanding, in helping women navigate these challenges.

Research on violence and vulnerability further reinforces the importance of an intersectional approach. Macey's (1999a, 1999b) qualitative study which was carried out over a four-year period on Pakistani Muslim male violence in Bradford found that young Asian women were often the targets of male violence both in the public and private spheres and men took it upon themselves to organise networks which monitored and policed Pakistani women and often used religion and ethnicity as justifications for their actions. Women drew upon religion to fight oppression by demanding their rights to education and choice in marriage partners. Similarly, Brown (2006) notes that the separation of culture and religion was a strategy used by women to exercise their rights and challenge parents' cultural expectations that were seen to be 'oppressive' and non- Islamic (also found in Mohammad, 2015; Bolognani and Mellor, 2012; Charsley, 2005; Dwyer 2000). More recent research by Iqbal (2023), based on qualitative accounts from Pakistani women in the UK, explores women's journeys into and out of abusive relationships. Her findings show that experiences of abuse are shaped by intersecting inequalities linked to gender, race and minority status, which can increase vulnerability and make it more difficult for women to leave abusive relationships.

These studies suggest that women's experiences cannot be understood through gender alone. Instead, they are shaped by wider structural and institutional contexts, where factors such as class, generation, religion, culture and migration intersect in everyday life. Across family life, education, and work, people can

experience inequalities because of the different social positions they occupy. These overlapping factors can create multiple challenges and disadvantages.

South Asian feminist scholarship has also shown how gender expectations can change through migration and life in the diaspora. Rather than disappearing, gender roles are often adapted in new ways. In some cases, expectations around daughters' behaviour, relationships, and family reputation become stronger as families seek to preserve cultural identity and respond to experiences of racism, exclusion, or discrimination (Harriss and Shaw, 2009).

Importantly, feminist scholars caution against explaining gender inequality solely through South Asian or Muslim cultures. Research suggests that women's experiences are shaped by a combination of factors, including migration, social exclusion, racism, and public attitudes towards minority communities (Doğan, 2013). Decolonial feminist scholars have also challenged portrayals of South Asian women as passive victims of culture. Instead, they emphasise the importance of listening to women's own accounts and recognising the different ways they navigate, respond to, and challenge constraints in their everyday lives (Mohanty, 1988; Mahmood, 2005) (discussed further below).

These insights are important for my study because they highlight the need to understand daughterhood within the wider social, cultural, and political contexts that shape Pakistani women's lives, while also recognising women's capacity to influence and reshape those expectations.

Challenges to the sex binary also highlights the need for more inclusive work, as Fausto-Sterling's (1993) work exposed the biological complexity of sex itself, while scholarship on embodiment and affect shows how gender is lived through emotions, bodies and material environments (Ahmed, 2013). Mirza (2013), for example, argues for an 'embodied intersectionality' and has explored how Muslim women challenged and transformed hegemonic discourses of race, gender and religion. Through narrative interviews, she found that the women in her study expressed agency through their dress, piety, and cultural attachments despite the dominant social and

political discourses that 'pathologies' Muslim women as voiceless and victims of oppression. She argues that it is important to take seriously the processes of being and becoming a gendered, sexed, raced and classed subject of materialist discourse. Contemporary feminist theorists increasingly draw on queer, decolonial and posthuman approaches to argue that gender is relational, negotiated and context dependent (Butler, 1990; Lugones, 2010).

Patriarchy

These reconceptualisations of gender require a similarly nuanced understanding of patriarchy. Early feminist theories often described patriarchy as a universal system of male dominance. However, critics argued that this approach overlooked differences in women's experiences and paid insufficient attention to the impact of race, class, and colonial histories. Walby (1989) offered a more nuanced understanding by defining patriarchy as a set of interconnected structures operating across areas such as the family, employment, culture, sexuality, violence, and the state. She argued that patriarchy changes over time rather than simply disappearing, shifting between private and public forms (Walby, 1989).

Later feminist scholars further developed this understanding. Black feminist researchers argued that patriarchy cannot be separated from racism and class inequality, as these systems work together to shape women's lives (Collins, 2000). Similarly, postcolonial feminist scholars challenged Western accounts that treated women's oppression as universal, highlighting the importance of colonial histories, cultural contexts, and global power relations (Mohanty, 1988; Spivak, 1988). Together, these perspectives show that patriarchy does not operate in the same way for all women. Instead, it takes different forms across social, cultural, and historical contexts.

I have found Kandiyoti's (1988) concept of the *patriarchal bargain* particularly useful for understanding how women respond to gendered expectations and constraints. She argues that women often develop strategies to gain security, influence, or greater independence within the limits imposed by patriarchal systems. Although

these strategies may sometimes reinforce existing inequalities, they can also help women navigate the circumstances they face. In contexts of “classic patriarchy,” common in South Asia, she notes that women’s authority is often deferred, whereby women traditionally gain greater authority as they grow older, become mothers, and move into more senior family positions. This authority is often achieved after years of meeting expectations placed on them as younger women. Kandiyoti’s (1988) work helps move beyond simple ideas of women as either oppressed or resistant by showing how their choices and actions are shaped by their position within family relationships and different stages of life.

Empirical studies of South Asian families support Kandiyoti’s (1988) argument that women often navigate gendered expectations through strategic choices rather than through simple acceptance or resistance. Research on marriage, for example, shows how women negotiate respectability, mobility, and belonging through choices that may appear conformist on the surface (Shaw, 2000; Charsley, 2012). Similarly, practices such as veiling or prioritising family responsibilities can provide women with social and cultural legitimacy that enables participation in education or employment, even while reinforcing gendered expectations (Bhopal, 2019).

However, patriarchal arrangements are not fixed. Kandiyoti (1998) argues that economic restructuring, migration, and wider social changes have weakened some of the reciprocal obligations that traditionally sustained women’s compliance within patriarchal systems. As a result, the rewards that once accompanied conformity have become less certain. For example, when women gain access to education and employment, or when economic pressures affect men’s ability to fulfil traditional provider roles, family relationships and power dynamics may shift, creating tensions and opportunities for renegotiation.

I also found that Habiba et al.’s (2016) concept of *neo-patriarchy* offered a related but distinct perspective. Like Kandiyoti, they recognise that women can exercise agency within gendered constraints. Drawing on research in Pakistan, they show how women, particularly older women, may play an important role in maintaining and passing on patriarchal expectations within the household. Through processes of

socialisation, mothers-in-law and other senior women can regulate the behaviour of younger women, especially daughters-in-law.

While both concepts draw attention to the complexity of women's experiences within patriarchal systems, they focus on different processes. For Habiba et al. (2016), neo-patriarchy refers to the reproduction of patriarchal norms within households, often through women's involvement in enforcing gendered expectations. In contrast, Kandiyoti (1998) uses neo-patriarchy to describe broader structural changes in which traditional patriarchal arrangements are being reworked and the benefits promised to women for compliance are becoming less reliable. This distinction is important to my analysis. Habiba et al.'s (2016) will be drawn on to help me explain how power and authority can operate between women across generations within families, while Kandiyoti's (1998) work provides me with a useful framework for understanding how migration, education, employment, and wider economic changes influence the experiences and choices of Pakistani women.

Resistance

Debates about resistance have changed alongside broader developments in feminist theory. Early feminist approaches often focused on visible forms of resistance, such as collective political action, labour organising, and feminist activism (Firestone, 1970; Hooks, 1984). While these contributions were important, they largely reflected the experiences of Western, middle-class women. Later feminist scholarship expanded understandings of resistance by recognising that women may also respond to inequality through everyday practices such as endurance, negotiation, and selective compliance (Scott, 1985; Kabeer, 2000). More recent research suggests that these everyday responses can include redefining personal priorities, developing a sense of self, and finding ways to live according to one's values within gendered constraints (Alyousif and Sallehuddin, 2024).

At the same time, feminist scholars caution against assuming that all forms of coping should be understood as resistance. Abu-Lughod's (1990) critique of the "romance of resistance", based on her work with Bedouin women, highlights the risk of

interpreting everyday actions as inherently oppositional. Similarly, Raheja and Gold (1994) analysis of women's songs in North India show that women can express criticism of gendered expectations while continuing to participate in the social structures that sustain them. These studies remind us that resistance is not always transformative and often exists alongside accommodation and compromise. This remains particularly relevant in a period in which feminist gains are increasingly being challenged in many parts of the world, and where opportunities for resistance are shaped by wider social and political conditions (Gergorić et al., 2025).

Mahmood's (2005) work further complicates conventional understandings of resistance by arguing that agency does not always involve opposing social norms. Studying women's piety movements in Egypt, she shows that women may exercise agency through moral and religious commitments rather than through direct resistance. This insight has been especially influential in research on Muslim women. For example, practices such as veiling can provide opportunities for ethical self-expression and public participation without necessarily challenging patriarchal authority (Jouili, 2015). More recent feminist scholarship also highlights the relational nature of resistance, showing how women's responses to inequality are shaped by their social relationships and by intersections of race, class, culture, and religion (Daneshpour, 2025).

In diasporic contexts, resistance is often complex and sometimes contradictory. Pursuing education, negotiating marriage decisions, or expressing religious identity may challenge some forms of inequality while simultaneously reinforcing others (Brah, 1996; Meer, 2013). In other cases, women may resist through refusal, distancing themselves from expectations surrounding marriage, relationships, or care responsibilities (Gujjar, 2025). Scholarship from the Global South further emphasises that these responses are shaped by particular historical, political, and economic contexts and therefore cannot be understood through universal definitions of resistance (Seppälä, 2016).

Spivak (1988) reminds us that the absence of visible resistance does not necessarily indicate consent, but may instead reflect limited opportunities to speak or act.

Likewise, Fraser (2013) warns against treating survival or adaptation within unequal systems as evidence of empowerment. Taken together, this body of work suggests that resistance is often partial, complex, and context-specific. It may be visible or subtle, individual or collective, and is frequently intertwined with the very social structures women are seeking to navigate.

Feminist debates on gender, patriarchy, and resistance highlight the importance of understanding both the constraints women face and the ways they respond to them. Gender is shaped through everyday interactions and expectations, while patriarchy operates through social, cultural, and family relationships that vary across different contexts and over time. Resistance is not always obvious or collective; it can also take subtle and everyday forms.

I have found these concepts are particularly useful for understanding daughterhood. They help draw attention to how daughters experience and respond to expectations within families, communities, and wider social structures. Rather than viewing women's actions as either resistance or compliance, my study focuses on how daughters navigate, negotiate, and sometimes reshape gendered expectations in ways that reflect their particular social, cultural, and generational circumstances.

Defining Gender, Patriarchy & Resistance in this Study

My thesis examines how daughterhood is practised and negotiated within Pakistani families across three generations. Gender, patriarchy, and resistance provide me with the main analytical framework for understanding participants' experiences. Drawing on feminist sociology and anthropology, I use these concepts as interpretive tools rather than fixed explanatory categories. Together, they provide me with a way of exploring both continuity and change in daughterhood, highlighting how gendered expectations are maintained, negotiated, and sometimes challenged across generations.

I understand Gender as something that is enacted through everyday social practices, as opposed to a fixed category (West and Zimmerman, 1987; Butler, 1990). In my thesis, I view daughterhood as an important site through which gender is lived and

expressed within family life (discussed further below). Expectations around care, obedience, emotional support, responsibility, and family relationships all contribute to what it means to be a daughter. Focusing on daughterhood allows me to examine how ideas about being a "good daughter" are shaped through relationships with parents, siblings, and extended family members, and how these ideas vary across generations and contexts. My approach recognises the influence of social expectations while also attending to women's choices, negotiations, and aspirations.

Patriarchy provides me with a framework for understanding how gendered expectations are organised and transmitted within families. Rather than treating patriarchy as a single, universal system, in my thesis I draw on approaches that emphasise its historical and cultural specificity (Kandiyoti, 1988; Walby, 1989). This perspective helps me to examine how daughters are positioned within family hierarchies, how responsibilities are distributed, and how expectations around care, respect, and obedience are maintained across generations. It also allows me to consider how migration influences these relationships, creating opportunities for continuity, adaptation, and change.

An intersectional framework further informs my analysis (Crenshaw, 1991; Collins, 2000). The experiences of Pakistani daughters are shaped not only by gender but also by factors such as age, birth order, religion, class, migration history, and experiences of racialisation. As a result, I understand daughterhood to be more than just a single or uniform experience. Instead, expectations around family honour, care, responsibility, and opportunity are experienced differently across families and generations, and in turn shaping daughterhood. An intersectional perspective helps me to capture this variation and recognise the multiple factors that shape women's lives.

In line with decolonial feminist scholarship, I avoid portraying Pakistani family life as inherently 'oppressive' or 'backward'. Rather than assuming that gendered expectations are experienced only as constraints, I approach daughterhood as a site of ongoing negotiation. This perspective allows for a more nuanced understanding of

how women respond to family expectations without reducing their experiences to either victimhood or empowerment.

Accordingly, I use the concept of resistance carefully throughout the thesis. Following Mahmood (2005), resistance is not treated as something that must be visible, confrontational, or explicitly political. Instead, I use it as a lens for examining the different ways daughters respond to gendered expectations in everyday life. These responses may include negotiation, selective compliance, managing relationships, pursuing education and employment, planning for the future, or challenging expectations more directly. Understanding resistance in this way helps to illuminate the complexity of women's experiences and recognises that actions which appear compliant may also reflect strategic decision-making, care for relationships, or attempts to create opportunities within existing constraints (Kandiyoti, 1988).

2.7.2 Conceptualising Generation

Generation is a widely used but contested concept within the social sciences. It has been applied in different ways across sociology, migration studies, family studies, and kinship research to understand relationships, experiences, and social change. Given the importance of intergenerational relationships to this thesis, this section clarifies how generation is understood and used in the study.

Researchers have defined generation in several ways. Some use it to refer to positions within family relationships, such as grandparents, parents, and children (Bristow, 2024). Others use it to describe birth cohorts who share particular historical experiences (Alwin and McCammon, 2003; Fosse and Winship, 2019), or groups shaped by common social and historical circumstances, following Mannheim's influential work (Pina-Cabral and Theodossopoulos, 2022). In migration research, generation is often defined according to migration history and birthplace, with distinctions made between first-, second-, and later-generation migrants (Rumbaut, 2012; Harrison et al., 2023; Baek et al., 2025).

These different approaches make generation a useful but sometimes ambiguous concept. Recent scholarship has stressed that generational experiences are shaped

by factors such as gender, class, ethnicity, and age, and therefore should not be treated as fixed or uniform categories (Bristow, 2024). Similarly, Pilcher's (1998) work on women's gender attitudes suggests that people from different generations experience different social and historical conditions, which can influence how they understand and respond to issues such as gender and family life. Generational differences, therefore, reflect both family position and the wider historical contexts in which people come of age.

Research on British Pakistani communities has generally used two approaches to generation: migration-based and familial-based. The migration-based approach categorises people according to their migration history and country of birth. Scholars commonly distinguish between first-generation migrants, who migrated themselves, and second-generation migrants, who were born in Britain to migrant parents. More detailed classifications include categories such as 1.5 and 2.5 generations (Harrison et al., 2023; Baek et al., 2025). These approaches have often been linked to ideas of assimilation, which assume that each generation becomes less traditional and more integrated into British society over time (Wang, 2019).

However, this assumption has been widely challenged. Charsley (2012) argues that continuing marriage migration means that newly arrived migrants remain closely connected to families already settled in Britain. As a result, generational boundaries are often blurred, and family practices may show continuity rather than straightforward change. Research on British Pakistani families similarly highlights the persistence of certain family patterns across generations, including marriage practices and family relationships (Harrison et al., 2023).

The second approach defines generation through family relationships rather than migration history. Here, generation refers to positions within the family, such as grandmothers, mothers, and daughters (Afshar, 1989). This perspective focuses on how generational experiences are shaped through family relationships, cultural expectations, and changing social circumstances (Hopkins, 2006). It also recognises that increased opportunities do not automatically lead to improved outcomes and

that change is often uneven and shaped by context (Afshar, 1989; Bolognani, 2007; Wang, 2019).

A transnational perspective further complicates generational distinctions. Bolognani (2014) shows how second-generation visits to Pakistan can both reinforce family hierarchies and create opportunities for identity negotiation across Pakistan, Britain and Islam. This suggests that generational experiences are not contained within national boundaries, but are shaped through ongoing cross-border relationships and connections (Bolognani, 2014; Luthra and Platt, 2017).

At the same time, inconsistencies in how generation is defined make comparison across studies difficult, while differences within generations highlight the risk of overgeneralising cultural groups (Wang, 2019; Shaw, 2001; Ahmed et al., 2022). Vincent (2005) argues that generations should be understood as social formations shaped by shared historical experiences, cultural meanings and changing life-course trajectories, rather than as fixed chronological cohorts. This thesis builds on that position by emphasising heterogeneity within cultural groups and examining how continuity and change emerge in nuanced, uneven and context-specific ways.

Defining Generation in this Study

In my study, generational categories reflect both familial position and migration history and are defined in relation to the sample. First-generation women were all born in Pakistan and later migrated to the UK. The second generation includes both women who were born in Pakistan and migrated and those who were born in the UK. The third generation comprises women who were all born in the UK. While this means that the second generation is internally diverse, grouping these women together reflects their shared position as daughters of migrant mothers, while also allowing variation within this category to be examined.

To retain analytical clarity, the second generation is further differentiated using nativity-based labels (for example, British-born and Pakistan-born second-generation women). This makes it possible to explore how migration history shapes women's

experiences without treating these differences as entirely separate generations. Therefore, I use the concept of generation primarily to capture the familial and relational position, while nativity is treated as a distinct but intersecting dimension of experience.

This approach allows me to examine daughterhood across both familial and historical contexts. It enables me to analyse how expectations, responsibilities, and meanings attached to daughterhood are transmitted, adapted, and negotiated across generations, while remaining attentive to the influence of migration histories, transnational connections, and broader social change.

My focus is on three generations of women: grandmothers, mothers, and daughters. The eldest living generation comprised grandmothers rather than great-grandmothers, and the youngest comprised daughters rather than great-granddaughters. While including additional generations may have provided further insight into longer-term patterns of continuity and change, methodological, ethical, and practical considerations shaped the scope of my research. These decisions are discussed in Chapter 3.

2.7.3 Conceptualising Daughterhood

As demonstrated earlier, sociologists have written extensively about gender, families, and relationships across generations, but daughterhood itself has received surprisingly little direct attention. Daughters are often mentioned only in passing, usually within studies of mothers, household roles, or gender socialisation, rather than being examined as a topic in their own right. Earlier reviews noted this gap and called for a sociology that focuses specifically on daughters (Hirsch, 1981), yet this call has largely gone unanswered. The absence is especially clear in research on South Asian and Pakistani families, where daughters' experiences are usually absorbed into broader discussions about women, patriarchy, or family change. As a result, we know far less about what daughterhood actually involves as a lived and relational experience. This section outlines the existing research to show why it is important to study doing daughterhood directly. By tracing what is known, and

crucially, what remains unexamined, it sets the stage for my thesis which positions daughterhood as a dynamic and historically situated process shaped by shifting gender norms, migration histories, and intergenerational continuities and transformations.

Within feminist sociology and anthropology, daughterhood has been analysed against patriarchal structures. Drawing on interviews with 120 women, Pildes (1978) provides a feminist critique of the mother-daughter relationship. She conceptualises daughterhood as a universal role that is defined by the internalisation of passive, submissive traits that are intended to prepare women for marriage and motherhood (p. 2). She explains that throughout all the roles a woman fills within society, the role of a daughter remains constant. Pildes' (1978) argument highlights the enduring significance of daughterhood in shaping women's identities and social roles, making it a useful starting point for thinking about how daughters experience and negotiate gendered expectations within family life.

Pildes (1978) goes on to explain that, like daughterhood, the role of motherhood is also a socially constructed low-status role, designed to serve male culture, ultimately leading to alienation between women. She argues that the mother-daughter relationship needs to be redefined to be repaired, as male culture has separated "woman from woman, and women from women" (p. 2). A central finding in Pildes' (1978) research is the pattern of resistance within modern daughterhood. Sixty-three percent of women in her study consciously tried not to emulate their mothers and regarded them as "negative models", associated with constraint and self-neglect (p. 4). Pildes (1978) terms this dynamic as a "mutilated" subjectivity, whereby daughters construct their identities through opposition to their mothers' perceived victimisation. Similar points have been made by Westkott (1978) who argues that patriarchy constrains mothers and shapes daughters' expectations. This perspective is particularly useful because it highlights the importance of examining daughterhood relationally, paying attention to how daughters understand themselves in relation to previous and future generations of women and how these relationships shape experiences of gendered expectations.

It is worth noting that although Pildes' (1978) work is a useful starting point for exploring daughterhood, it does carry some limitations that need to be considered in future research with daughters. For example, Pildes' sample primarily reflects the experiences of White, middle-class women and gives limited attention to how race, class, religion, migration, and other social positions may shape daughterhood differently. It is also one-sided in the sense that it relies on daughters' perceptions of their mothers and not the direct narratives of mothers. To add to this, 63% of the women in Pildes' (1978) study rejected their mothers as models, and the experiences of the remaining 37%, who may regard their mothers as models and have positive associations with them, are less explored in her article. It is also important to highlight that Pildes' (1978) research is representative of a 1978 context, where she argues that a daughter's success is measured by her adherence to "current standards for women" (p. 3). This has implications for further research, like my study, to look at how daughters living in the 21st century are navigating a world that offers an evolving gendered landscape. It is also important to recognise that for those individuals without parents and/or without children, i.e. those in foster care, kinship care or residential care, these experiences are more complex and is an area that warrants further research, especially within the Pakistani context.

More recent sociological work, such as Kara and Wrede's (2022) study of Latin American women living in Barcelona, also conceptualises daughterhood as a dynamic, relational and morally charged social position. They explore daughterhood in the context of migration and transnational families and argue that the physical separation of daughters from their families intensifies the emotional, moral and practical dimensions of what it means to be a "good" daughter. They suggest that daughterhood is not only a set of practical responsibilities, such as caregiving and availability, but also requires deep emotional and moral work as daughters try to negotiate their own lives whilst feeling morally and culturally obligated towards their families. A key finding from their study was that when distance limited daughters' ability to provide physical care, they turned to symbolic displays of daughterhood to sustain a sense of themselves as "good enough daughters" (p. 532). These displays consisted of imagined futures, communication via telephone calls and emails, and

emotional management. In this sense, migration disrupts the physical care that is expected of daughters, and as a result, daughters were described as facing difficulties maintaining transitional relationships. Kara and Wrede's (2022) study is also useful in demonstrating how physical separation not only complicates care practices of daughters, but also how new forms of doing daughterhood are generated and how transnational daughterhood is emotionally complex. The complexity of care at a distance has been documented across a range of national and cultural contexts, including Europe, Asia and migrant-receiving countries such as the UK, where family members maintain practical, emotional and financial responsibilities across borders (Gruijters, 2017; Miyawaki and Hooyman, 2018; Albertini et al., 2019; Sethi et al., 2022)

Existing social science research suggests that daughterhood is a socially constructed and culturally embedded relational identity shaped by a range of social, cultural, and familial factors (Alford, 2019; Kara and Wrede, 2022). Rather than simply reflecting a biological relationship, daughterhood is produced through interactions with others, informed by gendered expectations, and experienced differently across social and cultural contexts. However, daughterhood remains an underdeveloped area of research. Existing studies point to the need for greater attention to daughters' own narratives and to analyses that consider how experiences of daughterhood are shaped by factors such as generation, migration, religion, and cultural context. Such work is important for understanding both shared and diverse experiences of daughterhood and for examining how continuity and change emerge across generations.

While the broader literature highlights daughterhood as a relational identity shaped by care, obligation, morality, and intergenerational relationships, research on Pakistani women suggests that these experiences are shaped by additional influences, including honour, family reputation, transnational kinship networks, and migration histories (explored previously in section 2.4 and 2.5). These factors give daughterhood a particular significance within Pakistani families and demonstrate the importance of examining it within its specific social and cultural context.

While the literature reviewed shows daughters negotiating cultural expectations, Pakistani research highlights *izzat* (honour/respect) as a more formal and powerful force. British-Pakistani young women are shaped by rules of *izzat* along with the pressure to present themselves respectably and avoid bringing shame on the family (Metlo, 2012; Fatima, 2019; Keddie, et al., 2019). This gives honour a centrality that is not present in Latina, Black, or transnational daughterhood studies. As with other minority groups, British-Pakistani daughters often benefit from strong family aspirations and ethnic capital that support educational success (Shah et al., 2010). But unlike many groups, educational decisions are also closely linked to marriageability and family reputation, and these shape when, where, and how daughters study (Afshar, 1989). This adds layers to the intergenerational transmission processes discussed in the wider literature.

Research on daughterhood consistently identifies daughters as key providers of emotional and practical support within families, particularly in relation to ageing parents and intergenerational care (Suitor and Pillemer, 2006; Ward-Griffin, et al., 2007). In Pakistani contexts, research sharpens this by distinguishing natal daughters from daughters-in-law: the former emphasises emotional reciprocity, while the latter face strong kin-duty expectations (Shekhani, 2024). Daughters in Karachi describe caregiving as emotional reciprocity, while daughters-in-law frame it as compulsory kin obligation (Shaw et al., 2005; Shekhani, 2024). In the UK, South-Asian women also use religious ideas like *sabar* (patience) to make sense of care and its limits (Qureshi, 2023). Like other migrant groups, Pakistani families maintain strong transnational ties and transnational cousin marriages are used as a strategy to maintain connections and fulfil obligations (Shaw and Charsley, 2006; Harriss and Shaw, 2009). However, migration can also reshape intergenerational expectations and family relationships. Research suggests that British Pakistani women are sometimes viewed by relatives in Pakistan as less family-oriented or more challenging of traditional expectations than women living in Pakistan (Charsley, 2006; Shaw, 2006).

Defining Daughterhood in this Study

In this thesis, I conceptualise daughterhood as a relational and socially organised position that is lived and negotiated across the life course. Rather than treating daughterhood as a biological fact or a status confined to childhood, I understand it as an ongoing social position that continues to shape women's identities, relationships, and moral responsibilities over time (Pildes, 1978). Daughterhood is therefore approached as an ongoing social practice that is expressed through everyday interactions, emotional labour, care, and relational decision-making within families.

I position daughterhood as structured by gendered family norms, while also recognising it as an active and negotiated process. Feminist accounts have shown how daughterhood is embedded within patriarchal systems that assign daughters moral, emotional, and reproductive responsibilities (Pildes, 1978; Westkott, 1978). In this study, however, daughterhood is not treated as a passive or uniform role. Instead, I understand it as a site where expectations are interpreted, negotiated, and sometimes challenged as women navigate family relationships and responsibilities. This aligns with relational approaches that emphasise the moral and emotional work involved in sustaining family relationships, particularly for daughters (Suitor and Pillemer, 2006; Kara and Wrede, 2022).

My analysis is grounded in the context of Pakistani families, where daughterhood is closely tied to ideas of *izzat* (honour), respectability, and collective family reputation (Metlo, 2012; Fatima, 2019). Within this context, daughters are often positioned as key moral foci whose behaviour is closely monitored and evaluated, particularly in relation to education, mobility, and marriage. In my study, daughterhood is therefore understood as a deeply relational and collective position, shaped by family aspirations, intergenerational expectations, and wider ideas about honour and respectability (Afshar, 1989; Shah et al., 2010).

Finally, daughterhood in my study is conceptualised as generationally and historically situated. Migration and diasporic life reshape how daughterhood is understood and practised, producing tensions between continuity and change in intergenerational norms (Shaw, 2006; Charsley, 2006). At the same time, daughters often remain responsible for maintaining family relationships and providing emotional support, including across transnational family networks. Religious and moral frameworks, such as *sabar* (patience), are drawn upon by women to make sense of these responsibilities and to negotiate the limits of obligation (Qureshi, 2023).

Overall, my thesis treats daughterhood as an important site through which gendered expectations are maintained, negotiated, adapted, and sometimes resisted. By centring daughters' narratives, I demonstrate the analytical value of daughterhood as a distinct concept for understanding intergenerational continuity and change within Pakistani families.

2.8 Conclusion

In this chapter I have explored the historical, social, and cultural contexts that shape the experiences of Pakistani women and families in the UK. I have shown that migration has often been shaped by gendered family roles, with men typically associated with economic provision and women more commonly migrating through marriage and family networks. Marriage continues to play an important role in migration and family life, particularly through transnational and cousin marriages. While some families view these marriages as a way of maintaining family ties and trust, others question or move away from these practices. Through the reviewed literature I have highlighted the emotional, social, and practical challenges that can accompany these arrangements for daughters, wives, and daughters-in-law.

In this chapter I have also shown how ideas about honour, respectability, and family reputation continue to influence expectations of Pakistani women. Daughters are often positioned at the centre of family aspirations and responsibilities, with expectations surrounding education, employment, marriage, and care shaped by a range of factors, including gender, religion, migration history, class, and generation.

These experiences are diverse and cannot be understood through any single aspect of identity alone. I argue therefore, that an intersectional approach is useful for understanding how women experience and respond to these expectations in different ways and across different stages of life.

I have outlined the key concepts that guide this thesis: gender, patriarchy, generation, intersectionality, and daughterhood. Together, these concepts provide me with a way of understanding how expectations and responsibilities are shaped within families and how they are experienced across generations. Rather than assuming that women respond to these expectations in the same way, this framework recognises variation, negotiation, and the importance of social and historical context.

A central argument of this chapter is that daughterhood remains an underdeveloped area of research. Existing studies show that daughterhood is closely connected to care, family relationships, moral responsibility, and intergenerational expectations, but relatively little research has explored how daughters themselves understand and experience these roles. This gap is particularly evident within research on Pakistani families. By focusing on daughters' narratives, my thesis seeks to deepen understanding of how daughterhood is lived, negotiated, and understood across generations.

2.9 Addressing the gap

Building on the concepts and gaps identified above, this research is guided by the following question:

How is daughterhood understood and lived across generations and over time by Pakistani women living in Pakistani families?

Several gaps in the literature have been identified. Although there is a substantial body of research on migration, marriage, family life, and gender within Pakistani communities, less attention has been given to how daughters make sense of these experiences and how meanings of daughterhood may differ across generations,

migration histories, and family contexts. Exploring these questions offers an opportunity to better understand both continuity and change in family life and to examine how women navigate expectations, relationships, and responsibilities within the intersecting contexts of family, culture, religion, migration, and generation. The next chapters build on these foundations by exploring the experiences of three generations of Pakistani women and the different ways they understand and practise daughterhood.

The following chapters build on this foundation. In chapter three I set out the methodological approach I used to generate and analyse daughters' narratives, before moving onto chapters four to six where I examine how these values, expectations, family practices are lived, negotiated, and reworked across three generations of Pakistani women.

Chapter 3. Methodology

1.1 Introduction

In this chapter I set out the epistemological, methodological and analytical framework underpinning my study. I begin by outlining the constructionist-interpretivist epistemology and relativist ontology that inform my research design, before introducing the women and detailing the sampling, access and recruitment strategies. I then justify the use of qualitative and creative methods to explore Pakistani women's experiences of daughterhood, with a particular emphasis on participatory forms of data production and a life-course perspective. I talk through each stage of the data production undertaken through one-to-one interviews and draw attention to the ethical considerations in the research process. I then go on to discuss my analytical process, including my use of Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) and composite narratives, alongside a reflexive discussion of my positionality as an insider researcher. I conclude the chapter by outlining how I structured the empirical chapters.

1.2 The Epistemological and Ontological stance of the study

My study is informed by a social constructionist and interpretivist epistemology, which views knowledge as something that is socially produced, shaped by context, and developed through processes of meaning-making and interpretation rather than as objective or universally true (Alharahsheh and Pius, 2020; Braun & Clarke, 2021). This perspective fits closely with the study's focus on gender, patriarchy and resistance, which are understood not as fixed characteristics but as social processes that are experienced, negotiated and challenged in everyday life.

Intersectionality also shapes epistemological approach by recognising that women's experiences of gender are influenced by the interaction of multiple social positions and inequalities, including race, class, migration status and sexuality (Crenshaw, 1989; Collins & Bilge, 2020). From a social constructionist and interpretivist

perspective, these experiences are understood within the social and cultural contexts in which people live rather than as the result of fixed or universal categories (Burr, 2015). This allows my study to explore how participants understand and make sense of gendered power relations in their everyday lives, and how these understandings are shaped by their particular social locations and experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2021) (see Chapter 2, Section 2.7).

Ontologically, I adopt a relativist position in my study, viewing reality as multiple and context dependent rather than singular or fixed (Reed, 2008). Different realities can therefore coexist, reflecting the diverse experiences, perspectives and interpretations of the women who took part in the research.

1.3 A qualitative study

These epistemological and ontological positions underpin my use of a qualitative research approach. Qualitative research is particularly well suited to exploring how people understand and interpret their experiences within specific social and cultural contexts.

In this study, a qualitative methodology provides me with a way of exploring how Pakistani women make sense of gendered power relations, patriarchy and resistance as they experience and do daughterhood across the life course. It also enables an examination of how these understandings are shaped by wider social expectations, cultural values and structural conditions.

A key strength of qualitative research is its emphasis on depth, context and interpretation. It is especially useful for research that seeks to understand lived experiences, meaning-making and the ways people understand their social worlds (De Vaus, 2001; Hammarberg et al., 2016). Using a qualitative approach therefore enabled me to generate rich and contextualised accounts of women's experiences and to explore how gendered inequalities and forms of resistance are understood, negotiated and lived in everyday life as Pakistani women do daughterhood.

1.4 Sampling, Accessing & Recruiting

Due to the sensitive nature of my study, it was essential that I considered the cultural context when I was informing and approaching potential participants. Due to the anticipated difficulties in accessing and successfully recruiting participants, my only inclusion criteria was that the sample was to consist of Pakistani women belonging to Pakistani families, from either first, second or third familial generations.

My participants were primarily approached through personal networks and purposive sampling. Later snow-ball sampling and word of mouth was used as women shared that they knew of other women in their own networks who might be interested in taking part in the study. Both approaches served to be appropriate as the process required a high level of trust and recommendations carried power within this close-knit community of women. It also meant that an extra layer of anonymity and trust could be ensured as recognition of myself as a common face during fieldwork would not appear as unordinary. My personal networks consisted of local groups of women who I met regularly at the Mosque, attended community events with and took part in religious and cultural celebrations with.

As far as the sample size was concerned, I was not concerned with the issue of generalisability as I was interested individual lived experiences, however I was mindful of time and resource constraints. Furthermore, I did want a somewhat fair mixture of each generation within the sample to better explore similarities and diversities across generations and so I stopped recruitment once I felt this variety had been reached. It is worth reiterating here that the thoughts, practices and experiences of the Pakistani women in my study are not representative of all Pakistani women in the UK, nor can the findings be applied generally to the wider population of Pakistani women living outside of the UK. This study is a qualitative study that explores the lived experiences of 30 women and the research will show that this sample of women are not a homogenous group with harmonised experiences. Details of the participants are presented in Table 1.

Participants were provided with information sheets, printed in the English language, which explained the purpose and nature of the study as well as rights to withdraw and points of contact (see appendix A and C). Participants were also provided with a methods information sheet, which outlined what creative methods I was hoping to have them participate in during the narrative interview (see appendix E). Where participants could not read English, I verbally translated the information to them over the phone or in person into Urdu or Punjabi. Participants were made aware that interviews would be audio recorded and that they could be conducted in Urdu, Punjabi or English. Each participant was given the opportunity to ask any questions and clarify any points before giving consent for themselves or for their child (see appendix B and D).

Once participants gave consent, together we arranged for a suitable time and place to carry out the interview. Participants were given the flexibility to choose an appropriate place where they felt comfortable. All the interviews took place in the homes of the participants on a one-to-one basis. To maintain confidentiality and protect my participants from any ethical concerns, when carrying out interviews in their homes, I confirmed with the women whether we were able to have a room to ourselves for the duration of the process. Thankfully, this was not an issue for any of the women in my study. However, there were instances where the interview process was interrupted, and we had to stop and continue several times due to the women having to tend to their family responsibilities. This is discussed further in ethical implications (see section 3.9).

Table 1: Profile of participants (all names are pseudonyms)

ID	Psedeonym	Generation	Age	Marital Status	Qualification	Occupation
1	Aisha	3	15-18	Single	GCSE	Student
2	Balkees	1	65-70	Married	N/A	Housewife
3	Mariam	2	41-46	Married	O levels	Housewife
4	Alisha	3	19-25	Engaged	Undergrad	Employed
5	Safoora	3	19-25	Single	A levels	Student
6	Hira	3	26-30	Single	Msc	Employed
7	Waheeda	2	26-30	Married	AS Level	Housewife
8	Bushra	2	36-40	Married	N/A	Employed
9	Banno	1	65-70	Married	N/A	Housewife
10	Neelam	2	30-35	Married	N/A	Volunteer
11	Noora	2	36-40	Married	N/A	Unemployed
12	Farah	1	71-76	Widow	N/A	Housewife
13	Zenub	1	71-76	Married	N/A	Housewife
14	Raheela	1	65-70	Widow	N/A	Housewife
15	Kudsia	1	81-86	Widow	N/A	Housewife
16	Surayah	1	65-70	Married	N/A	Housewife
17	Rabia	1	71-76	Married	N/A	Housewife
18	Rifut	2	36-40	Married	N/A	Housewife
19	Hafsah	2	30-35	Married	N/A	Unemployed
20	Fatimah	2	36-40	Married	N/A	Housewife
21	Khadija	2	36-40	Married	N/A	Housewife
22	Summaya	2	41-46	Married	N/A	Housewife
23	Samiya	3	15-18	Single	GCSE	Student
24	Salma	3	26-30	Single	Msc	Employed
25	Shanaz	3	19-25	Single	Msc	Employed
26	Fameeda	3	19-25	Married	QTS	Employed
27	Jameela	3	19-25	Divorced	GCSE	Unemployed
28	Noreen	3	26-30	Married	BTEC L3	Unemployed
29	Sana	3	15-18	Single	GCSE	Student
30	Aliya	2	30-35	Divorced	Undergrad	Employed

The table provides the familial generation to which each participant belonged as well as the age group in which they fell into. I purposefully opted to record their age in this way as opposed to stating their actual age to further ensure the anonymity of my participants. As each participant is introduced in the empirical chapters for the first time, their age and generation are stated to achieve familiarity. Their marital status, qualification level and employment status are recorded in the table as they were at the time of data collection. It is worth acknowledging that these may have changed throughout the research process. It is also important to note that their employment status is noted as it was referred to by the participants themselves, for

example, some women referred to themselves as housewives whilst others referred to themselves as unemployed. Whilst it is not shown in the table, all the women identified as Muslim.

It is important to highlight that the sample displayed clear generational differences in educational attainment and employment. None of the eight first-generation participants held formal educational qualifications and all identified as housewives, reporting no experience of paid employment. Among the eleven second-generation women, educational attainment was more varied, ranging from O-levels and A-levels to undergraduate qualifications. Although three second-generation participants were employed, most identified as housewives. In contrast, all eleven third-generation participants held, or were studying towards, formal qualifications, ranging from GCSEs to postgraduate degrees. Most were either employed or engaged in education, although two participants were unemployed. These differences provide important context for understanding the findings presented throughout the thesis, as access to education and employment shaped the opportunities, resources, and forms of negotiation available to women across generations.

It is important to note that the absence of paid employment among first-generation participants reflects the characteristics of this sample rather than the experiences of all first-generation Pakistani women. Previous research has documented the participation of some South Asian migrant women in factory work, piecework undertaken within the home, and family-run businesses (see Bhopal, 1999; Dale, 2005; Khan; 2018, Charsley et al., 2020; Summerfield, 2024). The employment profile of the women in this study should therefore be understood as one possible experience rather than representative of an entire generation.

The pronounced generational differences in education and employment should be borne in mind throughout the empirical chapters, as these factors frequently intersected with participants' accounts of religion, family relationships, marriage, and the negotiation of gendered expectations.

Another notable characteristic of the sample is that all first- and second-generation participants were married in Pakistan rather than the UK. While this was not an intentional sampling criterion, it shaped the experiences and perspectives represented within the study. Consequently, the findings should not be understood as representative of the Pakistani population as a whole. Instead, participants' narratives reflect a range of social and cultural experiences that were shaped by both migration history and the contexts in which marriage took place.

1.5 Narrative Interviews

I chose to adopt a life-history approach to my data collection method of a narrative style interview (sometimes referred to as life-course or life-story) as I was interested in understanding my participants' experiences over time, as they moved through different stages and phases of their lives, I wanted a method that would best capture their personal stories in their various contexts.

Lanford et al. (2019) argue that a life history approach blurs the dichotomy of the researcher and the participant, as collaboratively they attempt to produce a detailed portrayal of an individual's life (p. 459). For Lincoln and Lanford (2019) taking a life-history approach to research enables researchers to depict the lives of those people and groups who are living on the margins of society and mainstream culture. It has been argued that life-history studies are useful for providing insights into a specific phenomenon, despite their results not being very generalisable or representative and their methods being time and energy consuming (Lanford et.al, 2019; Ladkin 1999; Cary, 1999). Within this approach, various techniques may be employed to generate in-depth data. These include interviews, reflective notes, artifacts, timelines, life history calendars, social media platforms, and observations (Lanford et.al. 2019; Lincoln and Lanford 2019; Adriansen, 2012; Gramling and Carr, 2004; Bertaux and Kohli, 1984).

Batool and Ullah (2017) used a life-course approach to explore Pakistani women's entrepreneurship in Pakistan. Semi-structured interviews with ten Pakistani women

from Islamabad and Peshawar revealed that despite Pakistan experiencing different transitional changes, women from less developed areas, such as Peshawar, experienced greater restrictions and were in fact suppressed by socio-cultural trends. These women received less support and freedom from their families in pursuing their careers and starting their own businesses. Interestingly, they highlight that agency was strongly expressed by some women who did not care for the traditional route of marriage and opted to pursue their career and break their cultural rules. They argue that a life-course approach enabled them to identify and analyse the individual, familial and socio-cultural changes in women's lives.

In my approach, I encouraged participants to recount significant events and experiences that have shaped their lives. I asked open-ended questions and allowed participants to speak freely in their own words, prompting them when I felt it necessary to gather further cultural and historical context. This method helped generate rich insights into Pakistani women's daughterhood and helped achieve an understanding of the essence of their experiences, which shaped their social realities. As the women produced their narratives, they were able to map out their historically, socially and culturally specific experiences.

This approach was also chosen as the role of researchers as active learners was emphasised: a researcher who can tell the story from a participant's view rather than an expert who passes judgements on participants (Creswell and Poth, 2016), and an attentive listener whose role it is to try and understand what is being said (Mannay, 2016). However, bracketing off (Clift et al., 2018), which is essential to this design and approach, proved to be difficult in practice due to personal experiences. Nevertheless, this is something that has been acknowledged and embraced in this work rather than ignored or covered up, as it can provide insights into how meaningful and representative data findings are (see section 3.16).

1.6 Visual and Creative Participatory methods

I incorporated the use of creative and visual participatory methods into the narrative-style interviews, which consisted of mapping, object elicitation and collage making. There has been a move in social science research towards visual methodologies as a tool for qualitative inquiry. Pauwels (2011) has outlined three types of approaches to the grouping, sorting and reflecting on visuals: found materials as a data source, researcher-initiated productions of visual data and meanings, and lastly, participatory productions where the social scientist acts as the participatory facilitator. The type of approach taken will have consequences and influences in relation to the control of the visual, materials, access, wider knowledge and understanding, uses and ethical issues (Pauwels, 2011; Mannay, 2016).

In my study, I opted for a participatory approach to my methods, whereby research was carried out with, rather than on, participants. This is usually with marginalised or stigmatised groups to give voice and move beyond sensationalised images of them, for example in the media. As a result, it engenders a space for empathy for these groups and centralises the exploration of an inner perspective (Mannay 2016). Participatory methods also work to fight familiarity (Delamont and Atkinson, 1995). The visual can act as a barrier to the 'big mouth small ears' issue where researchers listen less and ask too much during interviews. Instead, asking participants to show and explain what they have produced can generate fresh insights as they are encouraged to refresh their perceptions, slow down and reflect. In other words, the unconscious can be brought into the conscious with images as they give you more time to reflect, rather than the instant responses required by a question-and-answer approach (Mannay, 2010).

Mapping

The women were asked to note down the most memorable moments of their life on to sticky notes and place them on to a sheet of paper. The purpose of this method was to help them recollect and visualise their memories and it also gave them

control over what information or stories they wanted to share. Inspired by the work of Renold and Timperley (2024) on jars as communication vessels of sensitive 'jarring' topics, the women in my study were also provided with a jar so that they could add or remove memories that they did not feel comfortable talking about at any stage. Some decided to create the maps based on emotions, others chose a chronological timeline approach whilst some recalled things at random, as can be seen in figure 1 and figure 2 below.

Thirteen of my first-and-second-generation participants could not read or write in English so I would ask them about their most memorable moments and write and place them on the sheet for them, in English. These were not written bilingually as I did not know how to write in Urdu. Even though they were unable to read what I had wrote, I argue that visualising me doing it for them encouraged them to open-up and recall further memories as they expressed statements such as, 'write that one down' and 'add this as well' and 'what did you put down again?'. They found the setup with the large piece of paper and coloured sticky notes entertaining and the fact that they could follow what was going on helped establish a trustful atmosphere.

Figure 1: Sana's memorable moments map

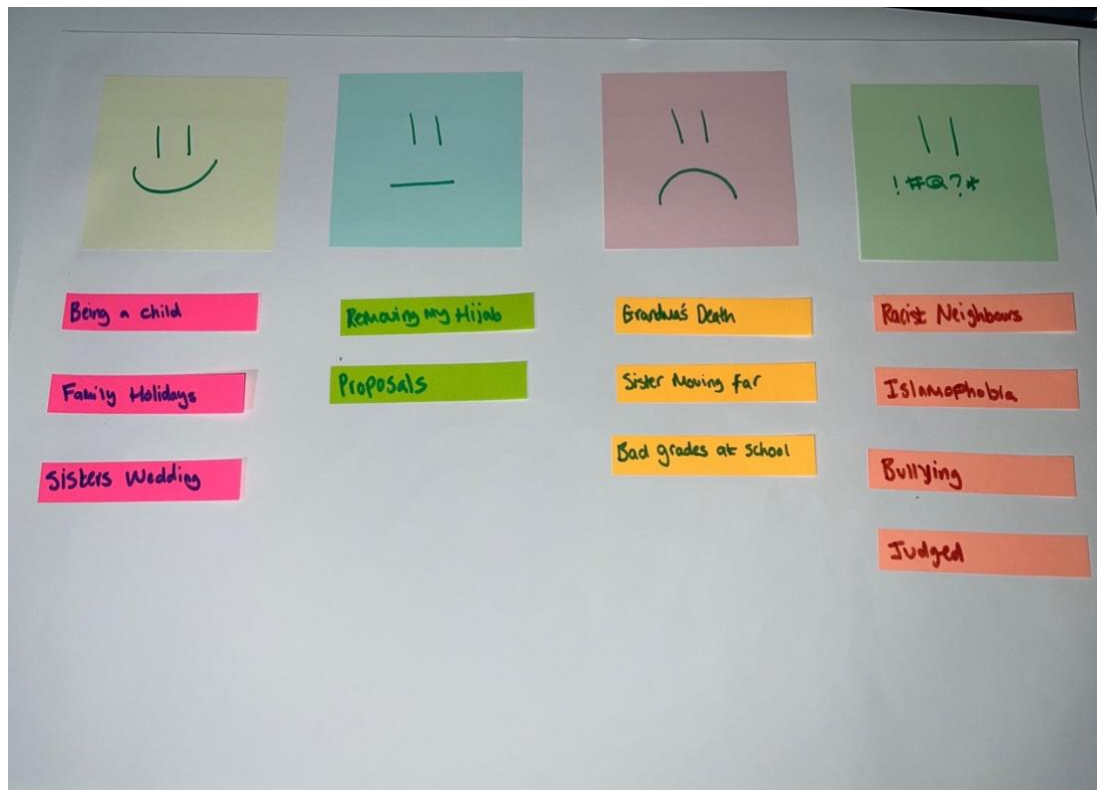
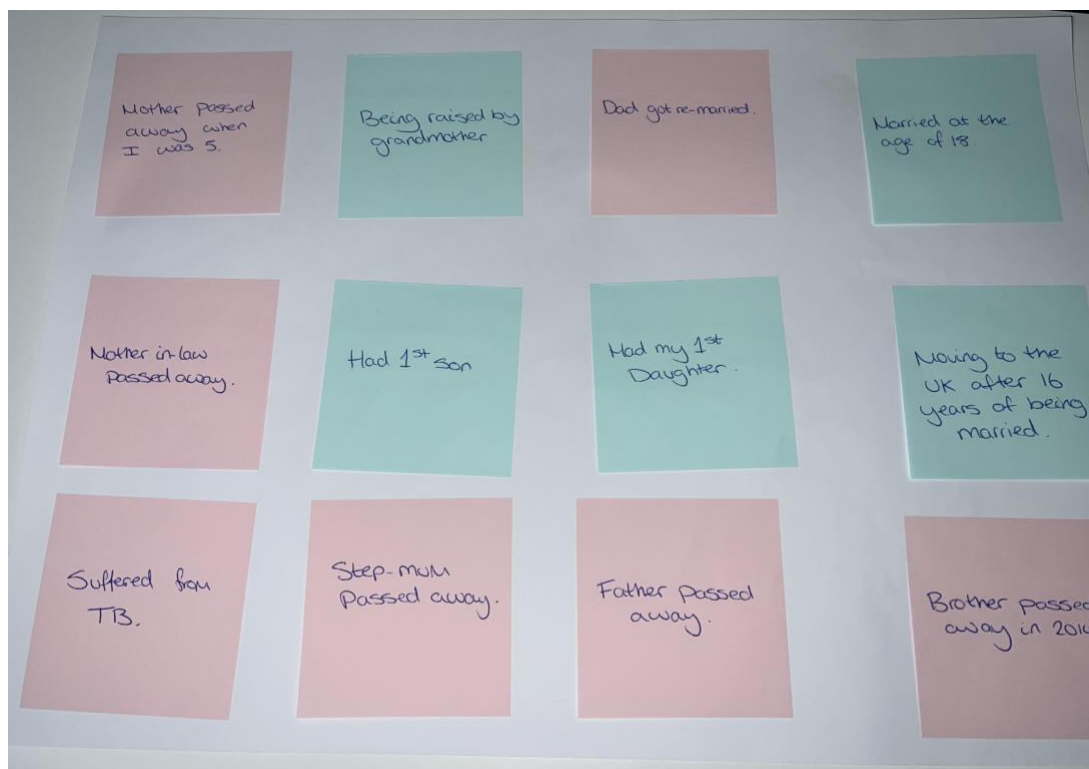


Figure 2: Balkees's memorable moments map



This method enabled participants to re-construct in-depth data about their past and identify key moments in their life. I was then able to probe them with questions to explore how they responded to these experiences. Just as importantly, a life-history approach to data production meant that changes in thoughts, practices and values could be tracked and understandings of what drove these changes could also be generated. This data was useful to draw upon when analysing similarities and differences in experiences within and across generations, as well as within the empirical chapters when mapping continuity and change in experiences.

Object elicitation

Drawing on previous work that makes use of objects to elicit rich data, address complex problems, and engage participants in a meaningful way, (see Kahlke et.al 2025), the women in my study were asked to bring along an item that was special to them so that we could talk about what this item meant to them and how it made them feel. They were given some examples on the methods information sheet to help them decide, such as photographs, jewellery or clothing. I was aware that giving examples can both facilitate engagement but also constrain what the women chose to bring as their objects. However, I felt it was necessary to provide some examples to make the women in my study feel confident to take part and to try and get as many women as possible to engage in each method I intended to use.

Some women brought along their jewellery, such as wedding bangles and earrings that were gifted to them by their parents or by their in-laws when they got married. Other examples included marriage certificates, their exam results, cultural clothing, and oven gloves. Images of these objects have been omitted from the research due to ethical considerations (see section 3.9).

The purpose of this activity was to elicit deeper understandings into the women's experiences and understandings of why this object held significance in their life. The aim was for the objects to prompt memories and for participants to recall events or individuals that may, or may not, relate to this object. In doing so, they were able to

produce in-depth narratives about their lives as Pakistani women (see Chapter 5 section 5.4).

Collage

I also used collaging as a method. Here, the women were given a cut-out template of a human figure and were asked to create a visual representation of a Pakistani daughter (see Figure 3). They were provided with a variety of colours, arts and crafts and stickers. Collections of all the collages were collated into one book.

The women created collages of Pakistani daughters from various perspectives including their own. This consisted of the community, parents, grandparents, the media, and wider society. It is worth highlighting that the collage activity also got them talking in greater detail about certain topics such as body image in the Pakistani community and ideas surrounding beauty, height, weight and skin colour. In some cases, these topics did not arise during other activities, suggesting that using different creative techniques provided access to different narratives and insights into a wider range of topics and experiences.

Figure 3: Aisha's collage of a Pakistani daughter



I found that first-generation women struggled with the collage activity. Many of the women mentioned they have never drawn anything in their life, and they did not know what to do or where to begin and for that reason they did not want to take part in it. Others showed an interest but asked me to draw on their behalf and told me what they would like to be drawn or written. Some of the second-generation women expressed a lack of confidence in their drawing skills but as they looked through the book they gave it a go. Similar experiences of adults' lack of confidence in creating collages have been found in other studies (see Mannay, 2009; Kearney and Hyle, 2004). Many of the women described this activity as calming and therapeutic given that they had spoken about some sensitive and emotional topics,

whilst some participants got quite upset when sharing their stories through the visual and creative methods (see section 3.7). When participants got upset, they were supported by being given time to take a break as well as the option to stop the interview if they wished.

Visual and creative materials were used throughout the interviews to support reflection, discussion and meaning-making. Although participants' narratives and interpretations form the primary focus of the empirical chapters, the visual productions were also analysed alongside interview accounts (discussed further in section 3.10). The visual and material methods used in this study highlighted the importance of attending not only to the objects selected by participants but also to the meanings they attributed to them. Similar objects were often used in different ways. For example, several participants brought items associated with cooking and domestic labour, such as rolling pins, chapati baskets, and kitchen utensils. However, these objects did not carry a single or fixed meaning. For some women, they represented pride in cultural identity, family care, and domestic competence. For others, they served as a commentary on gendered expectations and the responsibilities associated with daughterhood. Meanings were therefore derived from participants' narratives and explanations rather than assumed from the objects themselves.

Overall, I found that these methods facilitated the achievement of a deep understanding of my participants' experiences, as well as enabling my participants to express their ideas openly and freely. As an insider, I also developed a greater awareness of the need for useful and effective follow-up questions as well the sensitivity in probing difficult and personal issues that participants expressed during the interviews. Mannay (2016) notes that using visual methods for elicitation during narrative-style interviews can help researchers get closer to the participant's personal understanding and can help minimise the effect of the researchers interests and research questions that may distort the direction of the interview.

1.7 Pilot study

Given the demographics of my research sample and the nature of my research aims and questions, I had to ensure appropriateness of my methods to each generation, and I went through the relevant process of making changes to my techniques to improve the quality and robustness of my data production methods. For this reason, I conducted a pilot study, which helped me make important judgments about the suitability, challenges and shortcomings of each method. The pilot consisted of narrative style interviews with three Pakistani women, one from each generation (a grandmother, mother and daughter) on a one-to-one basis.

Object elicitation was used to help gain a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of the Pakistani women. They were asked to bring along an object that was symbolic of their daughterhood. I found that participants found it difficult to locate an object that was specifically representative of their daughterhood and were unsure of what to bring along to the interview. Upon reflection, the instructions were changed on the methods information sheet and participants were asked to bring along an object that was special to them as opposed to something that was 'symbolic of your daughterhood'.

The women were asked to create a visual timeline of their life so that I could open discussions on milestones in their life-history. The timelines followed a chronological order, starting from their earliest memories of childhood up until their current age and position in life. Upon reflection, it was felt that as a researcher I was imposing too much structure with this activity as opposed to letting my participants create and navigate their own narratives. I had failed to consider that there may be moments in their timeline that they do not want to talk about or include. As my study was seeking to be participatory in nature, I wanted to give my participants more control of the data production process and so I gave up the timeline method for a mapping activity where participants were asked to recollect the most memorable moments in their life onto sticky notes and place them on a large piece of paper.

The third activity consisted of the women creating 'the ideal daughter' on a cut-out template of a human figure, which I envisioned would form part of a book that would collate all these visuals of 'daughters'. Drawing on the work by Richardson (2015), the women were asked to create a visual representation of what the ideal daughter should be like. They created collages, where they stuck, drew, coloured and wrote on and around the template. Interestingly, the women in my pilot study each created an 'ideal daughter' from different perspectives, such as the family, the community, the media, which were not necessarily coherent with their own perspective. Based on this, I decided to change the instructions and asked participants to create a 'Pakistani daughter' instead of an ideal daughter. This meant they were able to create a collage based on whatever they felt to be of importance, or not, and from whichever lens they preferred. This meant that I would be able to probe for further detail during this activity and understand the meaning-making behind the collage and how these expectations regulated their lives.

Following the pilot study, I decided to offer each method to my participants at the beginning of their interviews and allowed them to choose whether they wanted to use all three or not. Given the life-history approach to my narrative interviews, I suggested that the first activity to be the mapping activity as it encouraged my participants to reflect on their whole lives which then opened up fruitful discussions on their variety of experiences. I suggested the second activity to be creating collages; however I did not impose a strict sequence, and participants were encouraged to pick the order and number of activities as they wished. The objects that participants had brought along to the interviews were acknowledged as and when the participant referred to the object themselves or by me when I wanted to prompt further discussions during the interview. I elaborate on these methods in the following section.

1.8 Methods in process

Bearing in mind that my participants were of different generations with different abilities, competencies, and skills I had to be flexible in giving them the choice to take part in the visual data production methods. Participants were reminded at the beginning of the interview that they had a choice about what they wanted to engage in. This was particularly important for the first-generation women who could not read or write in English as well as their home language and for those women who expressed a lack of confidence in their drawing skills.

During the mapping activity, in cases where participants could not read or write, in English or their home language, they placed trust in me, to write down the information they were giving in English. This was the case for all the first-generation women and some second-generation women. This meant that they did not have as much control as I would have liked them to have in the mapping activity and perhaps more could have been done to tailor this to their language needs. Alternative methods, such as found images, could have been used to invoke memories (Mannay, 2016).

There is also the possibility that participants were unclear in the recollection of their memorable moments. Ladkin (1999) notes how there is a tendency for people to recall those instances that are of most importance to them. Nonetheless, what is omitted from narratives can be just as important or interesting as what is said (Mannay, 2016). I was able to use this knowledge to further prompt the women and ask them to look over their maps and whether there was anything else they felt they could add.

The memory jar methodology proved very useful for collecting data on experiences participants did not always want to discuss verbally during interviews. I found that majority of the women did not make use of the jar at all, though in some cases it proved to be very impactful. For example, during the early stages of her interview, Waheeda (2nd generation, 26-30), insisted that there was no need for the jar and that she was “an open book”. As the interview progressed and she engaged in the

mapping activity, she referred to her memory of her father being “very strict” towards her when she was at school. She then began to talk about her father’s health and how he has become “weak” and “not the same”. Waheeda became quite upset at this point and she reached for the sticky note that read ‘*strict dad*’, pulled it off her map and shoved it into the jar whilst saying “thank God for that, let’s leave that in there”.

There were times when the women asked for my view on their drawings and maps, and I had to try my best not to impose ideas on how they could be improved or changed. It was important to me that the visuals represented their stories and ideas, and I had to encourage them to create what they could and not to be fazed by their assumptions about my opinions as a researcher. This reiterates the point made earlier about participants’ confidence in their artistic capabilities. I also provided the materials they were given to create their maps and collages, which ultimately did shape the way they presented their drawings. The specific stationery provided influenced how their collages turned out in terms of colours and materials available to use. In these instances, lines became blurred, and it sometimes felt like researcher-initiated production as opposed to participatory production as power relations shifted.

Each interview was a one-off interview and varied in length depending on the participant’s engagement, needs, and disturbances. For example, some participants needed to attend to their family during the interview, so the process was paused until they returned. Some participants did not engage in each creative method and so their interviews were shorter than others, and some interviews were disrupted by family members and audio recordings were paused accordingly. The shortest interview recorded was 47 minutes long and the longest interview recorded was 117 minutes long. Overall, I found my approach to be successful in allowing my participants to tell the stories they wanted to tell and not tell. However, there were certain ethical implications that impacted the process of my research methods, which I discuss below.

1.9 Ethical considerations

As a third-generation Pakistani woman belonging to a Pakistani family, being a part of the community that my participants belonged to, sharing similar familial expectations of how we, as women, should behave and sharing similar socioeconomic backgrounds, sharing the same religion and being able to be physically interpreted as a Pakistani, enabled me to present myself as an 'insider'. This position raised issues of power, as I had to navigate expectations and relationships. Roberts (2018) notes how being perceived as 'one of us' could result in people being more willing to participate in research, however familiarity can also signal problems too (discussed further in section 3.16).

Participants sometimes mistake researcher interactions as counselling sessions rather than interviews and this can lead to the expression of sensitive issues. In her work on family relationships and intimacy, Gabb (2010) contends that it can be difficult to conceal and protect the identities of participants in family research as accounts can reveal contradicting portrayals of identity and can lead to other family members involved in the research to come to know of previously private information when presenting findings. This has led her to make the decision to remove certain family case studies from her research to maintain the confidentiality of her participants. To add to this challenge, some published research is required to be open access and as a result they may have different outputs and be stored on a database. Different interpretations can be produced because of this, making the visual more problematic than numeric data, as images can be re-worked and edited to tell different stories.

Visuals can also be seen to breach anonymity despite the use of pseudonyms in analysis. This makes the concealment of identities methodologically challenging and if efforts are made to re-work the image in different ways it can lead to the visual getting out of control. As social beings we are not isolated units. Participants may tell the researcher many secrets about other people's lives in relation to the visual

image being used. As a researcher, informed consent has not been obtained from these particular people, and they are unaware of being characters in your study.

As a Pakistani woman who is part of the local Pakistani communities in which the research took place, it is highly likely that I will encounter individuals who have been mentioned by my participants in their narratives. Like Gabb (2010) found in her work, I was aware that participants may also speak of experiences that involve other participants in my sample. These individuals are unaware of being characters in my study and unaware that I have knowledge of the impact they have had on my participants, as expressed in their narratives. Ethically, I am bound to keep this knowledge to myself. I must ensure that I interact with these individuals as normal so I do not breach participants' trust, anonymity and confidentiality, as this may lead to negative consequences for them.

Anonymity of participants was crucial throughout the research process as it was possible that women shared similar social networks and may know of other participant's and their families. Any identifying markers of identity, such as names of people and places, were not made apparent in the visual productions by participants or in the analysis, and so concealing identities and preserving anonymity in this sense did not turn out to be a challenge. On the other hand, pictures were taken of the objects that participants brought along to the interview for analytical purposes. Participants gave consent for these pictures to be taken and used in my thesis and dissemination of my work. Upon reflection, I felt that that this may breach anonymity as there is a possibility that certain audiences may recognise who the items belong to. For this reason, I chose to omit the pictures of these items from the thesis and only to discuss their description and accompanying narrative in my empirical chapters.

Participatory methods also seek to minimise the effect of an 'intrusive researcher' but sometimes circumstances outside of the researcher's control can mean that other people can end up intruding on the research process, such as parents and siblings of participants (Mannay, 2015). For example, during the data production

stage, family members may help their child who is producing a visual image, or they may give input on what, how, and where visuals can be produced and so the actual production may not be an accurate representation of what was intended or instructed. I faced the issue of the interview process being disrupted several times with some of the women in the study who had to tend to their family responsibilities during the process of interviewing and creating visuals. During these instances, I had to ensure I paused audio recordings, made note of what was being discussed during that moment, and re-jog my participants memory of the topic when they returned. Although these disturbances were not ideal, I understood and respected their family commitments and was grateful to the women for taking time out of their busy day to take part in my study. These interruptions also present as data in their own right as they are telling of my participants' roles and their moment-to-moment importance within their family networks.

How instructions are interpreted, understanding the role as a participant and motives and intentions of the research will affect the results generated (Wooffitt and Holt, 2011). Some women expressed concerns regarding the use of the audio recordings, their personal information, as well as the potential 'leaking' of their stories. Some women were apprehensive towards the start of the recruitment process whilst others expressed worries during and after their interviews. One participant expressed that she felt worried that her father would find out what she had been talking about and that she would get into trouble if he was to find out. Another woman showed a keen interest in taking part in the study and then decided not to proceed after informing her mother about the study. She said that her mother doesn't agree with her taking part and does not want her talking about the family business. To help combat this issue in my research, during the recruitment process, I provided each participant with an information sheet that detailed who I was and what my research interests were, what my research was about, why their involvement was requested, and what the process would involve (see appendix A and C). The information sheets also made it clear that they could withdraw at any point without reason as well as how anonymity and confidentiality was going to be ensured. I also provided an additional methods information sheet to help minimise

potential hesitations. This sheet outlined each creative and visual method that I intended to use with the participants (see appendix E).

1.10 Analysing visuals

Understanding participant-generated images requires attention not only to what is depicted but also to the meanings participants attribute to their visual productions. Visual researchers have long argued that images do not speak for themselves; rather, their significance emerges through the social, cultural and personal contexts in which they are created and interpreted (Rose, 2001; Mannay, 2016). Consequently, visual data are best understood alongside participants' narratives, allowing researchers to explore the experiences, memories and emotions that underpin image-making.

This approach is particularly important when working with participant-generated images. As Mannay (2010; 2016) demonstrates, images can communicate aspects of everyday life and experience that may be difficult to articulate through words alone. For example, Mannay (2010) found that a participant's photograph of the night sky functioned as a symbolic representation of their lived experience. Crucially, this meaning emerged through the participant's own explanation of the image. A researcher-led visual analysis conducted in isolation may not have accessed the same personal narrative. Similarly, Rose (2001) argues that the meanings of visual materials are shaped through their production, interpretation and social context, while Luttrell and Chalfen (2010) suggest that inviting participants to discuss and interpret their images provides access to the meanings, relationships and experiences embedded within visual data.

In this study, the visual and creative productions served two related purposes. First, they acted as elicitation tools during interviews, facilitating engagement, encouraging reflection and opening up discussion about experiences of daughterhood (Harper, 2002; Mannay, 2016). Second, they formed part of the dataset and were analysed alongside participants' interview accounts. Rather than treating the images as independent visual texts, my analysis focused on both the

content of the images and participants' explanations of their meanings. This approach acknowledges that visual representations do not carry fixed meanings but are understood through the interpretations participants provide about what they chose to represent and why (Rose, 2001; Mannay, 2016).

Although the visual data were digitised, uploaded and embedded within interview transcripts, I retained the original productions throughout the analytical process. Keeping participants' visual materials to hand enhanced analytical sensitivity by enabling me to move between the visual artefacts and participants' narratives. The physicality of handling and viewing the original productions reminded me of the contexts in which they were created and the memories, emotions and stories they evoked. This proved particularly useful during analysis, allowing me to consider visual representations alongside participants' own interpretations and accounts of daughterhood. In doing so, the images were understood not simply as prompts for discussion but as visual expressions of experience that gained meaning through participants' accompanying narratives and reflections (Mannay, 2016; Rose, 2001).

While participants' explanations remained central to interpretation, my familiarity with the cultural contexts in which daughterhood is lived enabled me to engage with the nuances of the visual representations. However, rather than assuming shared understanding, I prioritised participants' own explanations of their images and remained reflexively aware of how my insider position shaped the analytical process (Mannay, 2016; Braun & Clarke, 2021)(discussed further below see section 3.16).

1.11 Transcribing interviews

Interviews were audio recorded, and the visual data productions were captured using a camera upon completion. Audio recordings were then played back and transcribed on to a Microsoft Word document. Where interviews were conducted in the home language of the participants (Urdu and Punjabi), translation of the audio recordings into English were conducted by me during transcription. It has been noted by Davidson (2009) that the use of more than one language in transcribing data can raise issues of representation and power. Although I could speak my

participants' languages, I could not write in the languages of Urdu or Punjabi, and so I had to ensure that my translation into English was an accurate representation of what was being said during the interviews. In this sense, I played the roles of researcher, interviewer, translator and transcriber.

When transcribing the interviews, I felt it was important to capture as many aspects of the interview as possible, such as emotions, pauses, silences, tone and disturbances, as I felt this would help with the interpretation of findings. Pauses were indicated as three dots [...], and emotions were noted in brackets, e.g., (smiling) (crying) (sighs). The terms naturalised and denaturalised transcription have been used by researchers to encompass the range of transcription practices (see Bucholtz, 2000; Oliver et al., 2005). Naturalised transcription focuses on written language rules, using punctuation and formatting that aren't usually found in speech, such as pauses, stutters, and vocalisations, making it easier to read but less like actual conversation. The aim in this process is to provide as much detail as possible. In contrast, denaturalised transcription keeps features of spoken language, like "ums" and "ers." Bucholtz (2000) notes that transcripts that feel more like speech might be harder for some readers to follow and look strange to those not used to them. Acknowledging the naturalised aspects in my transcriptions enabled me to capture the affective nature of the Pakistani women's lived experiences and gave further insights into their narratives (Bird, 2005). For me it was not only important to capture what the Pakistani women in my study said, but also how they said it.

Transcribing did prove to be time consuming, however, I found it to be a useful activity to get closer to my data, develop comprehensive insights and to understand my participants once again. As I commenced with transcribing, I kept the captured images of the visuals, belonging to the participant at the time, open on my screen as well as next to me in person. This way, I was able to refer to both the audio and visual when transcribing. Once audio recordings were transcribed into word, transcripts were read several times to achieve familiarity with the participants' narratives and create in-depth knowledge of the data (Lichtman, 2013).

As I listened, transcribed, and read over transcripts, I kept a journal alongside to capture my thoughts and feelings about the themes that were emerging from the data. This allowed me to capture spontaneous thoughts about relevant studies to look up further, common themes, as well as things that had been left out of conversation. The transcripts and visual data were all labelled with a number that corresponded to each participant and were kept in separate numbered folders so that I could return to them easily at any point.

Once I achieved reasonable familiarity with data, my analysis of data began in accordance with Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) (Braun & Clarke, 2021); which was to merge and organise codes to reveal patterns of meaning-making, i.e. themes. This process and its usefulness are discussed in the following section.

1.12 Reflexive Thematic Analysis

Braun and Clarke (2019), who originally proposed the framework for thematic analysis (TA), have more recently articulated an explicitly reflexive approach to thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021). In their later work, they critique many common applications of TA as often “unknowing, unreflexive and indicative of some degree of conceptual confusion” (p. 590), particularly where analysis is treated as a technical procedure rather than an interpretive practice. Reflexive thematic analysis foregrounds the active role of the researcher in meaning-making and emphasises reflexivity as central to qualitative analysis. Within this approach, meanings are understood as contextual, situated, and co-constructed through the researcher’s engagement with the data, rather than residing within the data itself.

While Braun and Clarke (2019; 2021) outline six analytic phases, these are not treated as sequential steps but as overlapping and recursive analytic practices, with movement back and forth between different analytic activities as the researcher becomes increasingly familiar with the data. Crucially, the researcher’s positionality is recognised as an analytic resource rather than a source of bias to be minimised (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

Reflexive thematic analysis is particularly suited to my epistemological framework, as it foregrounds the researcher's role in generating analytic interpretations and recognises that themes are constructed through engagement with the data rather than discovered within it (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Feminist researchers have long emphasised the importance of analytic approaches that prioritise women's lived experiences and recognise knowledge as situated and interpretive (Oakley, 2013; Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2003). RTA aligns with these principles by explicitly acknowledging the researcher's role in generating and interpreting themes, rather than treating analysis as an objective or neutral process. In this sense, RTA aligns well with my feminist and intersectional commitments, providing a flexible approach for exploring themes relating to gender, patriarchy and resistance in women's narratives. It also enables these commitments to be made explicit within the analytic process, while acknowledging how they shape the questions I ask of the data and the meanings I foreground.

Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) has been increasingly employed in research exploring the experiences of South Asian and Pakistani women. For example, Zahid et al. (2022) used RTA to examine experiences of seeking help for postnatal depression within South Asian communities, highlighting the influence of stigma, family relationships and cultural expectations. Similarly, Causier et al. (2024) employed RTA to explore help-seeking among young Pakistani women experiencing severe mental health difficulties, demonstrating how gender, culture and mental health stigma intersect in shaping access to support. Extending this work, Chaudhary and Lam (2025) used reflexive thematic analysis to examine meanings and manifestations of femininity among Indian and Pakistani immigrant women in the United States, showing how femininity is negotiated through relationality, embodiment and the navigation of multiple cultural contexts. These studies demonstrate the usefulness of RTA for examining the complex, contextual and gendered dimensions of women's lived experiences.

Feminist methodological literature focusing on diasporic and minoritised communities highlights the importance of analytic approaches that can capture complexity without imposing reductive or homogenising explanations (Phoenix, 2013). Reflexive

thematic analysis is well suited to this task insofar as it allows themes to incorporate nuance, variation, and where relevant, contradiction within participants' narratives.

Reflexivity is central to feminist qualitative research and is an integral component of reflexive thematic analysis (Finlay, 2002; Braun and Clarke, 2019). Feminist scholars have long argued that researchers' social positions, assumptions, and experiences shape all stages of the research process, including analysis (Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2003). RTA operationalises reflexivity by requiring researchers to engage critically with their analytic choices, including decisions about coding, theme construction, and interpretation. Phoenix (2013) notes that reflexivity is particularly important due to the potential for shared or divergent cultural, religious, or diasporic positions between the researcher and participants. Braun and Clarke (2021) argue that, rather than attempting to eliminate researcher influence, reflexive thematic analysis treats reflexivity as a marker of analytic quality. Making analytic decisions visible in this sense, strengthens transparency and methodological rigour, ensuring that interpretations are clearly grounded in the data while acknowledging the researcher's interpretive role. I demonstrate this in the following sections.

1.13 Engaging with the narratives

One challenge frequently identified in intersectional research concerns decisions about which social categories or structures to prioritise in analysis (Christensen & Jensen, 2012). Phoenix (2006) suggests that researchers may approach analysis either deductively, guided by theory and prior research, or inductively, driven by participants' accounts. Given the aims of my research, particularly its focus on continuity and change across generations, and the flexibility afforded by reflexive thematic analysis, I adopted an iterative analytic approach that combined both theoretically informed and data-driven engagement with the data. This approach has been described as iterative coding, whereby analytic attention moves between existing concepts and patterns emerging through close engagement with participants' narratives (Boyatzis, 1998), and compliments reflexive thematic analysis due to the recursive nature of this process.

My engagement with the data was shaped by the literature reviewed and by my intersectional analytical framework. This informed my attention to intersections such as generation, religion, and nationality, as well as recurring areas of life experience including marriage, education, employment, migration, culture, family, and community. These concepts did not function as fixed categories but rather as provoking lenses that guided my analytic attention. Alongside this, I engaged inductively with participants' narratives, attending closely to what participants themselves made meaningful in their accounts. Concepts such as burden, honour, empowerment, freedom, "sex" and "gender" preference were constructed through this process, reflecting participants' own emphases and framings.

Transcripts were read repeatedly and analysed manually through close, line-by-line engagement. I used colour coding and annotations to support my analytical thinking, allowing me to track patterns, contrasts, and recurring meanings across the dataset. This analytic process involved generating, refining and revisiting provisional themes as my understanding of the data developed. In line with reflexive thematic analysis, themes were conceptualised as interpretive patterns of meaning that captured something significant about the data in relation to the research questions, rather than as summaries of topic areas (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Throughout the analysis, I moved iteratively between participants' accounts, initial codes and developing themes, refining my interpretations as patterns of meaning became clearer across the dataset. Manual coding was a deliberate methodological choice, as Braun and Clarke (2021) note that RTA can be conducted effectively without specialist software, provided researchers engage deeply and reflexively with their data. Coding and annotation were undertaken in Microsoft Word using comment and review functions, while colour coding was used as an organisational tool to track recurring ideas across participants. These strategies supported, but did not determine, the analytic process, which remained centred on reflexive engagement with the data and the interpretive development of themes.

Given the intergenerational and intersectional nature of my research, I found that codes and themes frequently overlapped and intersected rather than remaining discrete or mutually exclusive. As analysis progressed, themes were continuously

reviewed, refined, merged, and reworked, reflecting the recursive nature of reflexive thematic analysis. Some themes captured experiences that cut across all three generations, while others were more specific to particular generational contexts. Attending to both shared and differing patterns enabled a richer analysis of continuity and change within the dataset.

As the analysis developed, the volume of data made it increasingly challenging to work across multiple transcripts. To support this process, I brought together extracts relating to developing themes while continuing to revisit full transcripts to ensure interpretations remained grounded in participants' wider accounts. Analysis was iterative, with some initial topic-based groupings being revised, combined or refined as patterns of meaning became clearer. Themes were considered sufficiently developed when they captured a coherent pattern across participants' accounts and provided meaningful insight into the research questions.

In retrospect, qualitative data analysis software may have offered efficiencies in managing a large dataset. However, I found the manual, iterative process of moving between transcripts, themes, and analytic notes to be analytically rewarding and conducive to reflexive engagement with the data. Previous research has noted that while qualitative software can be useful, it also requires time to learn and may not always align with a researcher's analytic approach or preferences (Zamawe, 2015). My chosen approach was therefore guided by methodological fit rather than technical considerations alone.

Following Reflexive Thematic Analysis, I developed composite narratives for my final empirical chapter. I discuss the development and use of composite narratives in section 3.15 below.

1.14 Illustrating How Themes Were Developed

To make clear how themes were developed in this study, I provide two brief examples from the interview data to illustrate the analytic process, which are developed in the empirical chapters. These examples demonstrate how I moved from participants' accounts to broader themes through careful reading, coding, comparison, and interpretation. Rather than treating themes as ideas that simply appeared in the data, I actively developed them by asking what participants were saying, how they were saying it, and what wider meanings their accounts carried in relation to gender, daughterhood, and family life.

The first example comes from an interview with Aisha, a third-generation Pakistani woman. During this interview, we were discussing attitudes towards girls' education and employment:

Aisha: *Erm...I think they think that girls might get out of hand*

Researcher: *What do you mean by out of hand?*

Aisha: *Like they might start to think too highly of themselves and don't want to be controlled by their husbands anymore, they want more power. Like my dad was brought up back home and he never saw any girls going to school, they only went to mosque, and even if they did go to school they would stop at a very young age, so coming here, I think he had the same mind-set, that's how it is there and that's how it should be here as well, like we shouldn't have that much freedom.*

When reading this extract, I initially noted that education was being discussed not simply as learning or opportunity, but in relation to control, freedom, and power. I coded Aisha's account using labels such as *fear of girls becoming independent, education as threat, control by men, migration and cultural values, and restriction of freedom*. These codes helped me stay close to what Aisha was describing while also beginning to notice patterns that appeared across other interviews.

As I revisited this extract alongside similar accounts, I reflected on the phrase "*getting out of hand*". Analytically, this was interpreted as an expression of

concern that education and paid work might give women confidence, autonomy, and the ability to challenge male authority within their families. Several women expressed how they challenged this through their own interpretations of religion as they juggled personal aspirations with familial and cultural expectations. This led me to incorporate these experiences into a broader theme focused on Emotional Burden (see Chapter 4 section 4.4).

A similar analytic process was used in developing the theme of Reproductive Burden (see Chapter 4 section 4.2). The extract below comes from an interview with Noreen, a third-generation Pakistani woman, in which she reflected on anticipated reactions to future childbirth within her husband's family:

Noreen: *I know they want another boy in the family, like how my husband is their only son, they want him to have one of his own. But I don't really care what it is. As long as it's healthy you know. But they would feel some type of way if it's a girl, I just know it. I mean, it would be nice for him [husband] to have a son, but doesn't really matter if we have a girl first does it?*

In this extract, I coded meanings related to *son preference*, *reproductive pressure*, *lineage*, *anticipated disappointment*, and *women as mediators of family expectations*. Although Noreen explicitly stated that the child's sex did not matter to her personally, her account revealed an awareness of others' expectations, particularly those of her in-laws. What stood out was the way son preference was anticipated rather than directly expressed; it existed as something felt, assumed, and pre-emptively managed rather than openly articulated.

Noreen navigated this tension by softening her account, stressing health over sex and framing the desire for a son as understandable rather than oppressive. This careful negotiation suggested an accepting of gendered expectations, even as she simultaneously attempted to distance herself from them. The notion that her husband "would feel some type of way" if the child were a girl reflects how responsibility for meeting these expectations is subtly placed on women, and in other women's accounts placed more directly.

As this extract was compared with others across the dataset, a broader pattern became visible in which son preference operated through assumptions tied to continuity, inheritance, and masculine lineage. Women frequently demonstrated awareness of these expectations, however analysis found that while some women framed their own attitudes as modern and more reasonable, some women adopted, upheld and implemented these expectations within their families.

Attention to nuance was central to my analysis. Rather than treating contradictions, ambiguities or mixed feelings as inconsistencies, I viewed them as meaningful aspects of participants' experiences. Through repeated engagement with the interview transcripts, I explored how participants sometimes expressed conflicting emotions, softened their descriptions, or understood restrictive practices as forms of care, protection or normality. In keeping with Reflexive Thematic Analysis, coding was flexible and involved me moving back and forth between the data, codes and themes, allowing these complexities to be retained and explored rather than reduced to simplified or uniform accounts (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Themes were therefore developed as interpretive accounts of participants' experiences rather than as fixed categories.

1.15 The Use Of Composite Narratives

Composite narratives have been described in a variety of ways, including as reflective stories (Todres, 2007), several individual interviews brought together to tell a single story (Willis, 2018), and short vignettes that weave together material from multiple participants (Johnston, 2024). Wertz et al. (2011, p. 2) suggest that a composite narrative “draws a composite picture of the phenomenon emerging from the informants”. As a qualitative method, composite narratives allow researchers to represent patterned social experiences without reducing participants’ accounts to isolated themes. They offer a way of preserving anonymity while retaining the complexity, emotion and context of lived experience, enabling researchers to demonstrate how social phenomena are shared across participants rather than located within a single individual account (Todres, 2007; Willis, 2018; Johnston et al., 2021).

Composite narratives have been used in diverse ways across qualitative research. In some studies, they are employed primarily as a means of protecting participant anonymity while preserving narrative detail, particularly in research involving sensitive topics or readily identifiable individuals (Willis, 2018; Mullany and Gubrium, 2024). In others, they are used as a way of presenting qualitative findings in forms that are accessible and engaging for readers (Johnston et al., 2021), developing educational and training materials from research data (Sajadi et al., 2023), or supporting collaborative and participatory forms of inquiry (Frimann et al., 2026). Composite narratives have also been used analytically. For example, Arjomand's (2022) Sequence-Based Composites approach demonstrates how the process of constructing a composite narrative can encourage systematic attention to patterns, variation and sequence within the data. Likewise, Wertz et al. (2011) illustrate how composite narratives can convey both the experiential texture of participants' lives and the broader structures through which those experiences are organised.

In this thesis, I use composite narratives for two interconnected purposes. First, they provide an additional layer of anonymity by bringing together the accounts of multiple participants into fictionalised characters. Second, they allow me to explore continuity and change across generations in a way that would be difficult to capture through individual excerpts alone (Willis, 2018; Arjomand, 2022). Rather than focusing on single participants, I draw together recurring experiences, meanings and tensions identified through the analysis, enabling me to examine shared patterns of daughterhood both within and across generations.

I developed the composite narratives after completing the thematic analysis presented in Chapters 4 and 5. Having identified the themes of *Burden* and *Honour*, I returned to the coded data for each generational group and synthesised participants' accounts into a series of composite characters. These narratives do not represent individual life histories. Instead, they are interpretative constructions that bring together recurring patterns across participants' accounts while also attending to variation, contradiction and nuance within the dataset.

To construct the narratives, I fictionalised participants' accounts, assigned pseudonyms and situated the characters within coherent social contexts. I then combined and re-worked extracts and experiences into narrative form. Consistent with Arjomand's (2022) emphasis on selection and sequencing, I paid careful attention to how experiences were organised within each narrative. For example, the first-generation composites follow a broadly life-course structure, bringing together participants' accounts of childhood, marriage, family responsibilities and later relationships with younger generations.

I decided to create two composite narratives for each generation as a way of representing both continuity and variation. The first narrative captures more widely shared patterns of meaning and experience, illustrating how expectations associated with burden and honour were commonly understood and negotiated in everyday life. These narratives reflect the normalisation of burden and honour across participants' accounts. The second narrative foregrounds variation, tension and alternative interpretations. Rather than presenting burden and honour as either accepted or rejected, these narratives bring together accounts that reveal questioning, discomfort, negotiation and the re-working of expectations.

In Chapter 6, I present each composite narrative before moving to a separate analytic discussion. This allows the narratives to stand as coherent accounts in their own right while enabling me to examine explicitly the patterns, continuities and points of variation that emerge from them. The composite narratives are presented in italicised font to distinguish them from my analysis. Separating the narratives from the analysis also creates a clearer distinction between the composite characters' stories and my interpretation of those stories as a researcher.

This approach supports the central aim of the thesis by enabling continuity and change to be explored across generations while retaining the contextual richness of participants' accounts. The composite narratives provide an integrated representation of shared experiences, while the accompanying analysis examines how expectations associated with burden and honour are maintained, adapted and reinterpreted across different social and historical contexts.

In keeping with reflexive thematic analysis, I recognise that the composite narratives are shaped by my interpretative role as a researcher. My positionality as a Pakistani Muslim daughter influenced how I listened to participants' accounts, identified patterns within the data, and made decisions about which experiences were combined within each narrative. My engagement with scholarship on gender, patriarchy, Pakistani families and South Asian women's lives also informed this process, alongside my reflections on the research journey and my own experiences of daughterhood. The composite narratives should therefore be understood as situated and interpretative constructions rather than neutral representations of participants' lives (Pillow, 2003; Piper and Sikes, 2010; see Section 3.16).

1.16 Reflexivity and Positionality

This study was shaped by my position as a third-generation British Pakistani woman researching Pakistani women across generations. I shared several social and cultural reference points with participants, including ethnicity, religion, and familiarity with Pakistani family life. I was also physically read as Pakistani and Muslim. These points of connection often helped establish rapport and shaped the stories participants chose to share. Rather than viewing this insider position as a source of bias to be removed, I understood it as an important part of the research process that required ongoing reflexive attention. My positionality influenced how data were generated, interpreted and analysed throughout the study.

As a Pakistani, South Asian and Muslim woman, I was often assumed to share an understanding of cultural expectations surrounding daughterhood, family responsibility and gender. Participants regularly drew on implicit cultural meanings or used forms of shorthand that relied on assumed familiarity. While this often facilitated conversation, it also raised the possibility of taking meanings for granted. Bracketing prior knowledge was not always straightforward, particularly when participants described experiences that resonated with my own cultural background. Therefore, I continually worked to distinguish between what participants were saying and what I thought I already knew.

Feminist and postcolonial scholars caution that insider status does not eliminate power differences or guarantee understanding (Narayan, 2013; Bhavnani et al., 2014). A key reflexive concern was avoiding the assumption that participants' meanings were self-evident. For example, when Aisha explained that girls could "get out of hand" if given too much freedom, the phrase carried cultural meanings that I immediately recognised. However, rather than relying on shared assumptions, I asked her to explain what she meant. This created space for her own interpretation rather than allowing my understanding to shape the account.

At times, participants challenged these requests for clarification. Some responded with comments such as, "What do you mean why?" or "You should know what it's like; you're a Pakistani daughter, aren't you?". These moments revealed some of the tensions of insider research, where participants may view the researcher as a community member as well as a researcher. As Roberts (2018) notes, insider positioning can encourage openness and trust, but it also presents methodological and ethical challenges. Meeto's (2016) description of insider research as a "double-edged sword" was particularly relevant. Participants sometimes positioned me as a fellow Pakistani daughter, confidante or moral community member, creating expectations that extended beyond the research relationship. Similar dynamics have been identified by researchers working within their own racialised and ethnic communities (Egharevba, 2001; Bhopal, 2019).

Reflexive journal writing and repeated engagement with the data were also an important tool for examining how my own assumptions and experiences shaped interpretation. Throughout coding and theme development, I asked questions such as: What is being taken for granted here? How is daughterhood being made meaningful? What values, expectations or moral frameworks are being invoked? These questions encouraged me to remain attentive to participants' meanings while recognising my active role in the interpretive process.

My relationship to the data also shifted across generational groups. While I shared closer life-stage experiences with younger participants, there was greater social and historical distance between myself and many of the older women. Their accounts of

daughterhood were shaped by migration histories, different educational opportunities and changing expectations of women's roles. Feminist research on South Asian diasporas highlights the importance of understanding such experiences within their historical and social contexts rather than judging them according to contemporary assumptions (Asher & Ramamurthy, 2020). This was particularly important when interpreting accounts of duty, obedience and family responsibility. When first- and second-generation women described following parental wishes as emotionally meaningful or morally right, it would have been easy to interpret these experiences through my own understandings of independence or resistance. Instead, I examined how their actions were shaped by family relationships, social expectations and available choices. In doing so, these accounts were understood as forms of negotiation and agency within constraint rather than simply as compliance or lack of agency (Kandiyoti, 1988; Dhanda, 2020).

At the same time, insider knowledge opened up important analytical possibilities. Familiarity with cultural and familial norms enabled me to ask questions that may not have arisen for an outsider researcher. For example, when participants discussed motherhood or aspirations for their children, I was able to explore expectations surrounding gender, caregiving and intergenerational responsibility that were often implied rather than explicitly stated. As Nayak (2006) argues, insider positionality should be understood not only as a challenge but also as a resource that can support more nuanced forms of engagement and interpretation.

Reflexivity was therefore central to the epistemological and analytical approach of this study. Working from a social constructionist and interpretivist feminist perspective, I understand knowledge as situated, partial and relational rather than objective or neutral. Meanings of daughterhood are produced within particular social, cultural and historical contexts and are shaped by family relationships, gendered expectations and wider structures of power. Reflexivity was not a separate stage of the research process but something that informed data generation, interpretation and analysis throughout. Following reflexive thematic analysis, participants' accounts are treated as situated and interpretive rather than as direct representations of reality (Braun & Clarke, 2021). The analysis presented in this thesis therefore

reflects an ongoing dialogue between participants' narratives, my own interpretive standpoint and the wider social contexts in which daughterhood is lived. This reflexive engagement directly informed the development of the empirical chapters on Honour, Burden, and Continuity and Change.

1.17 Structuring of Empirical Chapters

I structured the empirical chapters in this thesis around analytically constructed themes developed through reflexive thematic analysis (RTA). As outlined above, I understood themes as patterns of meaning produced through my interpretative engagement with the data (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Each empirical chapter therefore centres on a key theme that captures how daughterhood is organised and made meaningful within participants' accounts and through my interpretation as a insider researcher.

In the first empirical chapter I develop the theme of ***Burden***, conceptualised as a multi-layered and relational pattern through which daughters are positioned as responsible for sustaining family wellbeing. I draw on both interview data and participants' visual materials, to enable an exploration of how burden is not only described but also represented and interpreted. I organise the analysis through four interconnected dimensions: anticipatory, reproductive, relational, and emotional burden, which reflect how gendered expectations operate across the life course. Anticipatory burden captures how expectations are formed prior to birth and linked to imagined futures, while reproductive and relational dimensions examine how these expectations intensify within marriage and everyday family life. Emotional burden foregrounds the emotional labour involved in navigating these expectations, including responsibility, obligation, and tension. The inclusion of visual images supports my analysis by illustrating how participants understand and communicate these expectations, offering insight into how responsibility, care, and value are symbolically expressed.

The second empirical chapter builds on this analysis through the theme of ***Honour***, conceptualised as a moral and relational framework through which daughterhood is

evaluated and regulated. As with the *Burden* chapter, my analysis integrates both narrative and visual data. I structure the chapter around three interconnected themes: marriage, domesticity, and appearance, which together illustrate how honour is organised and made visible across different domains of social life. Marriage is examined as a central site through which family reputation is secured, domesticity as a marker of moral worth and respectability, and dress and appearance as a visible expression of honour that is susceptible to monitoring and evaluation. Visual materials are particularly significant in this chapter, as they help me show how participants construct ideals of respectability, femininity, and belonging, and how these are interpreted within everyday practices.

Across both empirical chapters, themes are internally complex and contain variation, tension, and ambiguity. Rather than separating participants into fixed categories, my analysis foregrounds how shared expectations are interpreted in multiple ways. For example, practices such as domestic labour or modest dress may be described as both expected and valued, while also experienced as restrictive. These differences are explored within themes, consistent with the RTA emphasis on capturing diversity within patterns of meaning.

The final empirical chapter, ***Continuity and Change***, brings together the themes of burden and honour to examine how expectations of daughterhood are sustained and reworked across three generations. In this chapter I adopt composite narratives as an analytic and representational strategy to capture both shared patterns of meaning and variation across generational experiences (discussed in section 3.15).

Two narratives are presented for each generation. The first section focuses on first-generation Pakistani women and explores how expectations associated with burden and honour were reproduced through family relationships, responsibilities and everyday practices. The first composite narrative, *Reproducing responsibility and endurance within family relationships*, reflects widely shared experiences of domestic responsibility, sacrifice and obligation, while the second, *Gendered access to education, knowledge and religious understanding*, highlights variation in how women understood and negotiated gendered expectations.

The second section focuses on second-generation Pakistani women and considers how burden and honour were negotiated within changing social and cultural contexts. *Employability, respectability and the negotiation of honour* explores the relationship between paid work, family expectations and respectability, while *Divorce and the reworking of honour within family and community life* examines how women navigated and reinterpreted honour in relation to marital breakdown and family relationships.

The final section explores the experiences of third-generation British Pakistani women and considers how burden and honour are being reinterpreted in contemporary contexts. The first composite narrative, *Reinterpreting religion in relation to cultural expectations*, examines how participants distinguished between religious beliefs and cultural practices, while *Education, work and changing valuation of daughters* explores changing understandings of daughters' roles, aspirations and contributions within family life.

Each composite narrative is followed by analytic discussion. This structure allows the narratives to present shared experiences and points of variation before examining how expectations associated with burden and honour are maintained, adapted and reworked across generations, providing a framework for understanding both continuity and change in experiences of daughterhood.

Overall, the structure of the empirical chapters reflects the analytic process through which the data was interpreted. The *Burden* and *Honour* chapters examine how daughterhood is organised through interconnected patterns of expectation across different domains of life, supported by both narrative and visual data. The *Continuity and Change* chapter then draws these themes together through composite narratives, demonstrating how these patterns persist and shift across generations. This structure ensures coherence across the thesis while foregrounding both the stability and transformation of gendered expectations within Pakistani family life.

Chapter 4. Burden

4.1 Introduction

This chapter explores *Burden* as a pattern of meaning that emerged through participants' accounts of daughterhood across three generations. Drawing on Braun and Clarke's (2019; 2021) approach to reflexive thematic analysis, the theme was developed through an iterative process of engagement with the data and informed by my position as a third-generation Pakistani woman using an intersectional feminist lens.

This chapter is organised into four sections to illustrate Burden and its various dimensions. The experiences of all three generations are presented under each theme, capturing the various ways gendered expectations shape women's lives over time. Participants' narratives revealed how responsibilities, obligations, and expectations are attached to women across different stages of the life course, influencing how they are valued within families and communities. These expectations often appear ordinary or taken for granted, yet they also require ongoing negotiation.

The first dimension, anticipatory burden, reflects how gendered expectations begin prior to birth, shaping ideas of value, hope, and anxiety. Participants described how sons were frequently associated with security, family continuity, and future support, while daughters were more commonly linked to concerns about reputation, protection, and the responsibilities involved in raising them.

A second dimension was reproductive burden. Across generations, women discussed pressures surrounding childbearing, particularly the expectation to produce a son. Participants often linked the birth of sons to increased status and security for themselves within marital households, whereas having daughters could expose women to criticism or diminish their standing.

Relational burden was also evident in everyday family relationships. Participants frequently connected ideals of the "good daughter" with those of the "good wife",

describing expectations to be selfless, accommodating, and attentive to the needs of others. Fulfilling family responsibilities and maintaining harmony were often presented as moral obligations, shaping women's decisions and behaviours within both natal and marital households.

Alongside these responsibilities sat a significant emotional burden. Participants spoke about feelings of duty, worry, guilt, and accountability, as well as the emotional work involved in managing family relationships and meeting competing demands. Their narratives also highlighted how expectations are passed between generations through everyday practices, whilst simultaneously being questioned, negotiated, and sometimes challenged.

Although discussed separately for analytical purposes, these dimensions were rarely experienced in isolation. Expectations attached to daughters before birth often shaped later experiences of marriage, reproduction, and family responsibility, while the emotional consequences of these expectations cut across all areas of women's lives. Participants' accounts therefore point to burden as a connected and evolving process rather than a set of discrete experiences.

Importantly, women were not simply passive recipients of these expectations. Throughout the narratives, participants described moments of accommodation, negotiation, and resistance. Sometimes these took the form of small everyday decisions; at other times they involved more explicit challenges to established expectations. However, such responses were often shaped by the same family, cultural, and structural conditions that produced the burden in the first place. For this reason, resistance is not treated as a separate theme but as a thread running throughout the chapter.

This chapter illustrates how burden is produced and experienced across generations in ways that are both enduring and dynamic. While gendered expectations continue to shape women's lives, participants' narratives also show the varied ways these expectations are interpreted, negotiated, and reworked.

4.1 Anticipatory Burden: hopes, fears and family expectations

Participants' accounts across the three generations highlight how preferences for the "sex" of children are embedded within wider expectations around family continuity, care, honour, and security. At the same time, the narratives reveal variation in how these meanings are understood and articulated across generations. This dimension of burden concerns how value is attached to sons and daughters before they are born and how women often find themselves navigating hopes, anxieties, and responsibilities associated with these expectations. Across several accounts, sons were linked to future security and family continuity, while daughters were more frequently discussed in relation to protection, vulnerability, and reputation.

Among first-generation participants, sons and grandsons were commonly described as important for both lineage and care in later life. Rabia (1st generation, 71–76) stated: "A grandson first... for his legacy to continue", while Surayah (1st generation, 65–70) similarly suggested that families felt incomplete without a son: "Daughters are a blessing as well, they're from God, but without a son the family isn't really complete". Likewise, Balkees (1st generation, 65–70) explained that: "Every mother needs a son. If we didn't have them, we would be in care homes right now. Our people don't do that. Sons are there to look after you, that's how families stay together." Zenub (1st generation, 71–76) also reflected this expectation, commenting: "Daughters end up going away, so who is going to look after us?"

In my initial coding, I captured these accounts through labels such as "inheritance" and "care expectations". These interpretations resonated with scholarship demonstrating that sons are often viewed as sources of social and economic security in later life within Pakistani family structures (Muhammad, 2009). These accounts also echo Kandiyoti's (1988) concept of the patriarchal bargain, whereby women's security and status within patrilineal family systems can become tied to their relationships with male family members, particularly sons. For several first-generation participants, sons were imagined not only as continuing the family line but also as a source of care and support in old age.

However, as I returned to the data, I became interested not only in how sons were valued but also in how daughters featured within these narratives. In several accounts, daughters appeared largely through contrast to sons, often positioned as temporary members of the family because they were expected to marry and leave. This prompted me to consider how preferences for sons may also reveal assumptions about daughters' future roles and responsibilities.

Second-generation accounts added further complexity. While some participants also spoke about sons in relation to continuity and support, they frequently framed preferences through concerns for daughters' future wellbeing. Fatimah (2nd generation, 36–40) explained that: "Our daughters need protecting. If something was to happen to them then their whole future could be ruined". Similarly, Rifut (2nd generation, 36–40) reflected on uncertainties surrounding marriage, stating: "We fear for our daughters. We don't know what married life will bring for them, if they will enter a good home or not."

Across these accounts, daughters were often described as requiring protection and care. Drawing on both participants' narratives and my cultural familiarity with these concerns, I interpreted these fears as extending beyond immediate safety to broader anxieties about reputation. For several women, concerns about daughters appeared closely connected to the potential consequences of divorce, separation, or behaviour perceived to bring shame upon the family. As Khadija (2nd generation, 36–40) stated: "We pray that she never returns home. Wherever she is, she should make her life there. That's the wish of every parent."

Although these issues are explored in greater detail in the following chapter, it is important to note that mothers' concerns for their daughters were often narrated through their own experiences and observations of family life. In this sense, participants' accounts suggest how expectations surrounding marriage and daughterhood may be reproduced across generations while also being shaped by women's own experiences of navigating them (Habiba et al., 2016; Nazish, 2018). Initially coded as "concern", "vulnerable", and "fear", these narratives were later

interpreted as reflecting how daughters can become associated with particular forms of family anxiety tied to honour, safety, and social standing.

Aliya's (2nd generation, 30–35) narrative powerfully illustrates the emotional weight of these expectations. Reflecting on her divorce, she recalled her mother telling her: "it would've been better not to have had you [give birth to you] if I knew this was going to happen [divorce]." In her collage below (see Figure 4), Aliya depicts a Pakistani daughter with a noose around her neck and the word *izzat* (honour) attached to it. When I asked her what this meant, she explained: "We're made to feel like our family's respect and honour depends on us and if we ruin that then we might as well be dead to them."

This account prompted a strong emotional response during analysis because it resonated with cultural narratives with which I was already familiar. Rather than setting this response aside, I used it as an opportunity to reflect more carefully on how participants linked daughterhood, marriage, divorce, and family reputation. Aliya's account drew my attention to the emotional significance of *izzat* and its role in shaping how daughters may come to experience responsibility towards their families. These reflections also informed the development of the second empirical chapter, where honour emerges as a central theme.

Figure 4: Aliya's collage of a Pakistani daughter



I interpreted these accounts as suggesting that marriage often provided families with a sense of reassurance because daughters were seen as being in their expected social position (discussed further in relational burden). In several narratives, remaining married appeared to be valued even where participants described unhappiness, inequality, or difficult circumstances within marriage. Aliya's depiction of daughterhood through *izzat* therefore points to how expectations attached to daughters extend beyond preferences around children and become connected to wider ideas of responsibility, reputation, and what I later conceptualise as relational burden (see section 4.3).

Across interviews, being asked to think about future children often encouraged participants to reflect critically on existing gender expectations. Among third-generation participants, there was a tendency for daughters to be discussed in ways that challenged or reworked earlier assumptions about gendered value. Rather than interpreting these responses as simple preferences for daughters, I understood them as shaped by participants' own experiences of family life and their reflections on inequalities they had observed or experienced.

Jameela (3rd generation, 19–25), for instance, rejected son preference outright, stating she would: “rather have daughters and no sons. I’ve seen how useless Pakistani men are.” While expressed humorously, her comment upturns more traditional narratives that position sons as especially valuable, illustrating how ideas about gender can be questioned and reinterpreted.

Similarly, Hira (3rd generation, 26–30) linked her imagined future parenting to her own experiences growing up: “I think, because of my upbringing and how my parents treated me, I'd favour my daughters over my sons. I don't want them to ever feel the way I did.” I interpreted Hira’s account as her expressing a desire to prevent her future daughters from encountering similar emotional experiences that she did, highlighting how reflections on the past can shape imagined futures. In this sense, there seems to be an anticipatory burden held by mothers for their daughters.

Rather than viewing these accounts as evidence of a straightforward reversal of son preference, I interpreted them as reflecting different ways participants engaged with the gendered values they had inherited. As shown, across several narratives, daughters were positioned not simply as recipients of care and concern but as figures through whom participants imagined alternative futures. These accounts suggest that meanings attached to daughterhood are neither fixed nor uniform but are continually reworked through experience and reflection.

4.2 Reproductive Burden: producing gendered value and marital security

Discussions about reproduction appeared throughout participants' accounts of marriage, family life, and relationships with in-laws. Although women described a range of experiences, many spoke about expectations surrounding childbearing, particularly the importance attached to having a son. These expectations were often presented as an ordinary part of married life rather than something unusual or openly questioned. My familiarity with these cultural expectations influenced the questions I asked during interviews and drew my attention to how participants talked about motherhood, sons, and women's value within the family.

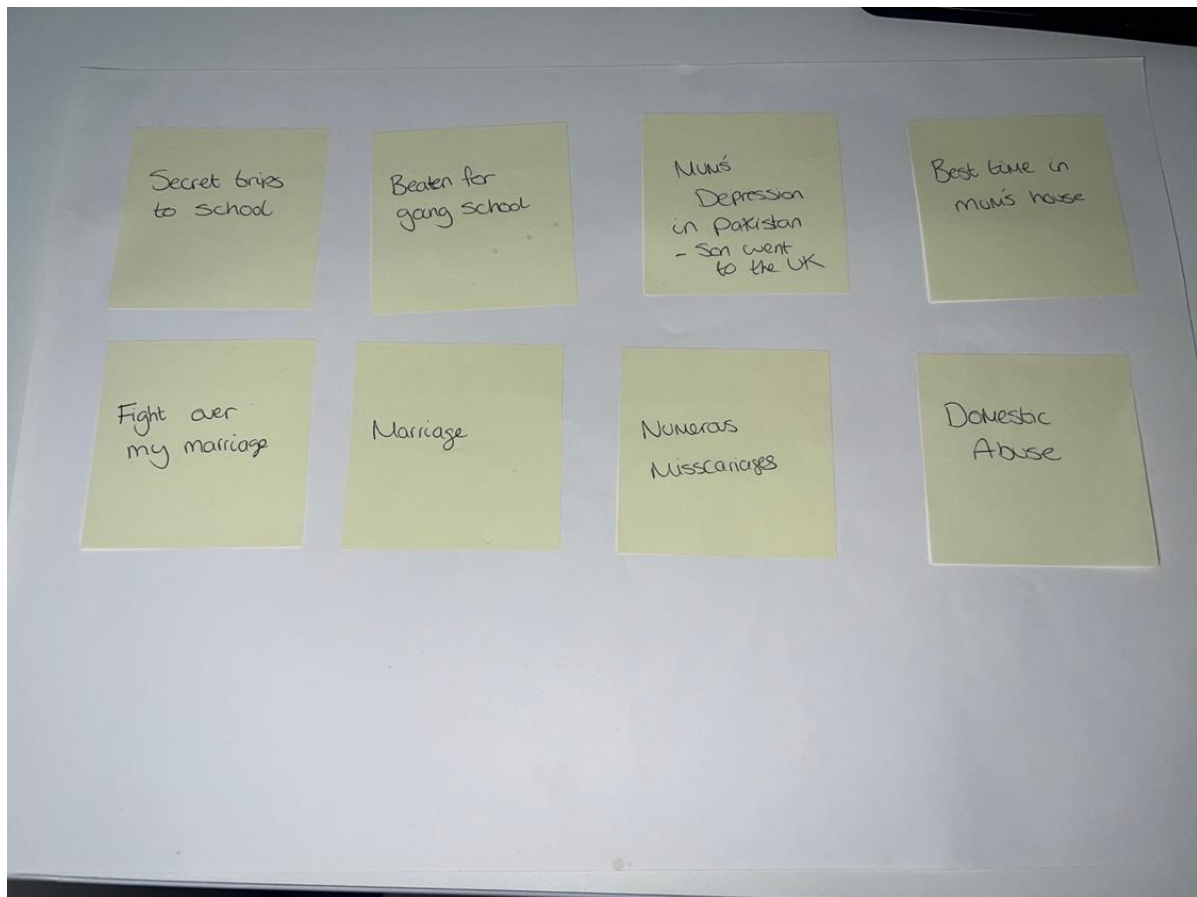
Among first-generation participants, several women described son preference in relation to practical concerns such as labour, financial security, and family continuity, as illustrated in the previous theme. Balkees explained: "In those days we were poor, so if we could not have sons then our husbands would struggle to provide for us on their own." During analysis, I became interested in how the importance of sons was largely taken for granted. Rather than being explained or justified, sons were often spoken about as a natural source of support for both the family and the household economy.

Across several interviews, sons were linked to inheritance, work, and future care for parents. Daughters appeared less frequently within these discussions and were more often associated with marriage and domestic responsibilities. These accounts reinforce anticipatory burden as they suggest that different expectations were attached to children according to gender, shaping how their future roles within the family were imagined.

Banno's (1st generation, 65–70) account provides a particularly detailed example of how these expectations were experienced within everyday family life. When creating her memorable moments map, she described marrying at age seventeen and giving birth first to a daughter, followed by two miscarriages, before later having a second daughter (see Figure 5). Throughout this period, she experienced frequent criticism

from her mother-in-law, particularly in relation to her inability to have a son. Banno explained that her mother-in-law encouraged her husband to remarry in order to secure a grandson, highlighting the importance placed on male heirs within the family.

Figure 5: Banno's memorable moments map



For Banno, reproduction was not simply about having children but was closely connected to how she was viewed by others around her. Similar themes appeared in several first-generation accounts, where motherhood and son production were often linked to women's status within marriage. These findings support existing research suggesting that sons continue to carry particular social and economic value in many Pakistani family contexts (Agboatwalla, 2000; Muhammad, 2009).

Giving birth to daughters, particularly where there was no son, was described by several first-generation participants as affecting women's position within marriage. Raheela (1st generation, 65–70), a mother of three daughters, recalled: "They

would insult me... I felt like an unworthy wife and even wanted him to get married again". She explained that her husband later remarried and had three sons with his second wife. Despite this, Raheela remained in the marriage.

When I first analysed Raheela's account, I focused primarily on the emotional impact of these experiences and the ways in which she described feeling hurt, rejected, and devalued. Returning to the interview at a later stage prompted me to think more carefully about the circumstances in which her decisions were made. Although Raheela spoke about the pain of being criticised for not having a son, she also described remaining within the marriage and accepting her husband's remarriage. Rather than viewing this simply as acceptance, her account points to the limited options available to some women and the difficult choices they faced when balancing their own wellbeing against concerns for family stability and their children's futures.

This moment became important within my analysis because it encouraged me to question an initial reading that centred solely on victimhood. Raheela's narrative certainly reflects the pressures associated with son preference, but it also highlights the complexities of living with and responding to those expectations. Kandiyoti's (1988) concept of the patriarchal bargain is useful here, as it draws attention to how women may seek security within existing social arrangements, even when those arrangements are unequal. In Raheela's case, remaining within the marriage appeared to offer a degree of stability despite the emotional costs involved. Her account suggests that reproductive expectations shaped not only how women were valued within marriage, but also the choices available to them when those expectations were not met.

Similarly, Zenub (1st generation, 71–76) reflected that becoming a co-wife was preferable to divorce, stating: "I know of so many women who let their husbands marry again for a son. It was so common back then; it wasn't a bad thing. It was better than Talaq²." Her account highlights how, for some women, polygyny was

² Talaq meaning divorce

understood as a more acceptable outcome than divorce, particularly in a context where marriage carried significant social and economic importance.

Revisiting both Zenub's and Raheela's accounts encouraged me to rethink my earlier coding of "fear". While this pattern was clearly present, the interviews also drew attention to the difficult decisions women sometimes faced when responding to reproductive expectations. Rather than presenting themselves simply as victims of these circumstances, both women described ways of living with, and making sense of, situations in which having a son carried considerable significance.

Raheela's experiences are also relevant to Raheja and Gold's (1994) argument that critique can coexist with participation in patriarchal institutions. Although she spoke about feeling devalued because she had daughters rather than sons, she also described accepting the possibility of her husband taking another wife. This does not necessarily indicate agreement with the circumstances she faced. Instead, her account highlights the complexity of women's responses to unequal social arrangements and the ways they may endure, accommodate, or make sense of them in everyday life. In this respect, Kabeer's (2000) work is useful in drawing attention to how women's responses to constraint can take forms that are less visible than overt resistance, and also how women seek security and social legitimacy within existing gender arrangements (Kandiyoti, 1988).

For both Raheela and Zenub, remaining within marriage appeared preferable to the uncertainty and stigma associated with divorce. As Zenub explained, second marriages were "so common... it wasn't a bad thing. It was better than Talaq." illustrating the limited range of options that were often available to women. This interpretation is supported by Azam et al. (2021), whose research shows that polygyny can become normalised in contexts where divorce carries significant social consequences for women. These accounts point to the complexities of navigating family life within a social context where motherhood, marriage, and son preference remained closely connected.

Banno's account highlights how reproductive expectations also operated within transnational family arrangements. While her husband was working in the UK, communication between them was limited and largely mediated through other family members, with conversations often focused on finances. Within this context, her mother-in-law appeared to have considerable influence over everyday family life and was particularly concerned about the birth of a male heir. Banno described ongoing pressure surrounding her fertility and recalled being accused of falsifying her pregnancy, stating: "I was accused of eating ice to prevent my periods and that I was faking my pregnancy."

This account suggests the extent to which reproduction could become a matter of family scrutiny rather than a private issue. Questions about fertility, pregnancy, and childbearing were not simply directed at reproductive outcomes but also shaped how Banno was viewed within the household. Her narrative highlights how expectations surrounding motherhood could become closely tied to judgments about a woman's character, value, and place within the family.

Habiba et al. (2016) demonstrate that patriarchal power operates through family relationships rather than solely through men. Banno's description of her mother-in-law's influence over decisions concerning reproduction and remarriage reflects this more relational understanding of power, where older women can play an important role in maintaining family expectations and norms.

Banno later explained that she eventually gave birth to a son, but that her mother-in-law chose not to tell her husband about the birth. As she recalled: "My husband found out through someone else. She wouldn't tell him, and I couldn't write to him either." This account further illustrates the complexity of family relationships and power within transnational households. Although the birth of a son was presented as highly significant, information about that birth remained subject to the control of others.

For me, Banno's narrative was striking because it highlighted both the pressures she experienced and the ways she continued to manage everyday life in difficult

circumstances. I noted how she made sense of these experiences and continued to fulfil her roles within the family despite ongoing criticism and uncertainty. In this respect, her account reflects what Spivak (1988) describes as the often limited and constrained ways in which women navigate unequal social conditions. More broadly, Banno's experiences suggest that reproductive expectations were shaped not only by wider gender norms but also by everyday family relationships through which those expectations were reinforced and lived.

While many of the pressures described by first-generation participants remained evident in second-generation women's accounts, they also reflected changing family relationships and social circumstances that shaped how these expectations were understood and responded to.

Like several first-generation participants, second-generation women often described living with in-laws as a key context in which expectations surrounding son production were experienced. Neelam (2nd generation, 26–30), for example, described persistent criticism from her mother-in-law: "She would pick on me every day... They want their son's legacy to live on so if you can't give them that then you're of no use really. He can just get another one [wife]."

Similarly, Noora (2nd generation, 36–40) recalled being blamed for not producing a grandson, with these tensions extending beyond reproduction itself: "She would complain about my cooking and cleaning, everything. Just to make me feel bad, as if it was my fault."

Although these experiences took different forms, similar patterns appeared across several interviews. Criticism relating to fertility was often intertwined with other aspects of everyday family life, suggesting that expectations surrounding childbearing could influence how some women felt they were viewed within the household more generally. For participants such as Neelam and Noora, concerns about having a son were not experienced as isolated reproductive issues but formed part of wider family dynamics and the value attached to them as wives and daughters-in-law.

Several accounts also pointed to the continued importance of sons in relation to family lineage and continuity. As in the first-generation narratives, mothers-in-law often featured prominently in discussions about reproductive expectations, supporting Habiba et al.'s (2016) argument that patriarchal authority is frequently maintained through family relationships rather than exercised by men alone. At the same time, some second-generation participants described husbands as being more openly involved in expressing a desire for sons, although these views were often reinforced by older female family members.

Rifut (2nd generation, 36–40) recalled how her husband was encouraged by his mother to have a son: "He wanted a son, and his mother used to egg him on... tell him that he needs to get married again so he can have one."

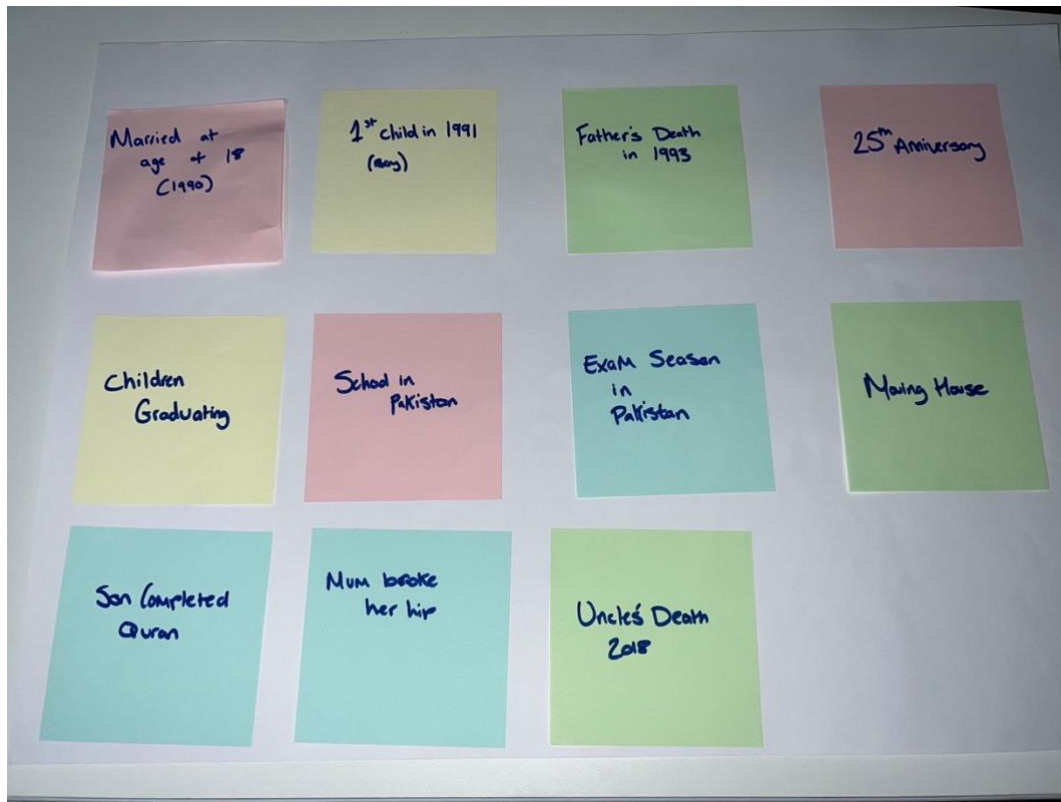
Rather than viewing these expectations as being passed unchanged from one generation to the next, Rifut's account suggests that they were reinforced through ongoing interactions between family members. In this respect, expectations surrounding son preference appeared to be sustained collectively within the family. The possibility of divorce or remarriage linked to women's reproductive outcomes also reflects findings by Winkvist and Akhtar (2000), who argue that both men and women can influence women's reproductive lives and wellbeing within patriarchal family structures.

Mariam's (2nd generation, 41–46) account highlights another aspect of son preference; the symbolic and emotional significance attached to the birth of a boy. Reflecting on the birth of her first child (see Figure 6), she identified "first child in 1991 (boy)" as one of the most important moments in her memorable moments map. When asked why, she explained: "Yes of course, everyone was so happy... my husband was phoning everyone... The elders were so happy."

What stands out in Mariam's account is not simply that she had a son, but the collective response that followed. The birth was described as an event that involved the wider family, generating celebration and approval from relatives across generations. Mariam's narrative suggests how the birth of a boy could become a

moment through which existing ideas about family continuity and success were publicly affirmed.

Figure 6: Mariam's memorable moments map

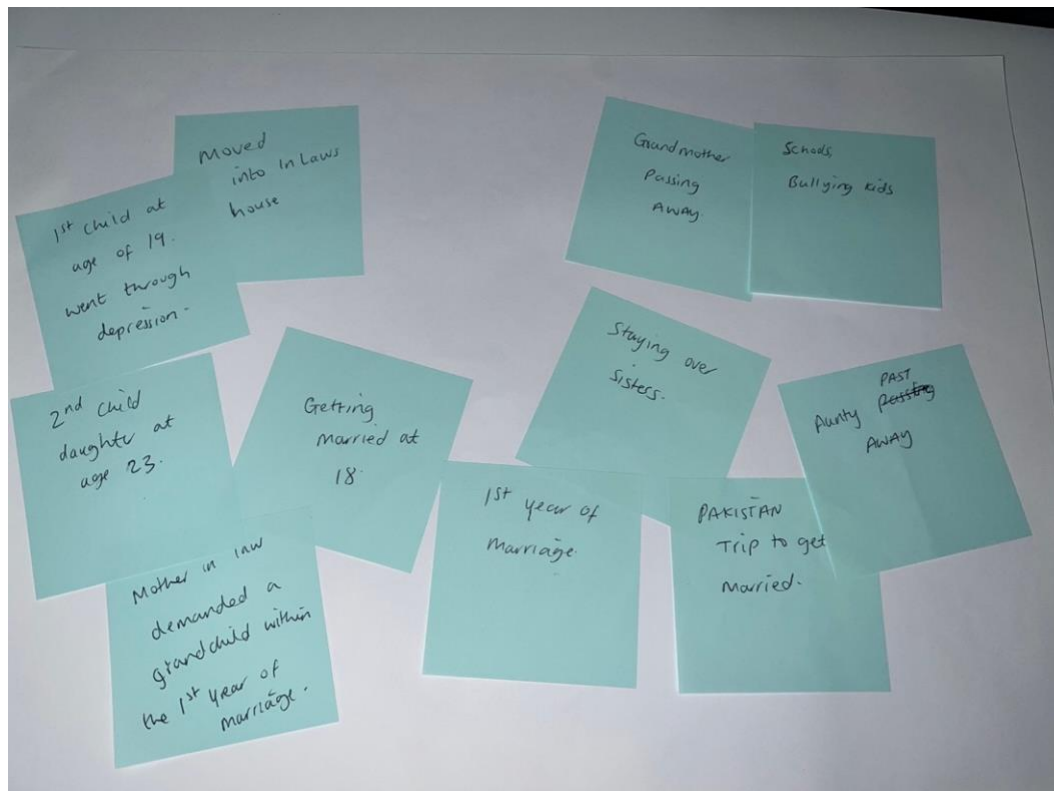


Participants' accounts also drew attention to the ways reproductive expectations could affect women's wellbeing. When creating her memorable moments mind map (see Figure 7), Waheeda (2nd generation, 36–40) described feeling under pressure to have a child soon after marriage because of her mother-in-law's desire for a grandson. She explained: "The first year of my marriage, she would go on and on, saying she wants a grandson, and she'd question if I was on contraception. Honestly, I feel like I had him just to shut her up." Rather than presenting family pressure as something external, her account suggests how expectations surrounding childbearing can shape women's experiences of marriage, motherhood, and their sense of personal choice.

What stood out across several interviews was not simply the expectation to have children, but the way these expectations could be experienced through the body and through everyday emotional strain. Waheeda's comment that she felt she had a child "just to shut her up" points to the frustration and pressure she associated with these family dynamics. Her account suggests that reproductive expectations were not only about achieving particular outcomes, such as having a son, but also about managing relationships within the household.

These experiences reflect wider research linking tensions within in-law relationships to women's wellbeing. Khan (2021), for example, found that verbal, indirect, and physical aggression from mothers-in-law was associated with poorer mental and physical health outcomes among daughters-in-law, including anxiety, depression, obsessive compulsive disorder, and poor physical health. While Waheeda did not describe these specific outcomes, her account highlights how reproductive expectations could become intertwined with broader experiences of burden and family conflict.

Figure 7: Waheeda's memorable moments map



Participants' accounts also highlighted how expectations surrounding sons could shape women's reproductive experiences over a long period of time. For some women, this involved continuing to have children in the hope of eventually having a son, even when doing so carried risks for their health. Rifut's account illustrates the pressures that could accompany these expectations:

"I've got five girls now, and my health is in danger as well. The doctors have told me I could die if I have more, because I've had so many caesareans. I love my girls, but you do hope that this time it will be a boy, but maybe it's just not meant to be. I don't know. Allah knows best."

What I found interesting about Rifut's account was the tension between her acknowledgement of the risks to her health and her continued hope for a son. Rather than reflecting a simple preference for boys, her narrative suggests how expectations surrounding son production could become woven into women's understandings of marriage and motherhood. Similar sentiments appeared in several interviews, where women described balancing concerns about their own wellbeing alongside expectations associated with having a son.

Rifut's account also highlights a broader contradiction that appeared across the data. Although daughters were deeply loved and valued by participants, sons were often associated with particular forms of recognition, status, or security within family life. As a result, women could find themselves caught between their affection for their daughters and wider expectations surrounding the significance of sons.

A key finding was that religion emerged as an important way through which women made sense of these pressures. Participants such as Rifut, Noora, and Bushra described turning to prayer and faith for comfort, guidance, and hope, often framing reproductive outcomes as being ultimately determined by God. Noora explained: "It's all from Allah. If he gives me one or not. Whenever I have problems, I turn to him. It has helped me a lot." Similarly, Bushra (2nd generation, 36–40) described relying on prayer throughout her efforts to have a son: "I would make prayer every

day. If I could have just one, then that would be enough. There are specific prayers you can make, for a boy or a girl. Once I had him, then I stopped."

Across these accounts, I found that faith appeared to provide a way of coping with uncertainty and disappointment while also sustaining hope for a particular outcome. Prayer offered reassurance at times when women felt they had little control over what would happen next. This reflects Hassouneh-Phillips' (2003) findings that faith can play an important role in helping women manage ongoing hardship and uncertainty.

As I analysed these interviews, I was reminded of how familiar such expressions of faith were within my own cultural context. However, rather than treating religion simply as a background feature of participants' lives, these accounts drew my attention to the active role it played in helping women navigate difficult circumstances. For many participants, faith was not only a matter of belief but also a practical resource that helped them cope with reproductive pressures and maintain hope in situations that often felt uncertain.

Rather than representing a clear break from earlier generations, third-generation Pakistani women's accounts suggested a more mixed picture in which some expectations persisted but were often questioned in ways that were less visible in the accounts of older participants.

Although none of the third-generation participants had children, their experiences as married, engaged, divorced, and single women provided insight into how reproductive expectations were anticipated and discussed before motherhood. Like some first- and second-generation participants, married women such as Fameeda (3rd generation, 19–25) and Noreen (3rd generation, 26–30) described a sense of reproductive burden as they expressed feeling pressure to eventually produce a son, particularly within speaking in the context of marital and in-law relationships.

Noreen, who had married an only son, reflected on comments made by both her husband and mother-in-law about her future role in continuing the family line. She explained:

"I know they want another boy in the family... they want him to have one of his own... But I don't really care what it is... it would be nice for him to have a son, but doesn't really matter if we have a girl first does it?"

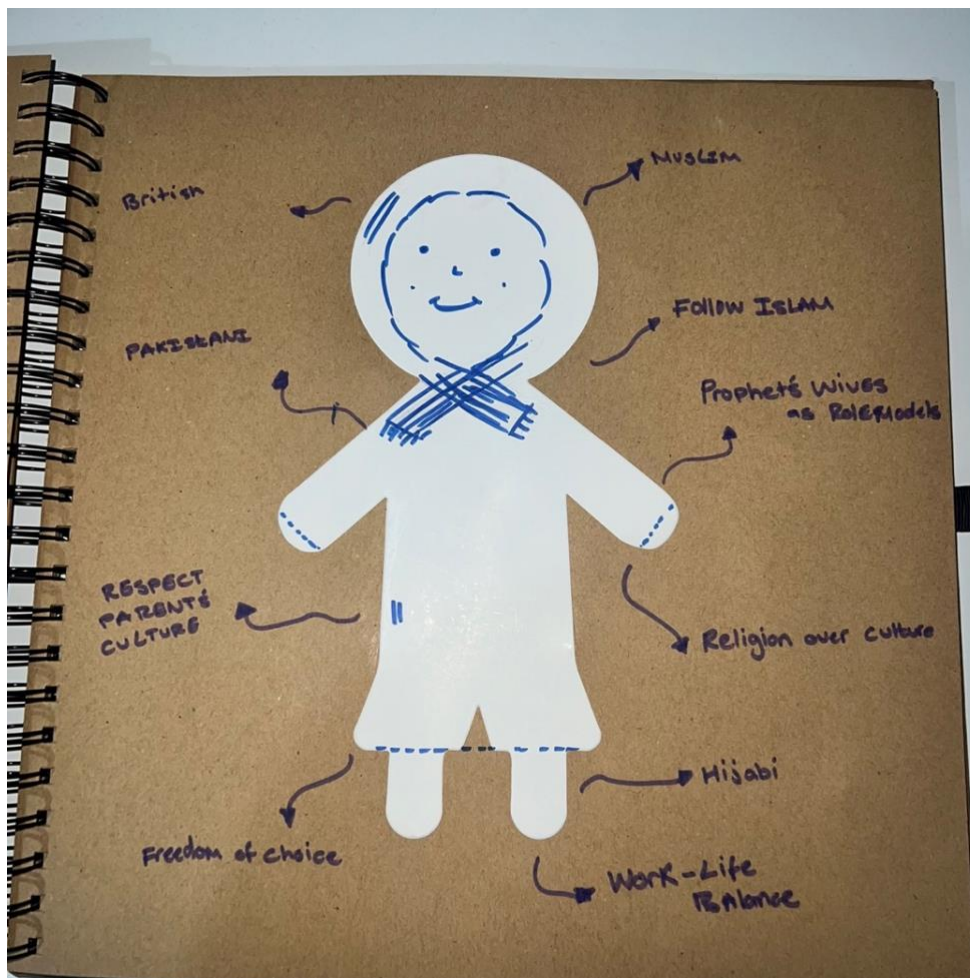
Noreen's account suggests that expectations surrounding son production remain present within some families. However, unlike many of the earlier accounts where the importance of sons was often taken for granted, Noreen spoke about these expectations with a degree of distance. While she recognised what her husband and mother-in-law hoped for, she also questioned the importance attached to the child's sex. Her response points to a more ambivalent position, acknowledging these expectations without fully accepting them as her own.

Fameeda's account offered a different perspective. Discussing family expectations around motherhood, she stated: "I use birth control, but they don't know that... they ask me all the time why I'm not trying for kids. I will have them, just on my terms."

What stood out in Fameeda's narrative was her emphasis on timing and control over her own reproductive decisions. Rather than focusing on whether or not she wanted children, she stressed her desire to decide when this would happen. This was also reflected in her collage (see Figure 8), where she included references to "freedom of choice". Importantly, these accounts suggest that reproductive expectations continue to shape women's lives, but some participants were more willing to question the timing and terms on which those expectations should be met.

At the same time, Fameeda's decision to keep her use of contraception hidden from her family highlights the ongoing influence of these expectations. Although she exercised choice in relation to her reproductive future, she did so within a context where open disagreement appeared difficult. This suggests that family expectations had not disappeared, but were being managed in different ways.

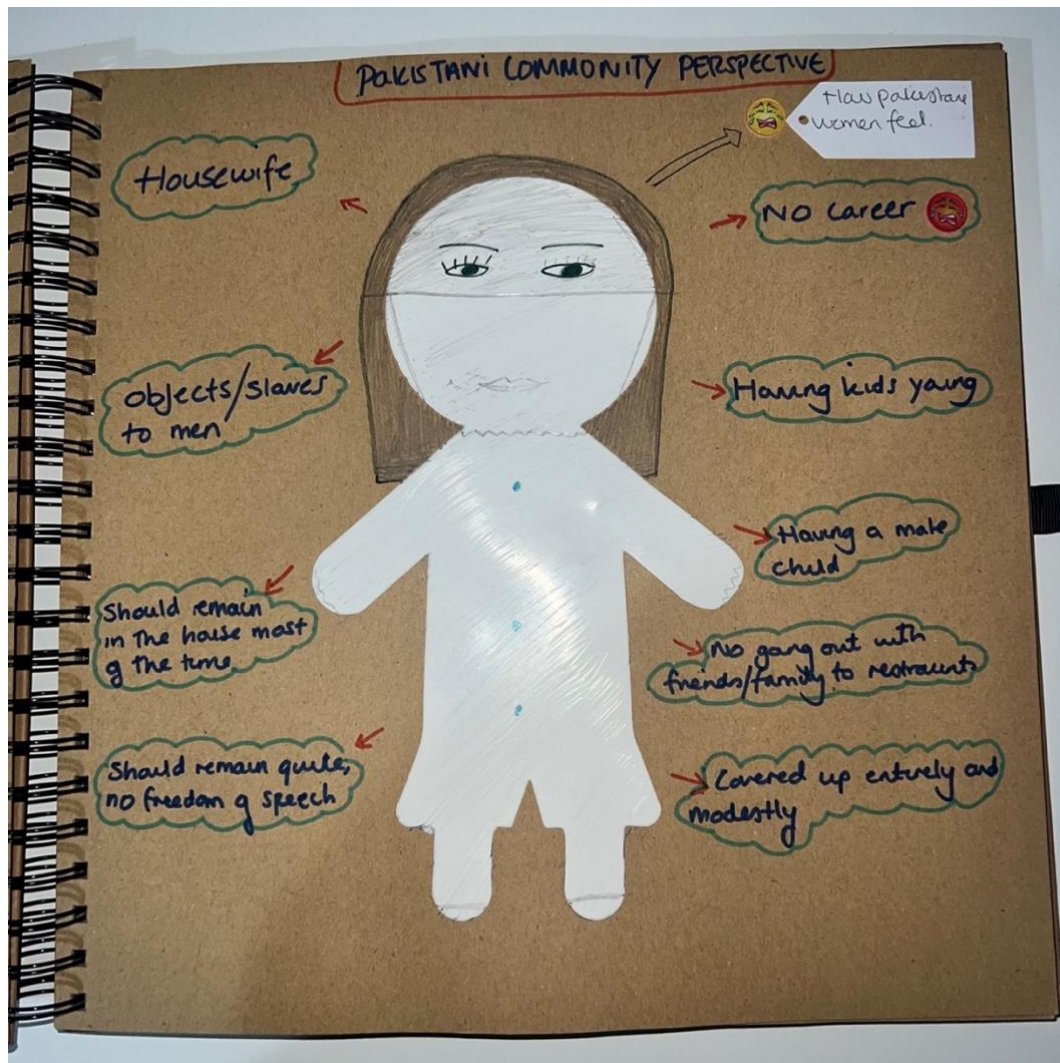
Figure 8: Fameeda's collage of a Pakistani daughter



Alisha (3rd generation, 19–25) spoke confidently about how she would respond if her future husband expressed disappointment at having daughters: “There’s no way I’d stick around. I told him, if he isn’t happy with having daughters, then he can go. I’m not the type to take that shit.”

Alisha’s comments, alongside the messages represented in her collage (see Figure 9), present a clear image of how she imagines herself as a future wife and mother. Unlike some of the earlier accounts, where women often described adapting to family expectations, Alisha emphasised her unwillingness to tolerate attitudes that devalue daughters. I interpreted her response to reflect a strong sense of self-confidence and a belief that she should be able to set boundaries within her relationships.

Figure 9: Alisha's collage of a Pakistani daughter



When I first analysed accounts such as Alisha's, I was inclined to view them as evidence of increasing empowerment among younger women. However, reflexive analysis encouraged me to take a more cautious approach. While participants were often more willing to question expectations that previous generations may have accepted, this did not mean those expectations had disappeared. Instead, women continued to describe navigating family relationships, cultural expectations, and concerns about belonging, albeit in different ways.

Alisha's account therefore points to both continuity and change. On the one hand, son preference and expectations surrounding women's behaviour remained familiar reference points. On the other, participants like Alisha appeared more willing to

challenge these expectations openly and imagine alternative ways of approaching marriage and family life. In one sense, it can be argued that this a pattern points to the eroding of anticipatory burden, where anxieties linked to daughters' futures were not feared, and as a result the reproductive burden to reproduce sons was also disappearing.

Nonetheless, reproduction remained an important area through which gendered expectations were experienced and discussed. What appeared to be changing was not necessarily the existence of these expectations, but the ways some women understood and responded to them.

4.3 Relational Burden: being the good daughter and the good wife

Accounts from first-generation participants suggest that expectations surrounding marriage were closely connected to ideas about being a "good" daughter, wife, and daughter-in-law. Across several interviews, women spoke about the importance of obedience, respect for elders, and maintaining family harmony. These expectations were often discussed as ordinary parts of family life and were closely linked to both family relationships and religious understandings.

Many participants described having limited access to formal religious knowledge and relying on male relatives to explain religious teachings. For example, Balkees explained: "The men would go to the ustadhs³ and alims⁴ and they would come home and teach us... we didn't question our elders." Similarly, Surayah reflected: "Our elders decided on family matters, and we believed they knew best."

My initial take on these accounts was focused on women's limited access to knowledge and their dependence on male family members for religious guidance. However, upon reflection, I noted that while from a contemporary perspective these experiences might be viewed as unequal, the women did not always describe them in those terms. Instead, several participants presented deference to husbands, elders, and religious authority as a normal and accepted part of family life. This

³ Ustadhs meaning Teachers

⁴ A male scholar in religious matters

prompted me to think less about whether these arrangements were accepted or resisted and more about how participants made sense of them. Across several accounts, being a “good” wife appeared to involve trusting the judgement of elders, respecting family hierarchies, and fulfilling expected roles within the household. Authority within both family and religious life was often described as something that men held, but participants frequently spoke about this as part of the social world they had grown up in rather than something they explicitly questioned.

These narratives suggest that expectations surrounding marriage were shaped not only through relationships with husbands but also through wider family and community structures. Ideas about what made a “good” wife were often connected to obedience, respectability, and maintaining family relationships, helping to frame how women understood their responsibilities within marriage.

Experiences of domestic abuse also emerged within this broader context of marital authority and family expectations. Zenub's statement that: “My husband used to hit me... but I dealt with it. These things happen in marriage” and Rabia's assertion that: “Men did hit their wives... that's how they show they're in charge” initially struck me as stark examples of gendered inequality within marriage. However, returning to my codes and themes, I noted that rather than describing them as exceptional, they positioned these experiences as part of what they understood marriage to involve.

These accounts suggest that ideas about what was considered acceptable behaviour within marriage were shaped by the social and cultural contexts in which participants lived. Several women described difficult experiences in ways that reflected broader expectations surrounding marriage and endurance. This resonates with feminist research which has shown that women's responses to abuse are often shaped by multiple factors, including concerns about family honour, economic dependency, and the stigma attached to separation or divorce (Hassounah-Phillips, 2003; Chantler et al., 2009). While the women clearly described unequal relationships and in some cases, violence, they also located these experiences within wider understandings of marriage, family obligations, and social expectations. Paying attention to this

complexity helped me avoid reducing their narratives solely to experiences of victimhood and oppression.

Across several first-generation accounts, being a “good” wife often appeared closely connected to maintaining relationships, respecting family hierarchies, and preserving family stability, even in difficult circumstances. Participants frequently suggested that openly challenging husbands, elders, or family expectations could have significant consequences, including conflict, social disapproval, divorce, or further hardship. In this sense, the burden described by participants was not simply the existence of unequal relationships, but the expectation that women should carry responsibility for maintaining those relationships.

I found Kandiyoti's (1988) concept of the patriarchal bargain useful here, as it highlights how women often navigate unequal social arrangements within the options available to them. Similarly, Fraser (2013) draws attention to the ways care, responsibility, and family maintenance frequently become gendered obligations. Read together, these perspectives help highlight how participants understood endurance, accommodation, and family responsibility as part of married life, even where those experiences involved significant personal costs.

Building on the first-generation accounts, several second-generation participants described enduring difficulties within marriage as something closely connected to family expectations and responsibilities. While many women were aware of gender inequalities within their relationships, they also spoke about pressure to maintain family harmony and avoid bringing distress or shame to their families. For some, this pressure came through advice from parents and other relatives, particularly during difficult periods of marriage.

Aliya, for example, explained that enduring marital hardship was often associated with moral virtue, stating that: “A woman who endures is seen to be a devout daughter”. Similarly, Rifut recalled being encouraged by her family to remain patient and stay within her marriage, explaining that they would tell her to: “just endure it... do it for us.”

Rather than describing endurance solely as something imposed upon them, my analysis suggested that participants often framed it through their responsibilities towards parents, children, and wider family networks. In several accounts, personal decisions were weighed against concerns about family reputation, wellbeing, and social expectations.

This was particularly evident in participants' discussions of divorce. Women frequently spoke about the stigma attached to separation and the social consequences that could follow. Noora's observation that: "They'd rather their daughter suffers in silence", highlights the strength of these expectations within some families. Discussions of divorce were rarely presented as individual choices alone, but were often tied to concerns about how daughters would be viewed by relatives and the wider community.

Noora also described how women who departed from expected behaviour could be labelled as selfish or "azaad⁵", explaining that elders feared "they will go off the rails." Her account suggests that ideas about respectability continued to shape judgements about women's behaviour both within and beyond marriage. In this sense, expectations surrounding daughterhood appeared to extend beyond obedience to include wider assumptions about reputation and family honour (discussed further in Chapter 5).

Several accounts also pointed to the important role women played in passing on advice about marriage and family life. This supports Habiba et al.'s (2016) argument that patriarchal norms are often maintained through family relationships and not solely through men's authority. At the same time, mothers' advice to endure difficult circumstances cannot be understood simply as reinforcing inequality. Many participants suggested that such advice was informed by mothers' own experiences, concerns about social stigma, and a desire to protect their daughters from what they perceived to be even greater hardship. As someone familiar with these cultural expectations, I found these tensions between care and limitation particularly striking.

⁵ Excessive or inappropriate freedom

Advice to "endure" could be experienced as restrictive, but it was also frequently presented as practical guidance rooted in love, concern, and lived experience.

These narratives suggest that relational burdens were often sustained through close family relationships rather than through direct coercion alone. Women's decisions were frequently shaped by competing demands of care, duty, reputation, and family responsibility. As Nazish (2018) argues, these dynamics are often complex and emotionally layered, reflecting the ways women navigate relationships that are simultaneously sources of support, obligation, and constraint.

Following on from the accounts of first- and second-generation women, narratives from the third generation suggest that expectations of being a "good wife" continue to shape women's lives, although they are not always accepted in the same way. Jameela's account, as the only divorced woman among the third-generation participants, offers a particularly useful insight into how these expectations operate within everyday family relationships.

Jameela described an incident where she went out to visit friends while her husband was at work. In response, her mother-in-law complained that her priority should be the home. Reflecting on her husband's reaction, Jameela explained: "He didn't take my side... he could've said no, she's my wife... but he couldn't stand up to her."

Her account highlights the important role mothers-in-law continued to play in shaping expectations around marriage and family life. For Jameela, something as ordinary as visiting friends became bound up with wider ideas about what a wife should prioritise. Similar to some of the accounts discussed earlier, responsibility for maintaining the household appeared closely connected to ideas of 'good wifehood', with women expected to place family needs ahead of their own.

Jameela's experiences also demonstrate how these expectations extended beyond marriage itself and into the process of marital breakdown. Describing the end of her relationship, she explained that it had "turned sour" and that she was ultimately forced to seek a divorce through an Islamic council (*khula*) because her husband

refused to grant a *talaq*: "He wouldn't say the three words... he was going to make it as difficult as possible just to make me suffer."

Her account suggests that leaving a marriage could be a complicated and emotionally demanding process, particularly when husbands were unwilling to cooperate. In this sense, expectations surrounding marriage were not only about remaining a "good wife" within a relationship, but could also shape the conditions under which women attempted to leave one.

Reproductive burdens also featured prominently in Jameela's account. Reflecting on her mother-in-law's criticism, she recalled: "She [mother-in-law] was like... you couldn't even give him a son... your family isn't your priority." This comment illustrates how expectations surrounding wifehood and motherhood were often closely connected. Jameela's value as a wife was questioned not only through her behaviour but also through her inability to produce a son. Similar expectations appeared elsewhere in the data, where women's commitment to family life was often evaluated through both reproductive and relational responsibilities.

At the same time, Jameela reflected on the fact that she had not had children during the marriage, explaining: "To be honest I'm glad it didn't happen, it would've made it harder to leave." This highlighted how motherhood was not only imagined as a source of fulfilment but also as something that could make difficult relationships harder to exit. Rather than viewing children solely as strengthening family bonds, Jameela's account points to the ways they can increase women's sense of responsibility and complicate decisions about separation.

In wider scholarship, women's challenges to established marriage norms have been described as a form of "silent revolution", particularly when they involve choices that depart from traditional expectations surrounding marriage and family life (Dhanda, 2012) (this is explored further in the following chapter). Some third-generation participants similarly questioned expectations that earlier generations often described as difficult to challenge.

Fameeda, for example, spoke confidently about her expectations of marriage and was explicit that she would not tolerate arrangements she considered unfair. Reflecting on the possibility of her husband taking another wife, she explained: "I don't think that happens much anymore. Maybe back home, but girls stick up for themselves now. I know I could never share my husband. I can stand up to him because I know my rights in Islam."

What stands out in Fameeda's account is the importance she places on knowledge. Unlike some first-generation participants, who described receiving religious guidance largely through male relatives, Fameeda drew on her own understanding of Islam when discussing marriage. For her, religious knowledge appeared to provide a basis for questioning practices she viewed as unfair, while also supporting her confidence in asserting her own position within a relationship. Rather than rejecting marriage itself, participants such as Fameeda were more likely to question the expectations attached to it. This echoes Charsley's (2005; 2007) argument that British Pakistani women often engage critically with marital expectations while continuing to value marriage and family relationships.

Similar themes appeared in other third-generation accounts. Shanaz (3rd generation, 19–25), for example, explained: "I've looked into it, and I know my rights as a woman. Islam has given us so many rights, but men and our culture stop us and make life harder for us." Likewise, Jameela distinguished between cultural practice and religious teaching, stating: "They choose culture over religion. They think it's religion but it's not. Islam is fair, Pakistani culture isn't." Aisha (3rd generation, 15–18) expressed a similar frustration, commenting that: "People put their cultural values before religion."

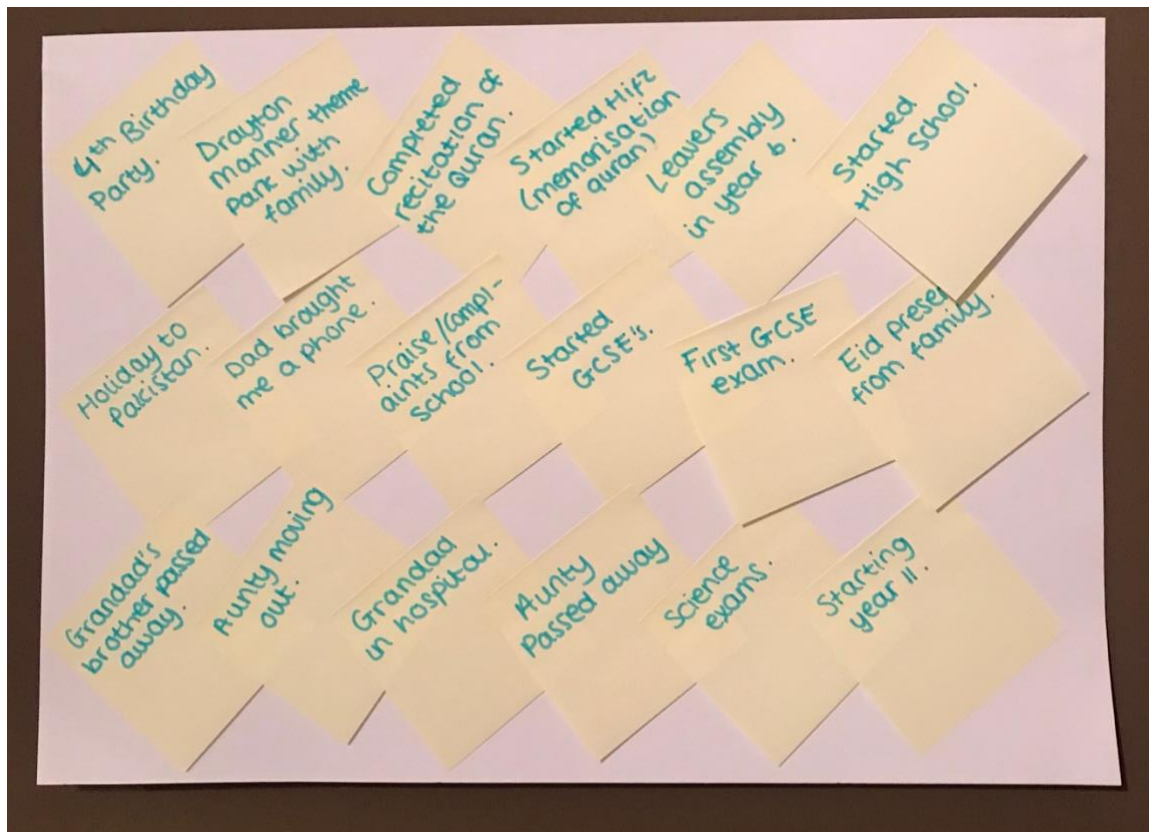
Across these accounts, participants frequently drew a distinction between Islam and what they viewed as cultural practices that limited women's opportunities or autonomy. Similar distinctions have been identified in studies of British Muslim women, where religion is often mobilised as a resource for challenging family practices perceived as cultural rather than Islamic (Dwyer, 2000; Shaw, 2000; Charsley, 2005). Participants in this study drew on a similar distinction, using

religious knowledge to justify alternative understandings of marriage, family relationships, and gender roles. This differs from many of the first-generation narratives, where religious knowledge was more commonly described as something accessed through husbands, fathers, or other male relatives.

Aisha's account provides a particularly clear example of this. In her mind map (see Figure 10), she identified memorising the Qur'an as one of her most memorable achievements and described religious knowledge as central to her everyday life: "I've memorised it and I have to live by it as well. It's meant to guide us through life, so yeah, it's more important than what anyone else says, religion comes first."

Rather than being described solely as a set of restrictions or obligations, religious knowledge was often presented as something that enabled women to question family expectations and justify alternative ways of thinking about marriage and daughterhood. In this sense, participants were not necessarily stepping outside established frameworks, but drawing on them in different ways. Their accounts suggest that change may occur not only through rejecting existing traditions, but also through reinterpreting them and applying them to new circumstances.

Figure 10: Aisha's memorable moments map



At the same time, participants' narratives also highlighted that challenging family expectations could come with significant emotional and relational consequences. While several third-generation women spoke about questioning established ideas around marriage and family life, their accounts suggest that doing so was not always straightforward or without cost.

Hafsah's experience illustrates some of these difficulties. Reflecting on being unable to marry someone of her own choosing, she explained:

"They didn't let me have a love marriage because that was wrong and shameful. I had to let it go. It's not wrong, you know, Islam lets us. But it's our people, they just won't allow it. I didn't speak to my dad for months. I think I still hold it against him."

What stands out in Hafsah's account is not only her frustration but also the lasting impact the experience had on her relationship with her father. Although she drew on

religion to justify her position, this did not alter the outcome. Her narrative suggests that alternative understandings of marriage may exist within families, but that cultural expectations can continue to shape decisions in powerful ways.

Shanaz also spoke about changing attitudes towards love marriages within her community. She felt that such marriages were becoming more common and more openly accepted than in previous generations. However, she was also aware that those who challenged expectations before these shifts occurred often continued to live with the consequences. Reflecting on women who had left home to marry someone of their choice, she explained: "There's a few in our community who left home. It's sad. Their family could've just accepted it, but they lost a daughter instead. And now it's becoming normal, and they can't come back."

When asked why she felt reconciliation was difficult, Shanaz suggested that: "They would have to go back on their word." Her account suggests that changing attitudes do not necessarily undo earlier family conflicts. Even where opinions have shifted over time, damaged relationships may remain difficult to repair in the face of *izzat*.

Fatimah's account further highlights these longer-term consequences. She described how her sister had left home to marry the man she loved, but that the family rejected the relationship because he was of a different ethnicity; British Bangladeshi. According to Fatimah, her father believed the marriage would bring dishonour to the family. Discussing the situation, she explained: "My mum and sisters are in touch with her. But my dad won't take her back. He'll never let her back in the house. She's basically dead to him."

This account illustrates the emotional costs and burdens that can accompany decisions which challenge family expectations. Although relationships with some family members had been maintained, the rupture with her father remained unresolved. Similar findings have been reported by Bolognani and Mellor (2012), who note that departures from expected marriage patterns can result in strained family relationships and long-term emotional consequences.

These accounts prompted me to think more carefully about the limits of change. Throughout the interviews, women often articulated alternative ways of thinking about marriage, family life, and personal choice. However, participants' experiences also suggest that questioning expectations does not necessarily remove the social and emotional consequences attached to them. As Bolognani and Mellor (2012) argue, drawing on religious arguments or alternative viewpoints in family disputes does not always lead to acceptance or change.

I found that while some women were increasingly willing to challenge expectations surrounding marriage, the costs of doing so could remain considerable. Family relationships, belonging, and emotional ties continued to shape what was possible, highlighting the complex realities of navigating expectations around daughterhood and wider relationships.

Unlike some of the earlier accounts, where endurance was often discussed as part of married life, third-generation women spoke more openly about being less tolerant and more autonomous in decision making. However, their experiences should not be understood as evidence of a straightforward generational shift. Family expectations remained highly visible in their narrative and continued to shape the perimeters in which they could negotiate and re-work these expectations.

4.4 Emotional Burden: living with expectations

While the previous sections have explored how burden is connected to reproduction and family relationships, participants' accounts also highlighted its emotional dimensions. Across the three generations, women described feelings of worry, responsibility, disappointment, shame, and frustration that were often connected to expectations surrounding daughterhood. These emotional experiences were not always linked to a single event, but appeared in the everyday ways women thought about themselves, their families, and the decisions they made throughout their lives.

Although emotional burden was most explicitly discussed by third-generation participants, elements of it were visible across all three generations. For many first-generation women, emotional distress was often spoken about indirectly and

presented as something that had to be endured rather than openly expressed. For example, when discussing domestic abuse, Zenub remarked that: “these things happen in marriage”, while Raheela reflected that she felt like an “unworthy wife” because she had not produced a son. Both accounts point to emotional experiences of sadness, shame, and self-blame, but these feelings were often described as part of everyday life rather than as something unusual or unjust.

Rather than locating responsibility in wider social structures, several participants spoke about their experiences in highly personal terms. Feelings of inadequacy were often directed inward, particularly when women felt they had not fulfilled expectations associated with marriage or motherhood. This suggests that the emotional consequences of gendered expectations were often carried privately, becoming part of how women understood themselves and their roles within the family.

Among second-generation participants, these emotional dimensions were often more visible. Women spoke about worries for their daughters, difficulties within marriage, and the pressure of balancing their own needs against the expectations of family members. Aliya's recollection of her mother telling her that it would have been “better not to have had you” following her divorce illustrates the emotional weight attached to family expectations. More than a disagreement between mother and daughter, her account highlights how feelings of shame and disappointment can become bound up with broader ideas about marriage and family honour.

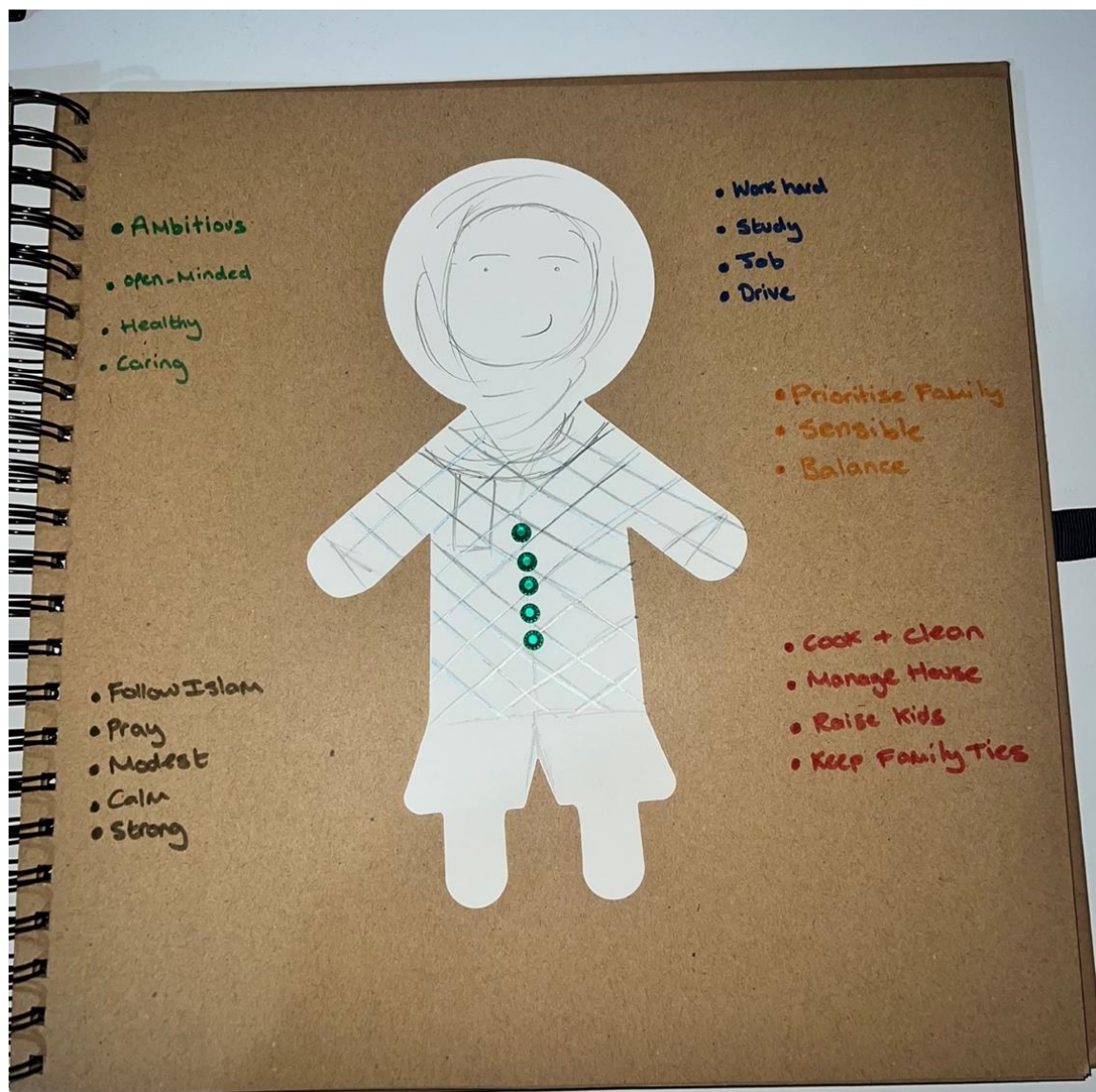
Participants also described the emotional work involved in managing the gap between what they hoped for and what they felt permitted to pursue. Hafsa (2nd generation, 30–35), for example, reflected on being prevented from continuing her education: “I wasn’t allowed to study further... they said it’s because I’m a girl.”

At the same time, her memorable moments collage (see Figure 11) presented an alternative vision of what a Pakistani daughter could be. Drawing together religious, cultural, family, and personal aspirations, the collage reflected ambitions that extended beyond the expectations she felt had been placed upon her. Discussing

these aspirations, she explained: "Who says we can't do it all? Just because we're girls doesn't mean we have to focus on one thing."

Hafsah's account provides an insight into the emotional tensions that can arise when personal aspirations do not align with family expectations. While she believed opportunities had been limited because she was a girl, she also imagined a different future for herself and for other young Pakistani women. Her narrative suggests that emotional burden was not only shaped by experiences of restriction, but also by the effort involved in reconciling ambitions and realities.

Figure 11: Hafsah's collage of a Pakistani daughter



Among third-generation participants, emotional aspects of burden were often discussed more openly and directly. Several women spoke about differences in how they and their brothers were treated, particularly in relation to freedom, mobility, and parental expectations. Safoora (3rd generation, 19–25) explained: “Boys can do whatever they like. Literally, whatever. We have to ask for permission for everything and everything we do has consequences, or we’re made to feel bad about it.” Similarly, Salma (3rd generation, 26–30) reflected: “My brother can come and go as he pleases. I’ve had curfews my whole life and my parents will call me non-stop to see where I am and when I’m coming home.”

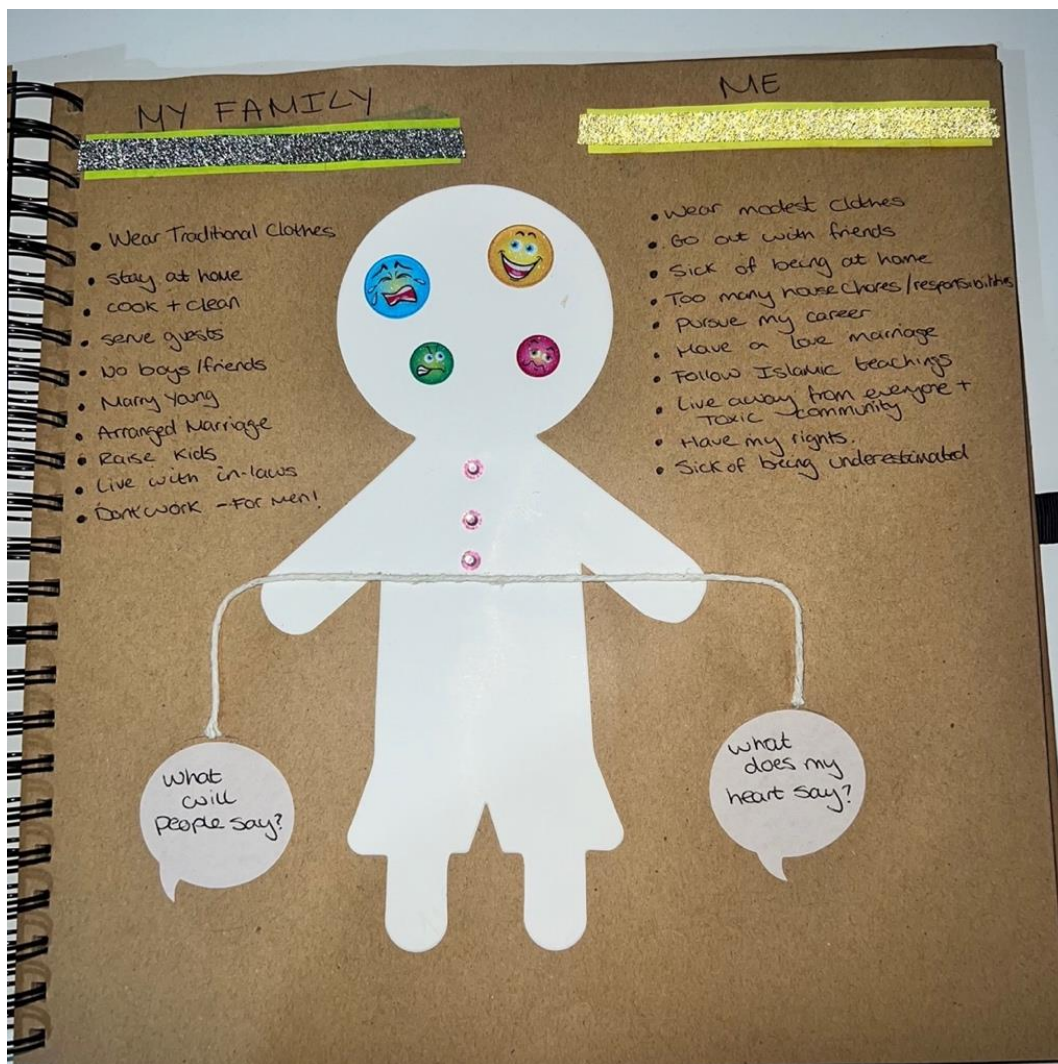
Reflecting on my own experiences, I interpreted these accounts to suggest that the issue was not only that daughters experienced more rules or restrictions, but that they often felt responsible for managing the consequences of their actions in ways their brothers did not. Across several accounts, participants described needing to think carefully about how their choices might be viewed by parents and relatives, suggesting that everyday decisions could carry a different emotional weight for daughters.

Hira’s account was particularly useful in highlighting how these feelings could emerge through seemingly ordinary aspects of family life. Reflecting on everyday experiences within the household, she commented: “They’re given the best food first... girls have to do everything for themselves.” Initially, I viewed this primarily as an example of unequal treatment between sons and daughters. However, revisiting Hira’s interview and reflecting on my own similar experiences, led me to pay more attention to the cumulative effect of these everyday interactions. Rather than any single event being especially significant, it was the repetition of small practices that appeared meaningful. In this sense, ideas about whose needs mattered most were communicated through routine acts of care, attention, and priority within everyday family life.

In this way, emotional burden was not always linked to explicit restrictions or major life events. It could also emerge through everyday experiences that subtly reinforced different expectations for sons and daughters. Hira’s collage (see Figure 12), which

highlights tensions between family expectations and personal aspirations, further drew my attention to the emotional effort involved in balancing these competing demands. Her narrative suggests that daughters often had to find ways of managing frustration, disappointment, and responsibility while maintaining close family relationships.

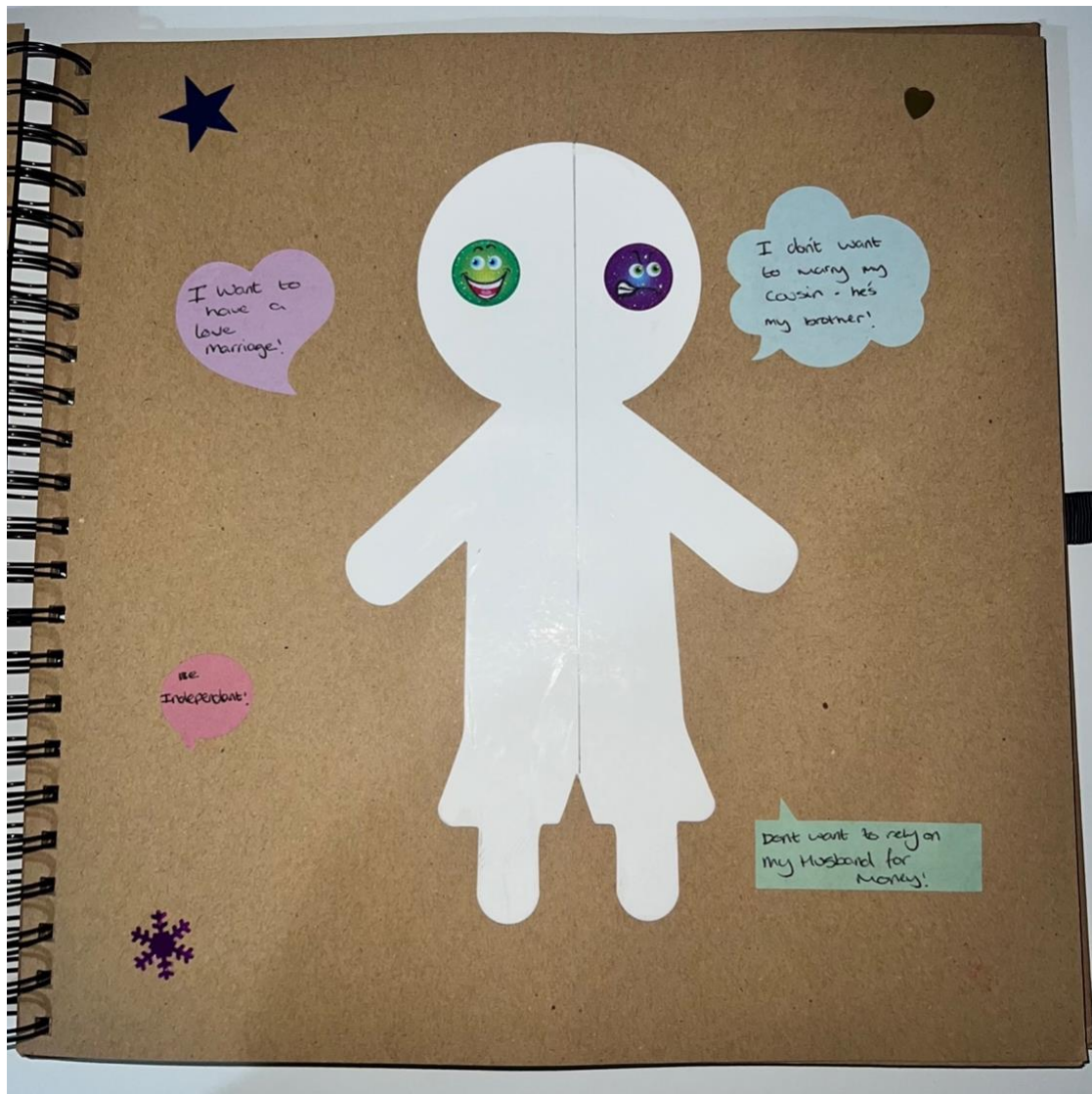
Figure 12: Hira's collage of a Pakistani daughter



Salma and Samiya's (3rd generation, 15–28) accounts further illustrate how these experiences were connected to questions of freedom, responsibility, and consequences. Salma's observation that her brother "can come and go as he pleases" while she has experienced "curfews [her] whole life" reflects a clear awareness of unequal expectations within the family. More importantly, her account

highlights the additional emotional work involved in anticipating how parents might respond to her actions and adjusting her behaviour accordingly (see Figure 13). Similarly, Samiya explained: "It's okay for sons to do these things, it doesn't reflect badly on the family if they mess up."

Figure 13: Salma's collage of a Pakistani daughter



What stands out here is the different significance attached to the behaviour of sons and daughters. Several participants suggested that mistakes made by sons were more easily treated as individual actions, whereas daughters often felt their behaviour carried wider implications for how the family would be viewed. This meant

that daughters were frequently more conscious of the potential consequences of everyday choices and actions.

These accounts suggest that emotional burden often developed through ongoing concerns about responsibility, reputation, and family expectations rather than through direct restrictions alone. Daughters were frequently aware that their actions could attract scrutiny or judgement, which shaped how they thought about and managed their everyday lives. Although participants described these experiences differently, a common thread was the feeling that daughters carried greater responsibility for maintaining family expectations than their brothers.

As someone who shares many of the cultural reference points described by participants, I found these narratives particularly resonant. However, rather than assuming a shared experience, they encouraged me to pay closer attention to the ways participants described the emotional effects of unequal expectations in their own words. Across several accounts, emotional burden appeared less as a single experience and more as an accumulation of everyday responsibilities, worries, and expectations that shaped how daughters understood themselves and their place within the family.

Interestingly, third-generation women often drew on religious arguments when managing the emotional burden of juggling personal aspirations with family expectations, especially in regard to education and employment. Rather than rejecting their parents' concerns outright, my analysis suggested that women worked within a shared religious framework to justify their aspirations.

Aisha, for example, spoke about using Islamic teachings to persuade her parents to allow her to study and work. When asked why she felt her parents were apprehensive, she explained that: "I think they think that girls might get out of hand." She went on to say that: "I told them, look, Islamically it's not wrong so nobody can say anything. You will have to answer to God." Similarly, Hira described how she used examples from Islamic history when discussing university with her father. Reflecting on these conversations, she explained:

“What about all the female figures in Islam who had their own businesses and schools and what not, centuries ago. You know, like the Prophet’s wives. Their reasons for not wanting me to go uni made no sense. Not Islamically. It’s just culture and the community. I told my dad people will always have something to say and I’m not stupid, I’m going to be sensible.”

What stands out in both accounts is the way participants distinguished between what they understood as Islamic teachings and what they viewed as cultural expectations. Rather than presenting education and employment as being in conflict with their families' values, they used religious arguments to support their position. Hira's account is particularly interesting because she framed higher education not as a rejection of family expectations, but as something that could be pursued while remaining a responsible daughter. By referring to respected female figures within Islam and reassuring her father that she would behave sensibly, she was able to present her ambitions in a way that resonated with values the family already recognised.

These accounts suggest that education and employment were important areas through which younger women imagined different possibilities for their futures. However, pursuing these opportunities was not always straightforward. Participants often described having to explain, justify, or reassure family members before their choices were accepted. In this sense, access to education and employment did not remove family expectations, but often required women to find ways of working through them.

Shifts in education and employment further complicate this picture. While increasing levels of education and economic participation among Pakistani women (Wang, 2018; Khan et al., 2023) have challenged traditional assumptions about men as sole providers, participants' accounts suggest that these changes are not always accepted without tension. Aisha, for example, reflected on attitudes towards daughters working outside the home:

“I think it’s a pride thing. It’s humiliating for a father if his daughter goes out to work. People will think he can’t provide for his family or something. A lot of people still think like that and won’t let their daughters work and then their husbands will think the same.”

Aisha's comments highlight how women's employment can become connected to wider ideas about masculinity, family reputation, honour and provision. Her account suggests that paid work is not simply an economic issue but is also shaped by social expectations about gender roles and family responsibilities, reflecting earlier accounts of reproductive and relational burden.

Overall, these narratives indicate that younger women often have access to opportunities that were less available to earlier generations, yet they continue to navigate family expectations in pursuing them. Participants described balancing personal ambitions with maintaining relationships and family harmony. In this sense, the experiences discussed throughout this chapter point not to the disappearance of burden, but to the changing ways it is experienced and managed across generations.

4.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I have explored how participants experienced and understood burden in relation to daughterhood across three generations of Pakistani women. Rather than representing a single experience, my analysis suggests that burden emerged through a range of interconnected expectations surrounding family life, marriage, reproduction, responsibility, and belonging. Across participants' accounts, these expectations shaped how daughters were valued, what was expected of them, and how they navigated relationships within both natal and marital families.

My analysis identified four interconnected dimensions of burden: anticipatory, reproductive, relational, and emotional. Anticipatory burden highlighted the ways hopes, anxieties, and expectations could be attached to children before birth, particularly through the meanings associated with sons and daughters. These accounts suggest that gendered expectations begin well before adulthood, shaping

how children are imagined and valued from the outset. Reproductive burden demonstrated how childbearing, and especially expectations surrounding sons, could influence women's experiences of marriage, family relationships, and social value. Reproductive experiences therefore emerged as an important site through which broader patriarchal values are reinforced and lived. Relational burden drew attention to the responsibilities associated with being a "good" daughter, wife, or daughter-in-law. In some cases, this involved tolerating unequal or difficult circumstances in order to meet these expectations. While emotional burden captured the everyday feelings of responsibility, worry, disappointment, obligation, and self-reflection that accompanied these expectations.

Although these dimensions have been discussed separately, participants rarely experienced them as distinct. Expectations surrounding marriage, reproduction, family honour, care, and responsibility were often interconnected, shaping women's experiences across different stages of the life course. Across the narratives, burden emerged not only through major life events such as marriage, childbirth, or divorce, but also through everyday interactions, family relationships, and seemingly ordinary practices that communicated different expectations for sons and daughters.

At the same time, participants' accounts revealed considerable variation in how these expectations were understood and responded to. Some women described adapting to family expectations, while others questioned particular practices or sought alternative ways of balancing personal aspirations with family responsibilities. These responses appeared across all three generations, although they were shaped by different social circumstances, family relationships, and available resources. Rather than suggesting a straightforward progression from acceptance to resistance, the findings point to a more complex picture in which continuity and change coexist.

Overall, this chapter contributes to sociological understandings of gender, family life, and intergenerational relationships by showing how burden is experienced across multiple domains of daughterhood. While existing research has highlighted son preference, gendered inequalities within marriage, and the significance of family honour (see chapter 2 section 2.5), the accounts presented here demonstrate how

such expectations are woven through everyday family relationships and lived in different ways across generations. Participants described burdens associated with reproduction, marriage, care, responsibility, aspirations and emotional labour, revealing the complex ways daughters come to understand their place within the family.

Across the narratives, burden was closely tied to questions of value, belonging, and accountability. Women frequently described feeling responsible not only for their own actions but also for maintaining family relationships, meeting expectations, and protecting the reputation of those around them. In this sense, burden extended beyond practical responsibilities to encompass wider concerns about how daughters are judged, valued, and evaluated within family and community life. These findings point towards the importance of honour as a key framework through which gendered expectations are understood and maintained. The following chapter develops this theme further by exploring how honour shapes experiences of daughterhood across generations and how women navigate the responsibilities, pressures, and expectations associated with it.

Chapter 5. Honour

5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I explored how daughters' lives were shaped by different forms of burden, highlighting the responsibilities and expectations participants described in relation to marriage, family life, reproduction, aspirations and care. Building on this analysis, in this chapter I examine how participants understood honour and how ideas about reputation, respectability, and family standing influenced experiences of daughterhood across generations.

Unlike the previous chapter, which foregrounded generational differences, this chapter adopts a more integrative approach under each theme. The chapter is organised into four sections. It begins by exploring participants' understandings of honour and the ways in which concerns about reputation and respectability informed expectations of daughters. It then develops three related themes that focus on marriage, domesticity, and dress. The first theme examines marriage as a key site through which honour is maintained and evaluated, particularly in relation to expectations surrounding arranged and intra-kin marriage. The second explores domesticity and considers how everyday practices of care, household labour, and family responsibility become associated with being a respectable daughter. The third focuses on dress and appearance, examining how honour is communicated, interpreted, and sometimes contested through embodied practices.

Throughout the chapter, I draw on Kandiyoti's (1988) concept of patriarchal bargains and Raheja and Gold's (1994) discussion of everyday forms of resistance to help make sense of participants' accounts as I am interested in bringing attention to the complex forms of resistance and the ways in which women described responding to expectations. Across the interviews, participants spoke about accommodating, questioning, delaying, reinterpreting, and at times challenging family expectations, often in ways that reflected their relationships, social circumstances, and concerns about belonging.

During analysis, I coded across all three generations to identify shared patterns in participants' discussions of honour while remaining attentive to the different historical and social contexts in which participants' experiences were situated. In doing so, I explore how honour continues to shape expectations surrounding daughterhood, whilst recognising that participants' understandings of honour were neither fixed nor uniform.

5.2 Understanding Honour: What Makes an Honourable Daughter?

Throughout the interviews, participants referred to ideas of respect, reputation, family standing, and concerns about "what will people say?". Although honour was not always discussed through the explicit language of *izzat*, these ideas appeared repeatedly across participants' accounts and often informed how they spoke about marriage, behaviour, family relationships, and social expectations. Through my engagement with the data, I became increasingly attentive to these recurring concerns and came to understand honour as an important framework through which many participants made sense of daughterhood.

Drawing on Braun and Clarke's (2021) reflexive thematic analysis, I developed honour as a central analytic theme. Rather than treating honour as a fixed cultural category, I understood it as a relational framework through which behaviour, responsibility, and family reputation were interpreted within both the immediate family (*gharwale*) and the wider kinship network (*biraderi*) (Lyons, 2002).

South Asian feminist scholarship provides a useful context for understanding these accounts. Gill (2006) and Abbas (2010), for example, demonstrate how honour can shape expectations surrounding women's behaviour and family reputation, while Papanek's (1973) work highlights the ways ideas about respectability, through practices such as *purdah*, have historically influenced women's visibility, mobility, and conduct. Kandiyoti's (1988) concept of patriarchal bargains draws attention to how gendered expectations are often lived through family relationships and everyday practices.

As I worked through the interviews, I became interested in what participants described as the qualities of a “good”, “respectable”, or “honourable” daughter. Across generations, recurring themes of obedience, respect for parents, self-discipline, and concern for family reputation appeared in participants’ accounts, echoing findings of relational burden. Rather than viewing these as separate characteristics, I came to understand them as part of a broader set of expectations through which daughterhood was evaluated.

One of the clearest patterns concerned obedience to parents and elders. Participants frequently spoke about listening to parents, respecting family decisions, and avoiding actions that might bring embarrassment or conflict. Shanaz explained: “Just do as your told. That’s what makes them happy. As long as you listen to them and do as they say, you’re good.” Similarly, Alisha stated: “You mustn’t question authority because it’s disrespectful to think you know better than them. Your duty is to look after your family and do as they say. They think that making them happy should make you happy.”

Several participants spoke about obedience in ways that connected it to respect and care. Rather than describing it simply as compliance with parental authority, they often presented it as part of maintaining relationships and avoiding disappointment or conflict within the family. As I reflected on these accounts, I became interested in how obedience was understood through emotional and relational ties as much as through authority itself. This interpretation is broadly consistent with Abbas’ (2010) observation that expectations surrounding daughters are frequently linked to wider concerns about family reputation and social standing.

Several participants also described these expectations through religious language. Rifut, for example, explained that: “Listening to your parents is a gateway into heaven.” Similarly, Fatimah reflected: “My daughters have to listen to me. Parents know what’s best for their kids, we keep them away from bad things. We understand these things, you know.” In this sense, obedience was described as carrying moral significance as well as religious importance. Participants often connected respect for parents with religious duty, suggesting that family

expectations were reinforced through both familial and spiritual understandings of responsibility. This overlap became an important part of how I interpreted participants' descriptions of honourable daughterhood.

Alongside obedience, many participants described daughters as needing protection. Concerns about safety, reputation, vulnerability, and trust appeared across several interviews, as shown in anticipatory burden. Rifut's description of daughters as "precious" and "vulnerable" (see Figure 14), alongside her view that, "You have to protect them from harm and from wrong things. Something could happen to them if they trust the wrong people. Men can make them *kharab*⁶", reflects wider concerns found in women's accounts surrounding daughters' wellbeing and family reputation.

In analysing this image, I noted how daughterhood was understood through both individual and relational meanings. Alongside terms such as "vulnerable" and "protected", she also included words such as "loved", which point towards the emotional significance of daughters within family life. Rather than depicting daughters solely as representatives of family honour or community expectations, the collage suggests that they are also valued as individuals who are cared for, cherished, and protected. At the same time, these expressions of love and care were closely connected to expectations surrounding behaviour, respectability, and family reputation. This combination of affection and responsibility highlights the complex ways daughterhood was understood within participants' accounts.

⁶ Kharab meaning soiled, which has synonyms of tainted, corrupt or ruined.

Figure 14: Rifut's collage of a Pakistani daughter



Rifut's image also drew my attention to a contradiction within participants' accounts. Men were often described as potential sources of moral risk, yet sons continued to enjoy greater freedom and status within the family. This prompted me to consider how limitations placed on daughters were justified. Participants frequently framed restrictions around mobility, friendships, and relationships through the language of protection, suggesting that concerns about safety and reputation made these expectations appear reasonable or necessary. As someone familiar with these cultural understandings, I interpreted honour as a gendered system of power that reproduces hierarchy while appearing protective, i.e., it can make unequal expectations feel legitimate.

Honour also appeared to operate through processes of evaluation and recognition within families and communities. Balkees, for example, spoke about the niece of her

daughter-in-law, who had recently married according to her parents' wishes:" She kept her families izzat. She listened to them and people only have good things to say." Similarly, Hira explained: "If you do what they want, then you've given them respect in the community. It shows that they raised you right. It basically makes them look good as parents, because you didn't go against them, you weren't rebellious or disobedient." Together, Rifut's and Balkees' accounts suggest that daughters function as moral representatives of the family, carrying responsibility for its public reputation. This reflects how honour operates within kinship networks as a collective resource.

Extending the previous chapter's focus on moral and emotional burden, I interpret daughterhood here as a form of moral labour, where honour becomes both a burden and a continuous practice of self-regulation as assumed responsibilities are simultaneously subject to external evaluation. An example of this was found in Kudsia (1st generation, 81-86) account where she suggested that: "A good daughter is one who cares for her mother's and father's respect. She doesn't do wrong things; she keeps them in mind at all times". In this sense, daughters' conduct becomes a key site through which honour is negotiated and recognised within the community, shaping not only what daughters do, but how they think about themselves and their responsibilities. Respectability then, is not simply something individuals possess but something that is continually worked towards, recognised, and evaluated through social relationships (Skeggs, 1997).

At the same time, participants' accounts also point to the varied ways daughters responded to these expectations. Across the interviews, women described accommodating, questioning, delaying, reinterpreting, and at times challenging family expectations. These responses rarely fit neatly into categories of either compliance or resistance. Instead, they often reflected attempts to balance personal aspirations with family relationships. This was particularly visible in decisions around education, marriage, and social interaction, where daughters negotiated boundaries rather than openly challenging authority.

As someone embedded within similar cultural logics, I recognised these acts not as insignificant, but as meaningful negotiations that reflect the constraints within which agency operates. I interpret these actions as patriarchal bargains and forms of everyday resistance, through which daughters maintain belonging while subtly reshaping expectations (Kandiyoti, 1988; Rajeha & Gold, 1994). Rather than rejecting patriarchy outright, participants work within its limits, adjusting their behaviour in ways that preserve honour while creating space for individual agency. For instance, several participants described delaying marriage, selectively disclosing relationships, or reframing their choices in ways that aligned with parental expectations (explored in the following themes). These actions do not disrupt the structure of patriarchy in overt ways, but they destabilise its taken-for-granted authority by subtly reworking the terms of daughterhood. In this sense, as discussed in Chapter 2, resistance is understood as relational, partial, and context-specific.

Overall, the women's accounts suggest that being an "honourable daughter" involved much more than simply following rules. Participants described a complex set of expectations surrounding respect, reputation, family responsibility, and belonging. At the same time, the meanings attached to honour were not fixed. The following sections explore how these expectations were lived and negotiated through marriage, domesticity, and dress, demonstrating the different ways honour became meaningful within everyday family life.

5.3 Marriage and Family Honour

Marriage featured prominently in participants' discussions of honour and family reputation. Across the interviews, women frequently connected marriage decisions to wider concerns about family relationships, parental expectations, and maintaining respect within kinship networks.

Previous research has highlighted the importance of marriage within Pakistani family life, particularly in maintaining kinship ties, family relationships, and cultural continuity (Shaw, 2000). Shaw (2000) also notes the continuing preference for cousin marriage and marriage within the *biraderi* in some families. Similar ideas

appeared in participants' accounts, where marriage was often discussed not only in terms of compatibility between two individuals but also in relation to wider family obligations and relationships.

When discussing marriage patterns within her family, Safoora explained that her older brother and sister had both married their cousins because this was what their parents wanted: "They like to keep it in the family. They just expect that you're going to marry your aunt's or your uncles' son if you're around the same age." A similar expectation appeared in Mariam's account when she spoke about her hopes for her daughter's future marriage: "Our first option for her would be my sister's son. We look to our immediate family before anyone else because we wouldn't want to upset them." Surayah offered a further explanation for this preference: "It's better this way. You understand each other better and you will put up with each other for the sake of your family, because their izzat is our izzat."

My analysis of these accounts highlighted a shared understanding of collective responsibility. Surayah's comment that "their izzat is our izzat" suggested that marriage was often understood as something that affected the wider family rather than simply the couple themselves. Family reputation, family harmony, and existing kinship ties appeared closely intertwined within these narratives, particularly amongst first-generation women. This resonates with Shaw (2006) and Mohammad (2015), who argue that arranged and intra-kin marriages are often understood as ways of preserving trust and strengthening family connections. At the same time, some accounts hinted at the personal compromises that such arrangements could involve, particularly where daughters felt responsible for meeting family expectations or maintaining family harmony (as discussed in Chapter 4 under relational and emotional burden).

Concerns about honour became especially visible when participants discussed love marriage. Across several interviews, love marriage was contrasted with arranged marriage and was often associated with uncertainty, risk, or unwanted attention from the community. Raheela, for example, remarked that: "Girls who marry their choice don't care for their father's honour."

As someone familiar with these cultural narratives, I recognised the connection being drawn between marriage decisions and family reputation. Rather than seeing marriage as a purely individual choice, participants often described it as having consequences for parents, siblings, and the wider family.

During my analysis, it became apparent that concern did not centre solely on the marriage itself, but also on how the relationship was believed to have developed. Several participants associated love marriage with the possibility of unsupervised contact between men and women before marriage, which they viewed as morally problematic.

Salma explained: "It must mean that she's met with a guy, has probably done stuff with him, like, sexual stuff she shouldn't be doing and basically taken advantage of the freedom that was given to her." Similarly, Hafsah commented: "People will talk about you and question how you met each other. Obviously if you're in love with each other that means you've been meeting each other and that's seen as bad because you could've been up to all sorts, you know what I mean."

In developing this analysis, I became interested in how honour appeared to be tied not only to the outcome of marriage, but also to the perceived pathway leading to it. These accounts suggest that concerns surrounding love marriage were often connected to assumptions about sexuality, morality, and appropriate behaviour before marriage. This reading is consistent with Gill's (2006) observations that family concerns about honour frequently extend to questions of sexuality, reputation, and marriage choice.

Several participants also described how concerns about marriage influenced daughters' everyday opportunities and freedoms. References to education, employment, socialising, and meeting potential partners frequently appeared alongside discussions of family reputation and marriage. During analysis, I found that participants often linked these issues to family worries about future relationships and the possibility of a love marriage. In this sense, restrictions were

often explained not only in terms of immediate behaviour, but also in relation to anticipated future consequences.

These concerns appeared across several interviews when participants discussed daughters' education, employment, and mobility. Fameeda suggested that girls who "go out" or "earn their own money" were more likely to have love marriages, reflecting a belief that greater independence could increase opportunities to form relationships outside family approval. Samiya made a similar connection when discussing her preference for girls-only education (Figure 15), explaining that: "if you're in a girls-only college you're less likely to meet boys, so you're less likely to have a boyfriend", suggesting that educational choices were sometimes viewed through concerns about relationships and family reputation. Hira's account also touched on these issues when she described having to reassure her father that she would be "sensible" if allowed to attend university (discussed in the previous chapter). Although these participants were discussing different situations, their accounts frequently linked daughters' access to education, work, and public life with wider anxieties about marriage, relationships, and honour. These accounts suggest that opportunities for autonomy were often interpreted in relation to their potential consequences, particularly where families worried that greater independence might lead daughters to make choices outside established expectations.

At the same time, participants frequently drew distinctions between cultural expectations and religious teachings within these accounts. Several women argued that while Islam discourages premarital sexual relationships, it does not prohibit individuals from choosing their own spouse. Teachings from the Quran warn against pre-marital sexual relationships, describing them as acts of *zina*⁷: "*And do not approach unlawful sexual intercourse. Indeed, it is ever an immorality and is evil as a way*" (Quran, Chapter 17, Verse 32). However, participants often pointed out that choosing one's marriage partner was not understood as sinful within Islamic teachings. Some referred to the *Hadith*⁸ in which the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is

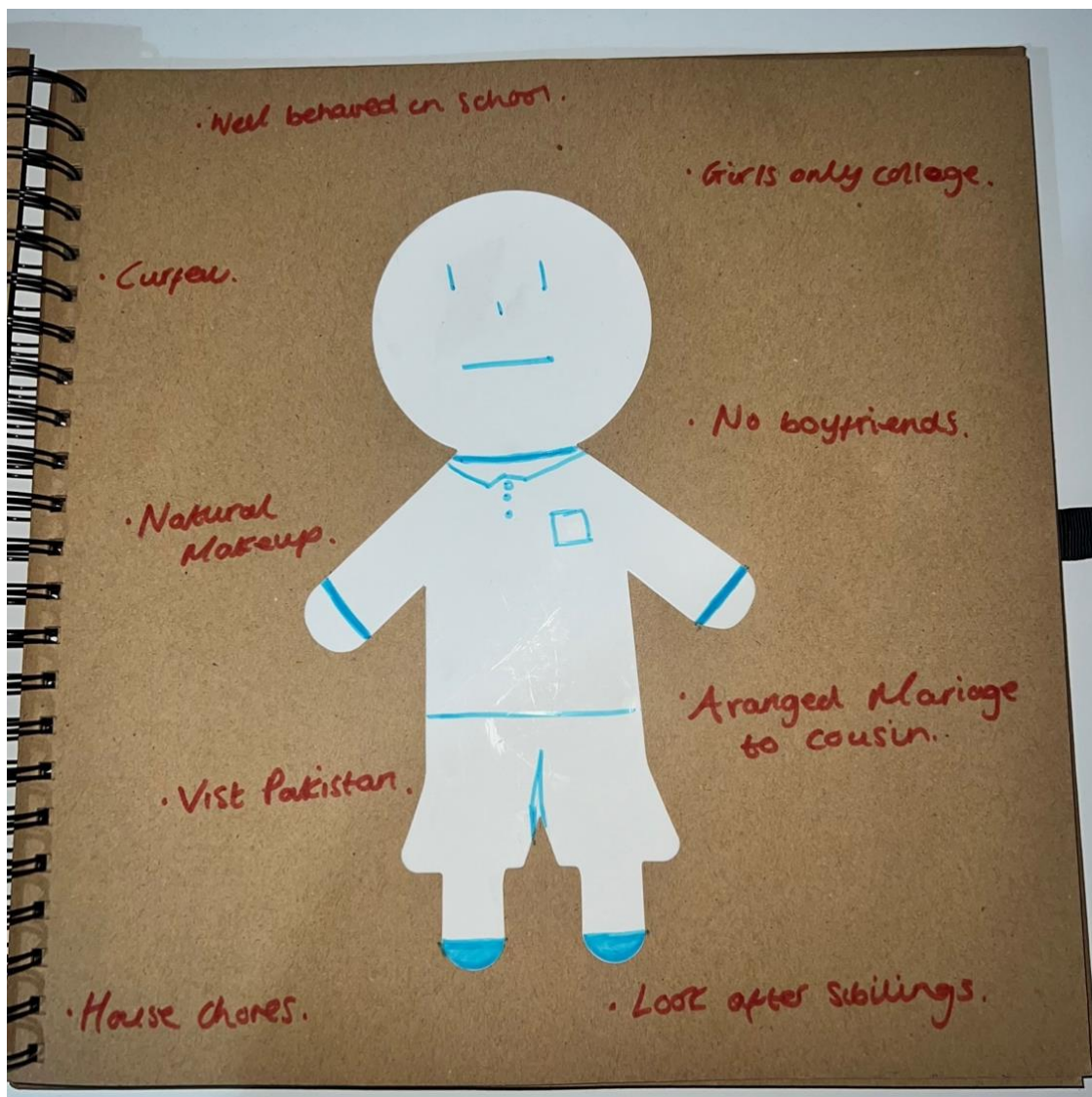
⁷ Zina is an Islamic legal term, meaning illicit sexual relations.

⁸ Hadith refers to the collected sayings and practices of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

reported to have said, *"There is nothing like marriage, for the two who love one another"* (Sunan⁹, 1952).

Samiya drew on these understandings while creating her image below (Figure 15). Discussing attitudes towards romantic relationships, she explained: "It's not permitted in Islam to have boyfriends and girlfriends, that's why. If you like someone then you should get married before you do anything wrong. So technically, they're not wrong."

Figure 15: Samiya's collage of a Pakistani daughter



⁹ A collection of hadiths

The phrases included in Samiya's collage reflected many of the expectations that appeared elsewhere in participants' accounts, including ideas about gender segregation, relationships, family duties, and appropriate behaviour. For example, she included phrases such as "no boyfriend" and "girls only college". When asked about these, she explained: "Well if you're in a girls-only college you're less likely to meet boys, so you're less likely to have a boyfriend. That's why its encouraged, because it saves you from that sin."

When analysing Samiya's image, I noted that rather than framing these expectations solely as controlling, she often framed them through ideas of morality, protection, and religious responsibility. This was also reflected in her observation that: "We might not like these things, but I think it's good for us in some ways. Especially if it means you won't be sinning. We should understand that." What interested me here was that while Samiya acknowledged that some expectations could feel restrictive, she also understood them as meaningful within her religious worldview. Her narrative highlights the importance of taking seriously the moral frameworks participants themselves drew upon when making sense of family expectations rather than assuming straightforward resistance or acceptance.

Alongside these accounts, several participants drew explicitly on religious knowledge to question cultural expectations surrounding marriage. Waheeda, for example, argued that: "There's nothing wrong in it [love marriage]. Islam allows it so why should anyone have an issue with it?" Similarly, Sana (3rd generation, 15–18) explained: "They can't force you. In Islam that marriage doesn't count [forced marriage]. We have a choice if we want to or not but obviously our culture says something else."

Shanaz (3rd generation, 19–25) also expressed a preference for choosing her own partner: "My preference would be a love marriage as well. I think the bond is just different." Likewise, Hira framed marriage as a personal decision: "It's my life. I'm going to be spending the rest of my life with that man, not my parents, so I should get to decide who it's going to be." Hafsah similarly reflected on changing attitudes

towards marriage: "We're living in the 21st century, its normal now. Everyone's having love marriages, I don't see what's wrong with it as long as they're happy."

These accounts suggest that participants did not all understand marriage through the same moral framework. While some emphasised family involvement and collective responsibility, others drew on religion to support greater personal choice. Younger participants were often less concerned with maintaining established kinship arrangements and emphasised compatibility, personal choice, and shared values. This suggests that while kinship continues to play an important role in marital decision-making, the forms through which family continuity is maintained may be changing.

While support for family involvement in marriage remained important for many participants, accounts from younger women also pointed towards changing attitudes to partner choice. Several participants described love marriage as increasingly common and socially accepted, even where earlier generations viewed it more negatively. This was particularly evident in discussions of the importance of emotional connection within marriage. These accounts suggest a shift in how marital decisions are negotiated, with greater expectation that daughters should have a voice in the process.

Despite these assertions of choice, participants' accounts also highlighted the limits of individual decision-making within family relationships. Several women described agreeing to decisions they were uncertain about because of the potential impact on parents and wider family relationships. Samiya reflected that: "you just have to trust them... even if you're not sure it's right for you"

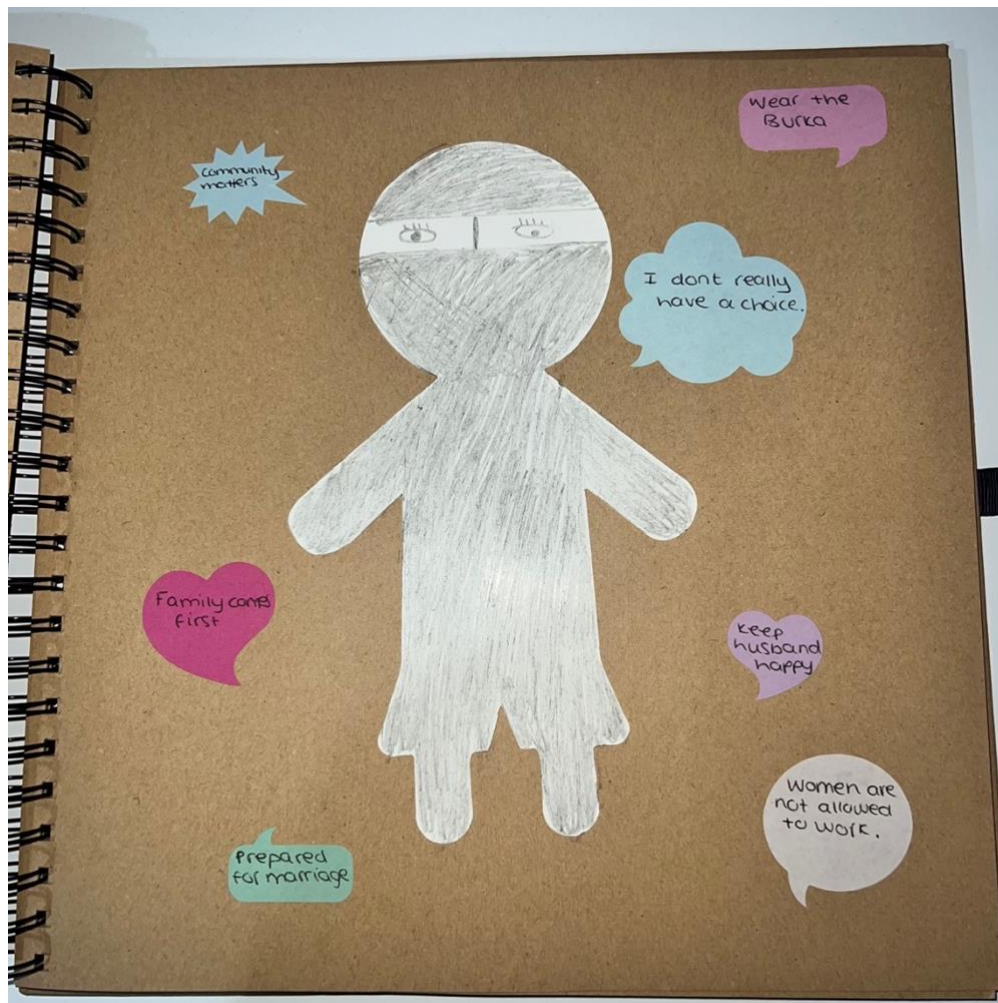
Her account suggests that agreement was not always straightforward or wholehearted. Instead, decisions about marriage often involved balancing personal preferences with trust in parents' judgement and the desire to maintain family harmony, as seen in Chapter 4.

For some participants, the emotional dimensions of this process were more explicit. Waheeda described feeling “emotionally blackmailed” (see Figure 16) into accepting her father's choice of spouse. Although she ultimately agreed to the marriage, her account highlights the emotional pressures that could accompany family involvement in marital decision-making. By contrast, as noted above, Sana spoke about the issue through a religious lens, when she said: “They can’t force you. In Islam that marriage doesn’t count¹⁰ [forced marriage]”.

When reflecting on these accounts, I noted that spaces existed between agreement and refusal. Participants often described finding ways to delay decisions, express hesitation, seek reassurance, or draw on alternative sources of authority, particularly religious knowledge. From my own experience as a Pakistani daughter, I recognised that responses such as “yes”, “later”, or “we’ll see” could carry meanings beyond simple acceptance. These accounts highlight the various ways women attempted to navigate family expectations while preserving important relationships. This interpretation resonates with Kandiyoti's (1988) discussion of patriarchal bargains and Raheja and Gold's (1994) work on everyday forms of resistance, both of which draw attention to the complex ways women respond to unequal social arrangements.

¹⁰ *In Islam, a forced marriage is not considered valid.*

Figure 16: Waheeda's collage of a Pakistani daughter



The gendered irregularity of these expectations further reinforces the centrality of daughters to honour. Participants repeatedly contrasted the relative freedom afforded to sons with the stricter regulation of daughters. Salma's observation that: "Boys can do what they like. It's not so bad if he brings a girl home, as long as he gets married and settles down. But for girls it's unacceptable. It means she's had a boyfriend or whatever and messed around", and Shanaz's statement that: "It's normal if a guy does it, cos he's a man and that's what they do. They're allowed to have love marriages, and they get to make their own decisions", illustrates how patriarchy operates through differentiated moral expectations, positioning daughters as primary bearers of family reputation. It is important to note here that this preferential treatment for sons exists despite the religious teachings being the same

for men and women in Islam regarding pre-marital relationships. In this sense, concerns about marriage were not only about relationships themselves, but also about whose choices were viewed as acceptable and whose required closer regulation.

Arranged marriages were discussed by women from all three generations, but participants varied considerably in how they understood and evaluated it. When reflecting on her own marriage, Balkees explained that her father had arranged her marriage to a neighbour's son who was also a relative. She recalled finding out the day before that she would be married the following day and stated that she had no objections because: "It's not in the nature of a daughter to make these decisions. That's for her elders to decide." Similarly, Surayah reflected: "There was no such thing in our days. Our fathers and uncles made the decisions for us, we didn't get a say. Nowadays there's too much freedom. They go out, they work, they meet with men. That's not what daughters did in our days."

For women such as Balkees and Surayah, arranged marriage was often described as the expected and ordinary route into marriage rather than as one option among many. It is worth noting again here that this marital expectation did not seem to apply to men. It is also important to note that all first- and second-generation participants in this study were married in Pakistan. Their experiences therefore reflect particular social, cultural, and historical contexts that may differ from those British Pakistani women who married in the UK. This can be seen in their accounts that reveal an awareness of change, particularly in relation to education, employment, and opportunities for social interaction that younger women now experience. This does not diminish the significance of their accounts, but it does remind us that understandings of marriage are shaped by both generation and context. This is also illustrative of how certain cultural expectations do not always transcend space and place, as well as time and generations. These themes of continuity and change in attitudes and experiences are explored in further detail in the next chapter.

Overall, this theme suggests that marriage was often described as involving more than individual preference, carrying implications for family relationships, reputation, and belonging. At the same time, participants' accounts reveal considerable variation in how these expectations were understood. Some emphasised trust in parental judgement, others drew on religion to support greater personal choice, and many occupied positions somewhere in between. Rather than presenting marriage as a fixed site of either control or freedom, my analysis points to the ongoing ways daughters make sense of, respond to, and occasionally question expectations surrounding honour and family life.

The accounts presented here suggest that honour was not only attached to whom daughters married, but also to the ways in which those decisions were made and justified. Marriage therefore became an important site through which ideas about obedience, family responsibility, reputation, and personal choice intersected. These same concerns resurfaced in participants' discussions of domestic life, where honour was similarly expressed and evaluated through everyday practices and expectations.

5.4 Domesticity and Respectability

Across the interviews, participants frequently linked daughterhood to cooking, cleaning, caregiving, and household responsibility. References to “learning to cook”, “helping at home”, “housework before study”, and “preparing for marriage” appeared repeatedly across the dataset. As I moved between interviews, I became interested in how domestic skills were rarely discussed as practical abilities alone. Instead, participants often described them as important qualities of a good daughter, future wife, and daughter-in-law.

Many women recalled being introduced to these expectations from an early age. Domestic responsibilities were frequently described as part of everyday family life and were often connected to future marriage. The women's accounts suggested that domestic labour was not optional, but a necessary condition for being recognised as respectable and marriageable. I interpreted domesticity to operate as a key mechanism through which honour is both produced and evaluated.

Neelam reflected on learning household tasks alongside her mother and described how these responsibilities shaped her daily routine:

“My mum would make me stand in the kitchen and watch her cook and slowly, slowly I picked it up and started cooking here and there. I would come home from school, and I’d have to Hoover the house, wash the dishes, dry them, do the ironing, everything. And then I’d stay up late in the night to do my homework. I never submitted my work on time, but my teachers were understanding and gave me more time. It was really hard, like I had no time for myself, and my mum would always say stuff like, you need to learn these things otherwise they’re [in-laws] going to send you back the next day.”

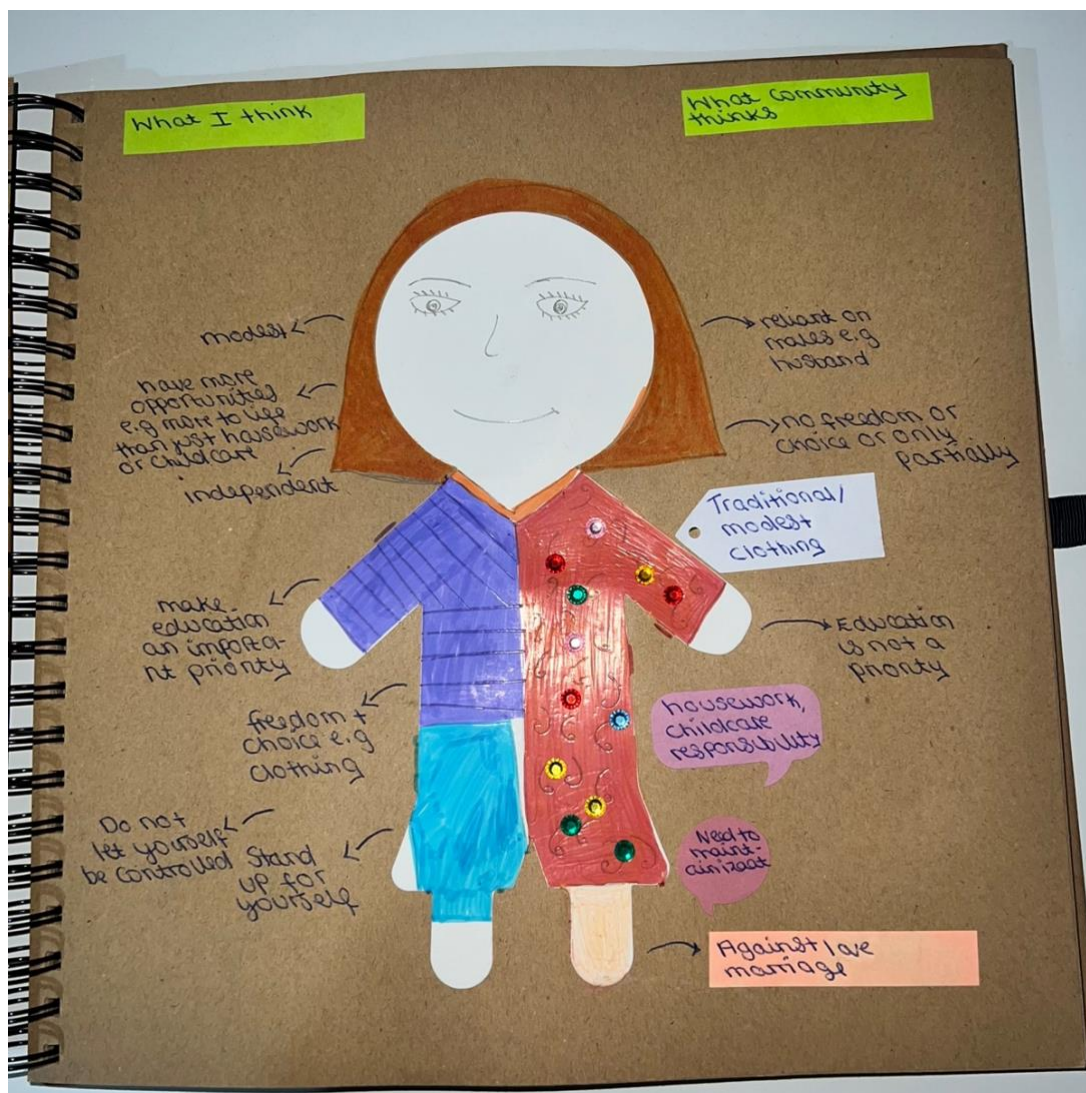
In analysing Neelam’s account, I noticed how concerns about marriage, family reputation, and future in-law relationships were woven into everyday practices. Like several other participants, Neelam described household skills as something daughters needed in order to avoid criticism and demonstrate that they had been raised correctly. As a Pakistani woman, I immediately understood the reference to being “sent back” as being returned to one’s parental home following difficulties in marriage. This led me to think more carefully about how expectations directed at daughters often extended beyond the natal family and into anticipated future relationships with in-laws.

Neelam’s account also highlighted tensions between competing expectations. Although education was clearly important to her, domestic responsibilities often took priority. This tension was reflected again in her collage (see Figure 17), where she contrasted her own aspirations with what she felt were wider community expectations. Reflecting on her experiences, she explained:

“I wish I had pursued my education. It was something I was so passionate about but could never make it my priority because of what was expected from me. And now I’m a wife and a mother so I don’t think I’ll ever do it. I wish our people gave it more importance.”

Neelam's account resonates with Basit's (1997) findings, which highlight how British Muslim girls often navigate competing expectations surrounding education, family responsibilities, and future roles within the family. Neelam's collage drew my attention to the gap between the opportunities she wanted for herself and the qualities she felt were valued by her community. Expectations about daughterhood appeared to be connected not only to individual behaviour but also to broader concerns about family reputation and respectability, a pattern noted in previous work on honour and gender within South Asian families (Moghadam, 1992).

Figure 17: Neelam's collage of a Pakistani daughter



Expectations surrounding domestic competence also appeared across generations and family positions. Women spoke about learning these skills from mothers and grandmothers, while mothers and mothers-in-law described passing similar expectations on to younger women. Kudsia recalled being disciplined for household mistakes as a child: "My mother would slap me on my wrists if I didn't wash the dishes properly and she would shout at me if my roti¹¹ wasn't perfectly round." Later in life, she described expecting daughters-in-law to be able to "take care of a home" and provide "sahulut¹²" for their husbands and extended family. Similarly, Sana explained: "If you don't know how to do these things then your in-laws will be like, didn't your mother teach you anything? It's embarrassing and makes them look bad. If you know how to cook and clean then you're fit to be a wife and a daughter-in-law, because that's what you're expected to do for them."

Rather than viewing these accounts as evidence that women simply reproduced patriarchal expectations, I noted how domestic competence was closely associated with family reputation, preparedness for marriage, and avoiding criticism from others. Mariam's account further illustrates this point. Reflecting on the advice she gave her daughters, she explained:

"I always tell my daughters what my mother told me, that your izzat lies in your ability to look after the men and children in your home. If they are pleased with you then you will do well. All this studying and working comes second."

Discussing her daughter-in-law, she added: "As long as my daughter-in-law is keeping my son happy and looks after the home then I am happy. But these days women want to work and make money like the men, and then their home-life suffers."

What interested me about Mariam's account was the way domestic care became intertwined with ideas of honour and familial success. Looking after others was not presented simply as a practical task but as something closely connected to being

¹¹ Roti is a round flatbread native to South Asian countries, sometimes referred to as Chapati or Naan.

¹² Meaning ease, help, or facilitate.

respected as a wife, daughter, or daughter-in-law. Fraser's (2013) discussion of social reproduction is useful here, as it draws attention to the ways care and family maintenance often become understood as women's responsibilities. At the same time, Mariam's comments reveal tensions surrounding changing expectations for women, particularly in relation to education and employment.

These accounts highlight how expectations surrounding domestic competence were passed between generations. Mothers and grandmothers frequently drew on their own experiences when teaching daughters and daughters-in-law about cooking, cleaning, and caring for others. Rather than viewing these practices simply as the reproduction of unequal gender relations, participants often described them through concerns about marriage, family reputation, and preparing younger women for what they believed would be expected of them. This interpretation is broadly consistent with Habiba et al. (2016) and Nazish (2018), who highlight the important role women play in transmitting gendered expectations through family relationships.

Domestic expectations were also reflected in the symbolic objects participants brought to represent daughterhood. Rolling pins, chapati baskets, oven gloves, and references to the "perfect" roti appeared repeatedly. Jameela joked that: "If your roti ain't round then you're not good in the kitchen." Although humorous, comments such as this appeared across several interviews and suggested a shared cultural understanding of cooking as an indicator of competence within Pakistani families. Waheeda similarly recalled South Asian boys teasing girls at school by claiming nobody would marry them if their rotis were not round. She also remembered her mother teaching her to perfect her rotis because she would eventually need to cook for her husband and his family. These examples suggest that domestic skills were often linked to wider ideas about marriageability and social value, extending beyond the home into peer relationships and community expectations. Although cooking-related objects appeared across a number of interviews, participants attached different meanings to them. For some women they represented competence, care, and family life, while for others they symbolised expectations surrounding marriage, domestic labour, and gender roles. This variation highlights the importance of

understanding these objects through participants' own interpretations rather than assuming a shared meaning.

At the same time, younger participants were often more explicit in questioning the fairness of these arrangements. References to unequal divisions of labour appeared regularly, particularly among second- and third-generation women. Shanaz described how men were often prioritised at mealtimes: "The men eat first, and they get the best food as well. My mum will take out the nicest pieces of meat from the curry and put them aside for my dad and brothers and then we will eat whatever's left over. I don't know why they do that, as if they're more deserving of nicer things."

Similarly, Sana expressed frustration at assumptions that women should continue caring for others regardless of their own responsibilities: "It's always, oh my god! quick feed the men and don't make them wait, and oh my god! my son likes this, let me make this for him... We come from uni or work as well, and we do everything else on top, but we don't get that treatment."

These accounts point towards growing awareness of unequal expectations surrounding domestic labour. Participants often described the challenge of balancing changing aspirations with enduring expectations. However, as illustrated across the chapter, the ability to challenge these expectations was shaped by the continued importance of honour and the potential consequences of non-compliance.

Reflecting on these interviews, I was conscious that many of the practices participants described felt familiar to me. This familiarity required me to continually step back and consider aspects of family life that might otherwise appear ordinary or unremarkable. Doing so helped me recognise how everyday activities such as cooking, serving food, and completing housework carried meanings that extended beyond the tasks themselves.

Domesticity remained an important way through which ideas about respectability, preparedness for marriage, and family reputation were communicated. Participants did not always agree on the value or fairness of these expectations, but domestic competence continued to be widely associated with being a good daughter and a

suitable future wife. The following section shifts attention from what daughters do within the home to how honour is communicated through appearance, exploring the role of dress in shaping perceptions of honour.

5.5 Dress, Modesty and Belonging

Across participants' interviews and visual images, my analysis suggested that dress was about more than appearance alone. I identified patterns related to clothing, modesty, covering, and *izzat*. Participants often discussed clothing in relation to family reputation, religious values, cultural identity, and appropriate behaviour. This led me to develop a theme focused on the ways honour became visible through dress and appearance.

Feminist and South Asian scholarship provides an important lens for understanding the relationship between dress, honour, and gendered expectations. Yuval-Davis (1997) argues that women are often positioned as symbolic bearers of cultural identity, making their bodies central to the maintenance of social and moral boundaries. In South Asian Muslim contexts, practices such as veiling and modest dress therefore take on heightened significance, functioning as visible markers of female respectability and family honour (Werbner, 2007). Work on honour further demonstrates how women's behaviour and appearance are regulated within patriarchal systems in order to maintain community reputation (Idriss & Abbas, 2010). These studies provide a useful context for understanding participants' accounts, although women often described these expectations in diverse and sometimes contradictory ways.

One of the clearest patterns concerned the importance of modest dress. Many participants associated particular styles of clothing with respectability, cultural continuity, and appropriate femininity. The shalwar kameez¹³ featured prominently within these discussions.

¹³ Shalwar Kameez is a traditional outfit worn in South Asian countries which consists of loose-fitting trousers and a long tunic that is usually thigh or knee length.

Several women from first-generations explained that they never knew what clothes other than Shalwar Kameez were until they moved to the UK and saw non-Pakistani women dress the way they did. For example, Farah (1st generation 71-76) explained: "In Pakistan that's all we knew and even here that's all we've ever worn. We didn't change our traditions because these are the clothes of our people. But these days girls don't care about that. They're dressing just like the goriya¹⁴."

Farah's account highlights the ways clothing was linked to both cultural identity and generational change as she connected clothing to belonging, continuity, and ideas about what it meant to remain connected to Pakistani culture. Similar concerns appeared elsewhere in the data, particularly when participants contrasted traditional forms of dress with styles they associated with Western femininity. These contrasts were particularly visible in Aisha's collage (Figure 18), in which she described a Pakistani daughter wearing high heels, a fitted top, make-up, and no Hijab. Discussing the image, Aisha explained that girls who dressed in this way were often viewed negatively within the community and compared to White girls. She reflected: "The more you dress like them [White girls] the more you're seen as modern and azaad (free) and the more people will talk bad about you."

When analysing this account, I was careful not to assume that references to "White girls" reflected simple opposition between cultures. Instead, I noted how similar to Skeggs' (1997) discussion of respectability, appearance was linked to moral judgements about character and family upbringing.

¹⁴ Goriya, Gori or Goris meaning fair-skinned women or woman in Punjabi and more commonly used to refer to non-Pakistani women, more specifically White women.

Figure 18: Aisha's collage of a Pakistani daughter



Several participants also described how expectations surrounding dress were reinforced within the home. Khadija recalled her mother's disapproval when clothing was considered inappropriate, explaining that she was often reminded that: "people will think you're shameless." Across interviews, comments such as these suggested that clothing was frequently evaluated through anticipated reactions from others, particularly relatives and members of the wider community.

Participants also frequently connected dress to religion. References to covering, modesty, and appropriate appearance appeared across generations, however some women emphasised religious commitment, whilst others focused on respect, family

expectations, or cultural traditions, particularly in relation to male relatives within the home.

As a Muslim Pakistani daughter, I recognise that modesty practices are often framed in terms of care, religious appropriateness and respect, rather than as forms of control. This required reflexive attention to how familiar understandings of modesty might obscure their regulatory effects. For example, Rabia's description of covering "immediately out of respect" and avoiding visibility in front of male relatives illustrates how modesty operates as a socially enforced expectation, rather than solely a personal or religious choice.

Importantly, participants' accounts referenced expectations to cover in front of fathers and brothers, which exceeds Islamic prescriptions regarding mahram¹⁵ relationships. I therefore interpreted these accounts as demonstrating the entanglement of religious and cultural expectations, where distinctions between the two become blurred yet continue to shape how appropriate femininity is understood and enacted.

Dress also functioned as a site of diasporic identity work, where maintaining Pakistani cultural practices became central to the reproduction of honour across space. Bushra's account of wearing shalwar kameez even while sleeping and layering additional clothing when leaving the house illustrates how modesty becomes embedded in everyday routines. She said:

"I even wore it to sleep, there was no such a thing as pyjamas. I wouldn't dare to walk past my dad in a t-shirt. I never owned a pair of jeans or anything like that. It was always a kameez at home and long coats on top when going out".

It's interesting that even within the privacy of her own bedroom, Bushra dressed in her traditional clothes and that she did not have any other types of clothes available to her, due to the expectations on how a daughter is to dress. This can be seen to

¹⁵ In Islam a Mahram is a person who you cannot marry because of your family relationships. This includes close family members like parents, siblings and children. The concept of mahram is important for maintaining modesty and guiding how men and women interact with each other.

be reflected in her collage (Figure 19) where she depicts a Pakistani daughter who wears traditional clothes and is expected to be modest. She mentions wearing long coats over her clothes when outside the home. This suggests that despite the Shalwar kameez being traditionally modest and loose fitted, there was an expectation on Bushra to have a further layer of modesty when out in public. I interpret this layering not as static adherence, but as a modified system of regulation, where the degree of bodily visibility intensifies in public spaces.

Figure 19: Bushra's collage of a Pakistani daughter



Similarly, several younger participants described adapting their dress according to context. Aisha's account of dressing modestly at home but changing outside illustrates how daughters actively negotiate expectations in context. She explained how she would dress to please her family at home, but when going out with friends she would dress how she liked. She said: "if I have to go out, I'll check to see if my dad is home or then I'll quickly run out the door before anyone can see me cos I know I'll get shouted at". However, her need to monitor her movements "in case someone sees" highlights how honour continues to operate through surveillance even in the absence of direct control.

Participant accounts further demonstrated how daughters negotiate competing expectations across institutional and familial contexts. My analysis suggested that these negotiations became more varied among third-generation participants, who described more flexible engagements with dress. Participants described modifying school uniforms or layering garments to meet both institutional requirements and family expectations. For example, Hafsa talked about her experiences of high school, and how she was not allowed to wear the standard school uniform. She explained that her mother would sew her a shalwar kameez which matched the colour of the school uniform: "Us girls would all be in our black shalwar kameez and we'd wear the school jumper on top. We weren't allowed to wear the normal shirts and trousers. I remember before my school year started my mum would sew me a new black one."

Similarly, Neelam described how she was expected to wear a shalwar kameez to school and how the school expected them to incorporate the school logo into their clothing: "I remember the teachers saying we had to have the logo somewhere on our clothes, so some of us would wear the jumper on top and some girls had the school logo sewn onto their kameez." These accounts illustrate how daughters actively navigate multiple systems of authority while maintaining an appearance of honourable femininity and daughterhood. My findings echo Dwyer's (2000) qualitative study of young British Pakistani Muslim women, in which she highlights how expectations surrounding family honour (*izzat*), community scrutiny, and wider

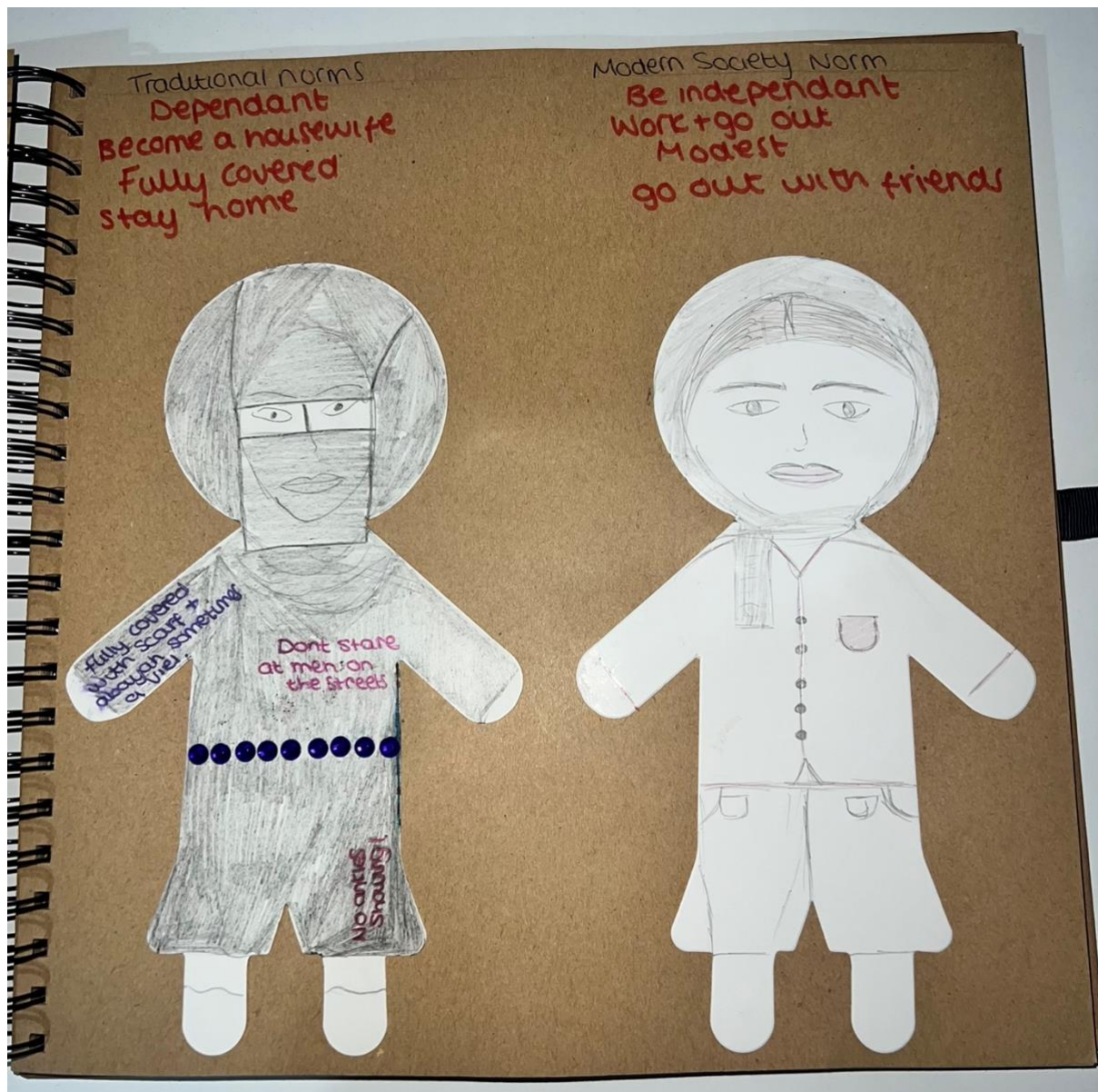
social stereotypes shape young women's everyday experiences, including decisions about dress, friendships, and education.

Participants also described varied engagements with modesty, with some adhering to stricter expectations while others selectively combining traditional and Western styles. For example, Noreen's narrative, accompanying her collage (Figure 20), highlights how expectations are not only generational but unevenly applied. She described being required to adhere to stricter forms of modest dress than her peers and older women: "It's not just the home, but when I go out, I have to cover my face and wear a burqa, and a lot of girls my age don't have to do that. Women older than me don't even do that."

Her collage illustrates a clear contrast between two Pakistani daughters who are dressed differently and imagined to be leading different kinds of lives. Noreen's account complicates any straightforward assumption that expectations surrounding modesty have relaxed over time. While expectations around modest dress appeared across all generations, stricter forms of covering, such as the burqa and face veil, were not described by many of the older women in this study. Noreen herself noted that "women older than me don't even do that". This suggests that modesty expectations do not necessarily become weaker or stronger across generations, but may be applied differently depending on age, family context, and understandings of honour.

One way I interpreted this pattern is that younger women's bodies become more closely associated with family reputation, marriageability, and concerns about sexuality. As a result, greater regulation may be directed towards younger daughters who are perceived as occupying a life stage where honour is considered more vulnerable to scrutiny or potential transgression. In contrast, older married women may no longer be viewed as carrying the same symbolic responsibility in relation to courtship, marriage, and sexual propriety. Rather than reflecting a single, unchanging tradition, participants' accounts point towards the uneven ways modesty expectations are attached to women at different points in the life course.

Figure 20: Noreen's collage of a Pakistani daughter



Some third-generation participants described having greater flexibility in how they dressed, highlighting variation both between and within generation. They explained how they were able to pick between wearing the shalwar kameez or wearing a long skirt with a shirt at school. Safoora said: "It was either the kameez or then a maxi skirt, trousers were just a no go." Within the home, they explained how they wore pyjamas but made sure to wear gowns or cardigans over them to remain modest. Shanaz explained: "I feel naked if I don't have something on top. I just find it embarrassing walking Infront of my dad in short tops, so I'll always have a gown or cardigan on top."

Others explained how they began to wear western clothing without displeasing their parents as long as they appeared modest. Sana explained: "As long as it's not tight and it covers your bum, they're ok with it." Whilst others would "cover up" at home and wear what they liked outside of the home. Aisha talked about how she would dress to please her family at home, but when going out with friends she would dress how she liked. She said: "If I have to go out, I'll check to see if my dad is home or then I'll quickly run out the door before anyone can see me 'cos I know I'll get shouted at".

Shanaz's feeling of being "embarrassed" without additional layers illustrates how modesty ideals become normalised, even where external enforcement is less visible. Similarly, Safoora's account of alternative modest dress options suggests that while forms of expression may shift, the underlying expectation of respectability remains.

In my analysis, I noted how these practices do not openly challenge patriarchal expectations, but they rework the boundaries in subtle and contextually meaningful ways. My positionality shaped how I recognised these practices as significant; as a Pakistani daughter, I understand that presenting differently across spaces or saying "it's just easier this way" can reflect negotiation rather than submission. At the same time, participants' emphasis on respect and consequence reminds me to treat these practices as ambivalent and constrained, where resistance and compliance remain deeply entangled.

These accounts suggest that dress was an important way through which ideas about respectability, modesty, family expectations, and belonging were communicated. However, participants' experiences also demonstrate considerable variation. While some women described adhering to stricter expectations than others, many adapted these expectations in ways that reflected their own circumstances, relationships, and understandings of modesty. In this sense, clothing emerged not simply as a reflection of honour, but as an area in which broader questions about identity, family, religion, and reputation were worked out in everyday life.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter has explored how participants understood honour and how it shaped experiences of daughterhood across generations. Through analysis of participants' accounts, I developed honour as an important framework through which expectations surrounding marriage, domesticity, and dress were understood and evaluated. Across the interviews, honour was understood as a shared cultural framework and also appeared in everyday interactions, family relationships, and ordinary practices that shaped how daughters were expected to behave, present themselves, and relate to others.

One of the key findings of this chapter is that honour was often reproduced through seemingly mundane aspects of everyday life. Marriage decisions, household responsibilities, cooking, clothing, family advice, and concerns about "what will people say?" all emerged as important ways through which ideas about respectability and reputation were maintained. Participants' accounts suggest that honour was not sustained solely through major life events or explicit rules, but through repeated everyday practices that communicated expectations about what it meant to be a good daughter. In this sense, the findings extend existing discussions of honour by demonstrating how it is woven into the routine organisation of family life rather than operating only through moments of conflict or crisis (Metlo, 2012; Fatima, 2019; Keddie, et al., 2019).

A second key finding concerns the relational nature of honour. Across the interviews, expectations were frequently described through the language of care, responsibility, belonging, and family relationships. Participants often explained expectations around marriage, domesticity, and dress in ways that reflected concern for parents, family reputation, and maintaining important relationships. What emerged from these accounts was not simply a story of daughters being controlled, but a more complex picture in which honour was experienced through emotional ties and obligations to others. This highlights the importance of understanding honour as a relational

process that is sustained through family relationships as much as through formal authority (Lyons, 2002).

The findings also point to the varied ways women responded to these expectations. Rather than fitting neatly into categories of either compliance or resistance, many accounts occupied an ambiguous space between the two. Women often sought to balance personal aspirations with family expectations, drawing on different resources, including education, religious knowledge, and changing social attitudes. These responses were frequently shaped by context, family relationships, and concerns about maintaining belonging. As a result, participants' accounts suggest that agency is often exercised within existing relationships and constraints rather than outside them.

The findings presented in this chapter demonstrate that honour remains an important aspect of daughterhood, but that its meanings and effects are neither uniform nor uncontested. Participants shared many common reference points, yet they interpreted and responded to honour in different ways depending on their circumstances, relationships, and generational locations. Honour therefore emerged as something continually interpreted, maintained, questioned, and reshaped through everyday family life. These complexities between continuity and change are explored further in the following chapter.

Chapter 6. Continuity and Change

6.1 Introduction

This chapter examines how expectations associated with burden and honour are experienced and interpreted across three generations of Pakistani women, addressing the central aim of the thesis to explore continuity and change in daughterhood over time. Rather than presenting generations as distinct or fixed categories the analysis considers how shared expectations are reworked in uneven and context-dependent ways, shaped by changing social, cultural, and economic conditions.

The chapter is organised into three main sections; first, second and third generation, each structured around two composite narratives. These accounts of burden and honour, analysed in the previous chapters, were synthesised to produce composite narratives that combine multiple participants' accounts, from the same generations, into a single, coherent narrative form. While the generational structure provides a way of organising the chapter, it does not imply clear or consistent transitions between groups. Instead, patterns of continuity, variation, and tension are evident both within and across generations and this is demonstrated through the use of two composite narratives per generation; the first presenting the normalisation of expectations and the second presenting the alternative interpretations and variations within generations (as discussed in Chapter 3 section 3.15).

Each section begins with an overview of the patterns identified in Chapters 4 and 5 in relation to *Burden* and *Honour*. I then present a composite narrative constructed from the accounts of women within the same generation. Presented in the third person, these narratives bring together shared experiences and meanings while preserving participant anonymity and the contextual richness of their accounts (Wertz et al., 2011; Willis, 2018; Johnston, 2024). Each narrative is followed by an analytic discussion that examines the ways burden and honour are reproduced, negotiated or reinterpreted within that generation. The section concludes by considering what these patterns suggest about continuity and change across

generations, enabling me to address the central research aims and question of the thesis.

For first-generation women, the chapter considers how burden and honour are reproduced through family relationships and gendered access to religious knowledge. It then examines how second-generation women negotiate these expectations in relation to employment and divorce within changing migratory and social contexts. Finally, it explores how third-generation women reinterpret burden and honour through their engagement with religion, education, and work. In doing so, this chapter highlights both continuity and change, showing how expectations are maintained, adapted, and reworked in diverse and often uneven ways across and within generations.

6.2 First-generation Pakistani women: sustaining expectations of burden and honour

Across first-generation women's accounts, expectations associated with burden and honour were widely recognised and often understood as part of everyday family life. Participants described responsibility, obedience and endurance as central features of daughterhood, shaping their relationships with parents, husbands, in-laws and the wider community. These expectations were rarely presented as matters of individual choice. Instead, women often described them as shared responsibilities that were collectively maintained within family and kinship networks.

Burden was closely linked to expectations that daughters would contribute to family wellbeing, undertake domestic labour and prioritise the needs of others. At the same time, honour influenced how women's behaviour was judged, particularly in relation to marriage, modesty and family reputation. Together, these expectations shaped how participants understood their roles within the family and wider community.

Many women spoke about the challenges associated with these expectations, including unequal relationships, emotional strain and experiences of hardship. However, such experiences were often described as ordinary aspects of family life.

Endurance and sacrifice were commonly understood as part of fulfilling responsibilities within marriage and protecting family honour. This echoes research which suggests that expectations of respectability and family cohesion can make it difficult for women to openly challenge these conditions (Hassouneh-Phillips, 2003; Hadi, 2017).

Participants also described how these expectations were reinforced through everyday family relationships. Alongside male authority, mothers and mothers-in-law played important roles in passing on ideas about responsibility, endurance and respectability, reflecting the findings of Nazish (2018) and Habiba et al. (2016). In this way, burden and honour were reproduced not only through broader patriarchal structures but also through routine family practices and relationships.

A notable feature of first-generation women's accounts was that many of these expectations were formed in Pakistan and continued to shape their lives following migration to the UK. Although migration introduced new social contexts, participants often described continuity in how family roles and responsibilities were understood. At the same time, some reflected on these expectations when comparing their experiences with those of younger generations.

6.2.1 Reproducing responsibility & endurance within family relationships

Participants' accounts suggest that expectations associated with burden and honour were often reproduced across the life course. As women moved from daughters to wives, mothers and mothers-in-law, their responsibilities and family roles changed, but the broader expectations surrounding duty, sacrifice and respectability frequently remained. The composite narrative of *Safia* brings together these shared experiences. Drawing on participants' accounts of growing up in Pakistan, entering marriage, managing family responsibilities and later relationships with younger women, the narrative illustrates how expectations associated with burden and honour could be carried across different stages of family life.

Composite Narrative: Safia

In a small village in Punjab, Pakistan, a daughter is born. Her cries at birth bring both smiles of joy and quiet sighs. They name her Safia. Safia is born into a family already burdened by poverty and dreams of a better life. She enters a world where sons are celebrated because they are believed to hold the potential to improve the family's circumstances. From an early age, expectations about her future are already in place.

Safia grows up knowing her place within the family. She becomes proficient in cooking and cleaning as she shadows her mother each day, helping to keep the household running smoothly. Her mother embraces her as she kneads the perfect dough for her father's rotis. Her father praises her as she finishes sweeping the floors. She learns early that being a good daughter means helping others and fulfilling family responsibilities. "You must learn, otherwise nobody will want you", her mother tells her. Marriage is presented as an important part of her future, and her father's house becomes the place where she learns the skills she is expected to carry into married life.

As she grows older, new expectations follow. She is expected to remain within the boundaries set by her family, obey her parents and prepare for marriage. Eventually, Safia's parents choose a husband for her. With the support of both families, she marries the son of her paternal uncle. Her honeymoon period is short-lived when her husband migrates to the UK in search of work, leaving his new bride and unborn child behind.

The early years of marriage are difficult. Safia lives with her mother-in-law, who closely supervises her work within the home and rarely expresses satisfaction with her efforts. At the same time, Safia has little contact with her husband and worries about raising her child alone.

When the day finally comes, Safia holds her newborn son in her arms for the first time. Women from the village visit the family with gifts of sweets and congratulations. Her mother-in-law welcomes neighbours and friends into the home,

delighted by the news. For the first time, Safia finds herself at the centre of the celebrations. She is praised for giving birth to a son and thanked for bringing happiness to the family.

Safia had never experienced such attention before. As she looks into the eyes of her newborn son, she feels a sense of relief. Holding him close, she whispers, "thank you God, thank you for giving me a son."

The years pass. One child becomes three, and eventually the news arrives that Safia and her children will be joining her husband in the UK. As she steps off the plane and onto British soil, she is overcome by different emotions. She feels excitement about beginning a new chapter of her life, nervousness about living in an unfamiliar country, and sadness at leaving behind everything she knows in Pakistan.

As Safia settles into life in the UK, she becomes part of a community of Pakistani women who have also migrated to join their husbands. Despite this, she often misses her family and village life in Pakistan. She longs to see her mother's face and hear the sounds of everyday life back home.

Over time, Safia begins to find comfort in familiar routines. She hosts gatherings for other women in her community. Together they share meals, exchange stories and laugh about memories from home. Through these friendships, she gradually feels less alone.

As her children grow older, Safia returns to Pakistan to begin searching for a suitable wife for her eldest son. She does not have to look far. She believes her niece would be a good match, and arrangements for the marriage soon begin. Following the wedding celebrations, Safia welcomes her new daughter-in-law into the family with gifts of gold jewellery and colourful suits.

Life within the household changes once again. Safia pays close attention to how her daughter-in-law carries out household tasks. She is often critical of her cooking and praises her only occasionally. At times, she finds herself competing for her son's attention. She reminds him that she hopes to see grandchildren fill the family home.

"You work so hard, my dear, you deserve a son who will grow up and help you. Someone who will look after you the way you look after us", she says.

As the years continue, Safia finds herself holding many of the same beliefs and expectations that shaped her own life.

Safia's narrative brings together many of the experiences described by first-generation participants and demonstrates how expectations associated with burden and honour shape women's lives across different stages of the life course. As Safia moves from daughter to daughter-in-law, mother and eventually mother-in-law, her responsibilities and position within the family change. However, these transitions do not necessarily free her from the expectations that shaped her earlier experiences. Instead, her story highlights how gendered expectations continue across generations, even when women's roles within the family shift.

One of the clearest patterns in Safia's narrative is the reproduction of responsibility and endurance within family relationships. From childhood, Safia is taught that being a good daughter involves helping others, developing domestic skills and preparing for marriage. Similar accounts appeared across participants' narratives, where women described learning from an early age that daughters were expected to support family life and prioritise the needs of others. These expectations continued after marriage, where women described managing household responsibilities, caring for family members and enduring difficult circumstances as part of their everyday lives.

The narrative also highlights the importance of endurance. Participants frequently described continuing with family responsibilities despite loneliness, marital separation, conflict with in-laws and other challenges. Safia's experiences following her husband's migration, alongside her efforts to navigate relationships within her marital home, reflect patterns evident across many first-generation accounts. Rather than being viewed as exceptional experiences, such difficulties were often understood as part of marriage and family life. Endurance therefore emerged as an

important feature of daughterhood, wifedom and motherhood within participants' accounts.

Honour operates alongside these expectations through the ways women's behaviour, relationships and reproductive roles are evaluated. Safia's narrative illustrates how women's status within the family could be closely connected to marriage and motherhood, particularly the birth of children. This is especially visible following the birth of her son, when she receives praise, recognition and a greater sense of acceptance within her family and community. Similar patterns appeared across participants' accounts, where children, particularly sons, were associated with family continuity, support and social status (Agboatwalla, 2000; Muhammad, 2009). Women's value was therefore often linked not only to what they did for their families, but also to their ability to fulfil socially valued family roles.

Safia's story further demonstrates how burden and honour are reproduced through relationships between women. Earlier chapters highlighted the influence of mothers and mothers-in-law in shaping ideas about responsibility, respectability and family obligations. Safia first experiences these expectations through her relationship with her mother and mother-in-law. Later, as a mother-in-law herself, she occupies a different position within the family and begins to reinforce similar expectations with her own daughter-in-law. This reflects Kandiyoti's (1988) concept of patriarchal bargains, where women may gain authority as they age while remaining within the same broader system of gendered expectations. This also reflects the findings of Habiba et al. (2016), who show how gendered expectations are often reinforced through everyday relationships between women within families. Safia first encounters these expectations through her mother and mother-in-law and later reproduces similar expectations in her relationship with her own daughter-in-law. In this sense, the narrative illustrates how burden and honour are sustained not only through male authority but also through everyday family relationships and practices.

Migration forms another important part of Safia's story. While moving to the United Kingdom introduced a new social and cultural context, it did not necessarily disrupt established understandings of family responsibility, marriage and gendered

expectations. Participants often described carrying these expectations with them after migration, even as they adapted to new surroundings. The friendships and support networks that Safia develops with other Pakistani women reflect the importance of community in helping women navigate migration while maintaining connections to familiar values, relationships and cultural practices.

At the same time, Safia's narrative is not simply a story of continuity. Although many of the expectations present in her childhood remain visible later in life, participants also described moments of reflection when comparing their own experiences with those of younger generations. Migration, changing social conditions and greater opportunities for education all contributed to these reflections. As a result, while first-generation accounts often highlighted continuity, they also pointed to the possibility that expectations surrounding daughterhood, marriage and family life could change over time.

Overall, Safia's narrative illustrates how burden and honour are reproduced across the life course through family relationships, marriage, motherhood and migration. It highlights how responsibility, endurance and respectability remain central to many first-generation women's experiences, while also showing that these expectations are shaped by changing social contexts and are not simply passed on unchanged from one generation to the next.

6.2.2 Access to education, knowledge & religious understanding

First-generation participants' accounts highlighted how access to education and knowledge shaped their understanding of expectations associated with burden and honour. As discussed in Chapter 2 (Section 2.5.1), restrictions on women's education and independence have been identified as important factors in the maintenance of patriarchal social structures in Pakistan. Many of the first-generation women in this study had limited access to formal education and in several cases, could not read or write in Urdu. Combined with economic and social dependence on male family members, these often limited opportunities to access religious texts or engage with religious knowledge independently.

As a result, participants frequently described learning about religion through the interpretations provided by fathers, husbands, brothers and other male relatives. Their accounts suggest that religious understandings were often shaped within family relationships rather than through direct engagement with religious texts. This is significant given that men have traditionally occupied positions of religious authority within many Pakistani communities, influencing how religious teachings are understood and practised. Previous research similarly suggests that women's confinement to the domestic sphere, lower levels of literacy and dependence on male relatives reduced opportunities to engage directly with religious knowledge, while enabling particular interpretations to be transmitted and reinforced through male authority (Dwyer, 2000; Hadi, 2017).

Participants' accounts therefore point to important generational differences in access to education, literacy and religious knowledge. While many first-generation women described limited opportunities to acquire formal education, younger participants generally reported greater access to education and religious texts, creating different possibilities for engaging with and interpreting religious teachings.

In this context, burden operated not only through expectations of care, obedience and responsibility, but also through unequal access to educational and religious resources. The composite narrative of *Iram* reflects a pattern evident across several participants' accounts, illustrating how girls moved between school, home and religious learning within the boundaries set by family expectations.

Composite Narrative: Iram

After a playful day at school, Iram returned home and rested on her rope bed beneath the tree while watching her mother prepare the clay oven for that evening's meal. As she lay there, she quietly repeated her times tables until she drifted off to sleep.

Before long, she was awakened by the sound of raised voices. Looking across the yard, she saw her uncle standing with her school uniform in his hands and a stern expression on his face. Nearby, her mother stood crying into her shawl.

A knot formed in Iram's stomach.

Her uncle had discovered that she had been attending school.

"Whose disgraceful daughter do these clothes belong to?" he shouted, holding the uniform high in the air. "Which disreputable person would send their daughter to school?"

He walked towards the clay oven and threw the uniform into the fire. Iram watched in disbelief as the fabric disappeared into the flames.

Pointing towards her, her uncle spoke firmly.

"It is not our way. You must stay home and help your mother."

As he left the house in anger, Iram ran into her mother's arms and sobbed. Stroking her hair, her mother tried to comfort her.

"It's okay, my dear. At least you went for a little while. Let it go now."

Iram knew that her uncle was an influential figure within the family, and neither she nor her mother felt able to challenge his decision.

As weeks turned into months, Iram missed her school friends and grew tired of spending her days at home. Noticing the change in her mood, her uncle suggested that she attend Quran classes at the local mosque, where she could learn about her religion and spend time with other girls her age.

For the first time in months, Iram felt excited again.

At the mosque, she quickly formed friendships with other girls. To her family's delight, she made good progress in learning to read Arabic and recite the Quran. Each evening, she practised with her mother before going to sleep.

Although she enjoyed her time at the mosque, she continued to think about school. She wondered what her former classmates were learning and imagined the

conversations and laughter taking place in the playground. Still, she valued the opportunities the mosque provided. It gave her time away from household chores, introduced her to new friends and allowed her to develop skills she was proud of. She worked hard in her classes and hoped to be at the top of the group.

Each day she prepared for mosque by putting on her hijab, packing her books into her bag and kissing her mother goodbye. Then she would skip down the street towards her lessons.

For those who saw her, she was simply a girl on her way to the mosque. For Iram, it was a place where she could spend time with friends, continue learning and imagine different possibilities for her future.

Iram's narrative highlights how access to education, knowledge and religious learning was shaped by family authority, gendered expectations and wider ideas about burden and honour. Her removal from school illustrates how decisions about girls' education were often made by others, with older family members exercising considerable influence over what was considered appropriate for daughters. Although Iram enjoyed school and wanted to continue her education, her opportunities were constrained by expectations surrounding family responsibility, gender roles and respectability.

Burden is reflected not only through expectations of care, obedience and domestic responsibility, but also through unequal access to educational opportunities. When Iram's schooling ends, she is expected to remain at home and assist her mother. In this sense, burden operates through both what girls are expected to do and the opportunities that are unavailable to them. Participants' accounts suggest that restricted access to education was often intertwined with broader expectations about women's future roles as wives, mothers and carers.

At the same time, Iram's narrative demonstrates that education was not necessarily rejected altogether. Instead, access to learning was shaped by ideas about what forms of knowledge were considered acceptable for girls. While formal schooling was restricted, Quran classes were encouraged and supported by family members. This

distinction appeared across several first-generation accounts, suggesting that honour did not simply limit educational opportunities but often directed girls towards forms of learning that were viewed as culturally and socially appropriate. Rather than representing the absence of education, religious learning frequently became a substitute for other educational opportunities.

The narrative also highlights the role of male authority in shaping access to knowledge. Iram's uncle has the power to decide whether she attends school, and both Iram and her mother feel unable to challenge that decision. Similar patterns appeared across participants' accounts, where fathers, brothers, husbands and other male relatives often acted as gatekeepers to education, employment and religious knowledge. Participants frequently described learning about religion through male family members rather than through direct engagement with religious texts themselves.

This pattern was closely connected to wider inequalities in literacy and educational access. Many first-generation women described limited opportunities for formal education and in some cases, difficulties reading or writing in their native language. As a result, religious teachings were often understood through the interpretations provided by male relatives. Previous research similarly suggests that women's confinement to the domestic sphere, lower levels of literacy and dependence on male relatives reduced opportunities to engage directly with religious knowledge, while enabling particular interpretations to be reinforced through male authority (Dwyer, 2000; Hadi, 2017).

Participants' accounts also demonstrated how limited access to education shaped women's opportunities later in life. Many first-generation women described little or no involvement in paid employment and remained financially dependent on male relatives. Restricted access to education and work often reinforced unequal power relations within families and contributed to women's dependence on fathers, husbands and sons. These experiences reflect broader structural inequalities in Pakistan, where access to education has historically been uneven and gender

disparities have persisted across different forms of schooling (Niaz, 2003; Khattak, 2014; Ali and Farah, 2007).

At the same time, Iram's narrative demonstrates that women's experiences cannot be understood solely through restriction and disadvantage. Despite the loss of formal schooling, she finds friendship, enjoyment and a sense of achievement through religious learning. Similar moments appeared across participants' accounts, where women described creating meaning and belonging within the opportunities available to them. This highlights the importance of recognising both constraint and complexity within first-generation women's experiences.

Overall, Iram's narrative shows how burden and honour were reproduced through unequal access to education, knowledge and religious authority. It illustrates how family expectations shaped what girls could learn, who they could learn from and how they understood their place within the family and wider community. At the same time, the narrative points towards important generational differences. While many first-generation women described restricted access to education and literacy, younger participants generally had greater opportunities to engage with formal education, employment and religious knowledge. These changing conditions created new possibilities for how burden and honour were understood, negotiated and lived across generations.

It is within these changing social, educational and migratory contexts that the experiences of second-generation women emerge. The following section therefore examines how expectations associated with burden and honour are negotiated in new social settings, where education, employment and migration create different opportunities and challenges for daughters.

6.3 Second-generation Pakistani women: negotiating expectations within changing contexts

Across second-generation women's accounts, expectations associated with burden and honour remained recognisable, but were understood and managed in more varied ways. Participants described how family expectations continued to shape

decisions about marriage, education and everyday behaviour, often influencing what was considered appropriate or acceptable. As with first-generation women, these expectations were closely connected to family wellbeing and family reputation.

Many participants described ongoing expectations to prioritise family responsibilities, enter marriage at an expected time, and fulfil roles as wives and mothers. These expectations were often understood as part of family life and were not always openly challenged, particularly when maintaining family relationships and avoiding conflict were important. In this sense, burden, expressed through care, responsibility and endurance, and honour, expressed through respectability, obedience and reputation, continued to shape experiences of daughterhood.

At the same time, participants' accounts revealed greater variation than those of the first-generation women. These differences were often linked to education, migration and access to employment. For women who migrated to the UK through marriage, maintaining familiar practices and expectations was sometimes described as a way of preserving cultural continuity in a new environment. Previous research suggests that migration can intensify expectations placed on daughters as families seek to maintain cultural values and identities (Dion and Dion, 2001; Moghadam, 1992). Similar concerns appeared in participants' accounts, particularly in relation to education, behaviour and marriage.

For British-born women, access to education and employment created opportunities that were often unavailable to earlier generations. However, participants' accounts suggest that these opportunities did not necessarily remove family expectations. Instead, women frequently described negotiating educational, employment and relationship decisions within the boundaries of what was considered acceptable by family members. This highlights how access to resources may alter, rather than replace, established expectations associated with burden and honour.

Alongside continuity, participants also described moments where expectations were questioned, adapted or understood differently. These moments were not always

expressed through direct resistance, but often emerged through everyday decisions about education, work, marriage and family relationships.

6.3.1 Employment, respectability & the negotiation of honour

Participants described employment as a key area in which expectations associated with burden and honour were negotiated. While education and paid work were often valued, particularly for their contribution to family wellbeing and financial security, participants also described concerns about how women's employment might affect family reputation and respectability. Decisions about work were therefore rarely understood as purely individual choices, but were shaped by wider expectations regarding appropriate behaviour, family responsibilities and community perceptions.

The composite narrative of *Amina* brings together these shared experiences and illustrates how second-generation women negotiated tensions between personal aspirations, employment opportunities and family expectations.

Composite Narrative: Amina

Amina found herself struggling to balance the demands of her studies with the household chores that awaited her when she returned home from school each day. As a daughter, much of her time was spent helping her family, leaving little opportunity to pursue her own interests. She dreamed of becoming a teacher and earning her own money.

As her A-level examinations came to an end, the conversation she had been dreading finally arrived. One evening, her mother and father sat her down to discuss the next stage of her life.

"You can do all this after marriage, Amina, my child. This is more important right now," her mother told her.

University soon felt like a distant possibility as marriage became the focus of family discussions. Her father presented her with a proposal to marry Hamza, her first

cousin and the eldest son of her paternal aunt. The match had been discussed within the family for many years.

Amina knew what was expected of her. Wanting to meet her family's expectations, she accepted the proposal and began her new life as a wife.

As she got to know her husband, she realised that Hamza's views were very similar to those of her father. He saw himself as the provider and expected Amina to focus on the home and family. One evening, she spoke to him about her hopes for the future and her desire to have some independence of her own.

Hamza was not supportive of the idea.

"What will people say, Amina?" he asked.

It was a question she had heard many times before.

As she lay awake that night, she remembered asking her mother if she could apply for a job.

"You will bring shame onto the family, you silly girl. Do you not feel ashamed to be mixing with other men? Stop dreaming. What will people say?"

Despite these conversations, Amina continued to think about ways she might pursue her ambitions. One of her friends, Khadija, had recently started sewing clothes for people in the community from her home. Watching her succeed encouraged Amina to consider what might be possible within the boundaries set by her family.

Over time, she and Hamza reached a compromise. Amina began tutoring young children in her own home. She carefully balanced her teaching with her household responsibilities and took pride in seeing her students learn and develop.

As teaching became an increasingly important part of her life, family members began asking when she and Hamza would have children. Her mother-in-law's comments became more frequent, and community members often questioned why she had not yet started a family.

Although she hoped to have children one day, Amina did not feel ready. For a period of time, she quietly used birth control, allowing her to continue teaching while postponing motherhood.

Eventually, Amina gave birth to a daughter.

She celebrated her daughter's arrival with family and friends, but comments soon followed.

One relative suggested it was time to try for a son.

Her mother-in-law added, "God willing, we will have a boy next time and not another girl."

Despite the remarks, Amina was determined to support her daughter and give her opportunities she had not experienced herself.

As her daughter Hina entered her teenage years, she wanted to spend more time with her friends after school. Amina knew her husband and in-laws would not approve. In their view, school and home were the appropriate places for a young Pakistani daughter.

Nevertheless, Amina and Hina came to an arrangement. Hina could spend time with her friends after school, but she needed to be home before her father returned from work.

Over time, mother and daughter developed a close relationship. Hina spoke openly with Amina about the things that mattered to her, something Amina had never felt able to do with her own mother.

One evening, Amina reassured Hina that she would always support her. Through tears, Hina admitted that she wanted to marry someone she had chosen herself and feared being pressured into an arranged marriage.

Amina knew this would be difficult for the family to accept.

She told Hina that there was nothing wrong with wanting to marry someone of her choice, provided it was done in a way that remained important to her beliefs and values.

Although she knew there would be disagreements and tensions within the family, Amina remained determined to support her daughter as she moved forward with her life.

Amina's narrative illustrates how expectations associated with burden and honour are not simply reproduced in the same form across generations, but are adapted and reworked within changing social and family contexts. Like many second-generation participants, Amina encounters expectations around marriage, family responsibilities and respectability, yet she also has access to educational and employment opportunities that were often unavailable to earlier generations. Her experiences reflect the ways in which continuity and change can exist simultaneously.

Employment emerges as a key site through which burden and honour are negotiated. Throughout Amina's story, paid work is not evaluated solely in terms of personal ambition or financial gain. Instead, it is viewed through concerns about family reputation, respectability and appropriate behaviour. Family members worry about how others may react to women working outside the home, reflected in repeated questions about "what will people say?". These concerns were evident across participants' accounts, where employment was often accepted only when it could be accommodated within existing expectations surrounding marriage, motherhood and domestic responsibilities.

At the same time, Amina's narrative shows how women found ways to pursue employment within these boundaries. Her decision to tutor children from home reflects a pattern evident across several participants' accounts, where women engaged in forms of work that were considered compatible with family expectations. Home-based employment enabled women to contribute financially and pursue personal interests while remaining within socially accepted boundaries. In this sense, employment did not necessarily represent a straightforward break from traditional

expectations, but rather a negotiated adaptation that allowed women to expand opportunities without fully disrupting established family arrangements.

Amina's experiences reflect the ways women negotiate established expectations rather than simply accepting or rejecting them. Her decision to teach from home, delay motherhood and support her daughter's aspirations illustrates how women can create space for alternative possibilities while remaining embedded within family relationships and expectations. In this sense, her experiences resemble what Kandiyoti (1988) describes as patriarchal bargaining, where women work within existing social arrangements to improve their circumstances rather than acting outside them.

The narrative also highlights ongoing tensions between aspiration and expectation. Access to education and exposure to alternative possibilities shaped how many second-generation women thought about their futures. However, greater educational opportunities did not remove expectations surrounding marriage, motherhood and family responsibility. Instead, participants described managing these competing demands in different ways. Amina's decision to delay motherhood while continuing to teach illustrates how women negotiated expectations rather than simply accepting or rejecting them.

Honour remains an important influence throughout Amina's story. Concerns about reputation shape attitudes towards employment, relationships and motherhood, while community judgements continue to influence family expectations. Yet participants' accounts also suggest that honour was interpreted differently from previous generations. Rather than focusing solely on obedience and conformity, some women began to emphasise education, personal development and wellbeing alongside family responsibilities.

Amina's relationship with her daughter illustrates one of the clearest areas of generational change. Across second-generation accounts, participants frequently described wanting different opportunities for their daughters than those available to themselves. Many expressed support for daughters' education, employment and

greater involvement in marriage decisions. These changes were not always pursued through direct opposition to family expectations. Instead, women often created space for alternative possibilities through everyday practices, such as encouraging daughters' interests, supporting their independence, sharing responsibilities more equally, or negotiating boundaries within the family.

The narrative also highlights the importance of religion in shaping how expectations are interpreted. When discussing her daughter's wish to marry someone of her choice, Amina distinguishes between cultural expectations and religious teachings. Similar distinctions appeared across participants' accounts, where women drew on religious knowledge to question or reconsider cultural practices. This suggests that religion was not always experienced as a source of restriction, but could also provide alternative ways of thinking about marriage, family relationships and women's roles.

These patterns must also be understood within broader social changes linked to migration, education and employment. Compared with first-generation women, second-generation participants often had greater access to education, paid work and wider social networks, creating new conditions in which expectations associated with burden and honour could be negotiated (Dion and Dion, 2001; Bhopal, 2000). However, these opportunities were uneven and did not apply equally to all women. As Amina's narrative illustrates, family expectations continued to shape important life decisions even where educational and employment opportunities expanded.

Overall, Amina's narrative demonstrates that second-generation experiences are characterised neither by straightforward continuity nor complete change. Instead, participants described an ongoing process of negotiation, where expectations associated with burden and honour remained influential but were increasingly adapted, questioned and reworked within changing social contexts.

While Amina's narrative shows how expectations can be negotiated within marriage and family life, participants' accounts also highlighted situations where these expectations became more difficult to sustain. In particular, experiences of marital breakdown exposed tensions between personal wellbeing, family responsibility and

community reputation. It is within these circumstances that honour often becomes most visibly contested. The following composite narrative of Sameena explores how expectations associated with honour are confronted and reworked through experiences of divorce.

6.3.2 Divorce & the reworking of honour

Within participants' accounts, divorce emerged as an important context in which expectations associated with honour became particularly visible. Although only a small number of women in the study had experienced divorce directly, their accounts reflected wider community understandings in which divorce was often associated with stigma, shame and social judgement. Participants described how remaining in a marriage, even under difficult circumstances, was frequently viewed as preferable to separation because of the importance placed on maintaining family reputation and avoiding community criticism (Azam et al., 2021).

These expectations often positioned women as responsible for preserving marital relationships through compromise, patience and emotional labour. Participants described how family members, community networks and cultural expectations could encourage women to remain in marriages despite unhappiness or difficulties, reflecting the close relationship between marriage, respectability and honour.

At the same time, participants' accounts suggest that these expectations were not always accepted without question. Some women described reaching a point whereby remaining in a relationship was no longer sustainable, leading them to reassess their responsibilities to themselves, their children and their families. In these situations, divorce became a site where competing expectations surrounding wellbeing, duty and family reputation had to be negotiated.

The accounts also highlighted how experiences of divorce could reshape understandings of honour. Rather than viewing honour solely as remaining within a marriage at all costs, some participants described alternative understandings that prioritised safety, wellbeing and dignity. These accounts suggest that honour is not

fixed, but can be interpreted and negotiated in different ways depending on individual circumstances and family contexts.

The composite narrative of *Sameena* brings together these shared experiences and illustrates how expectations associated with honour are challenged, negotiated and reworked when women experience marital breakdown.

Composite Narrative: Sameena

Sameena was raised in a conservative household where the men were the breadwinners and the women were the homemakers. Growing up, she was taught to prioritise her family and to behave in ways that reflected well on those around her. After finishing college, her parents suggested that she settle down and marry her cousin Anwar. Although she was hesitant, Sameena agreed, hoping that the marriage would bring happiness and stability.

As time went on, Sameena realised that her husband was not the person she had hoped he would be. Anwar was controlling and frequently belittled her in front of his family. Over time, the verbal abuse developed into physical abuse. Despite her unhappiness, Sameena remained in the marriage. She had grown up hearing stories about women who had left difficult marriages and faced criticism from family members and the wider community. She also knew of women who felt they had nowhere to go after marriage. Day after day, she tried to carry on, often feeling isolated and unsure of who she could turn to for support.

One day, during an argument, Anwar threw dishes across the room. Pieces of shattered crockery struck Sameena and cut her skin. For the first time, she felt unable to continue as she had before.

After Anwar left for work, Sameena packed her belongings and returned to her parents' home.

Her family were shocked to see her standing at the door with her bags.

As she explained what had been happening, Sameena told them that she did not want to return to her husband. The response she received was not the one she had hoped for. Her mother immediately criticised her decision, while her father accused her of bringing shame upon the family. Through tears, her mother said:

"It would have been better if I didn't have you, if I knew this was going to happen."

Over the following days, Sameena faced intense pressure to reconsider her decision. Her aunt, who was also her mother-in-law, came to visit and urged her to return.

"Think about our family reputation at least," she said.

Despite these conversations, Sameena remained firm in her decision and began the process of seeking a divorce.

The months that followed were difficult. Sameena faced criticism and judgement from some members of the community, while trying to rebuild her life. Over time, however, some family members began to accept her decision. Friends offered support and encouragement as she adjusted to life outside the marriage.

As the years passed, Sameena began to focus on building a future for herself. She became more confident in making decisions and started to think differently about the life she wanted. While relationships within the family remained complicated at times, she felt increasingly certain that she had made the right decision for herself.

Sameena's narrative illustrates how expectations associated with honour can become difficult to sustain when they conflict with personal wellbeing and safety. Throughout her marriage, she attempts to fulfil expectations associated with being a good wife by remaining in the relationship despite ongoing abuse. Similar accounts appeared across the dataset, where women described enduring difficult circumstances in order to preserve family relationships, avoid community judgement and protect family reputation. In this sense, honour was often closely connected to maintaining marriage, even when doing so came at a personal cost.

The narrative also highlights how burden operates through expectations of endurance, compromise and emotional labour. Participants frequently described feeling responsible for maintaining relationships and avoiding family conflict, even when they were unhappy. Sameena's decision to remain in her marriage for a prolonged period reflects wider expectations that women should tolerate difficulties and prioritise family stability. However, her account also demonstrates that these expectations have limits. When abuse became impossible to ignore, concerns about safety and wellbeing began to outweigh the expectations that had previously encouraged her to stay.

The reactions of Sameena's family further illustrate how honour is maintained through family and community relationships. Rather than focusing on her experiences of abuse, family members express concern about shame, reputation and the consequences of divorce for the wider family. Similar concerns appeared across participants' accounts, where divorce was often viewed as a family issue rather than an individual decision. Women's choices were therefore frequently evaluated in relation to their impact on family reputation and social standing.

At the same time, Sameena's narrative shows that expectations associated with honour are not fixed. Her decision to pursue a divorce reflects a re-evaluation of what it means to protect herself and live with dignity. Rather than rejecting family relationships altogether, she begins to place greater importance on her own wellbeing alongside her responsibilities to others. This resonates with Kandiyoti's (1988) argument that women negotiate patriarchal constraints from within existing social arrangements rather than outside them. Sameena's decision does not emerge in the absence of pressure or expectation, but in response to them.

Participants' accounts suggest that these shifts were uneven and often accompanied by tension. While some women reinterpreted expectations surrounding marriage and divorce, others continued to emphasise endurance, commitment and family duty. Religion was frequently described as a source of comfort and guidance during difficult periods, while also shaping how responsibility, patience and marital commitment were understood (Hassounah-Phillips, 2003). Several participants spoke

about the importance of fulfilling duties as daughters and wives, at times interpreting hardship through these responsibilities.

Sameena's narrative also reflects broader changes evident across second-generation accounts. Compared with first-generation women, participants were generally more likely to discuss personal wellbeing, emotional fulfilment and individual choice alongside family obligations. At the same time, family reputation, respectability and duty remained important considerations. Expectations associated with burden and honour therefore continued to shape women's lives, but were increasingly negotiated and interpreted in different ways.

Overall, Sameena's narrative demonstrates that divorce can become a significant site in which honour is questioned, negotiated and reworked. It highlights the limits of endurance and shows how women may reassess expectations when they conflict with personal safety and wellbeing. Rather than representing a simple rejection of family values, these decisions often reflect ongoing attempts to balance responsibility to family with responsibility to self.

These tensions between continuity and change provide an important bridge to the experiences of third-generation women. Greater access to education, employment and religious knowledge creates new opportunities for interpreting and negotiating expectations associated with burden and honour. The following section explores how these expectations are understood, challenged and reworked in contemporary contexts.

6.4 Third-generation Pakistani women: reinterpreting burden and honour in contemporary contexts

Across third-generation women's accounts, expectations associated with burden and honour continued to shape everyday life, but participants engaged with these expectations within different social and material circumstances. Greater access to education and employment often gave women more influence over decisions affecting their lives as daughters, students, wives and future mothers. While these

opportunities did not remove existing expectations, they created new ways of negotiating them.

Participants frequently linked this increased influence to educational achievement and financial contribution, both of which strengthened their ability to participate in family decision-making. This reflects wider research suggesting that education can expand women's capacity to make choices and influence their own circumstances (Naz and Ashraf, 2020; Mahsud and Ali, 2020). Rather than producing change automatically, education functioned as a resource through which expectations associated with burden and honour could be re-worked.

Religion was also central to participants' accounts, although many described engaging with it differently from previous generations. Rather than relying on family members for religious guidance, participants often described accessing religious knowledge independently through education, reading, online resources and discussion with others. Many distinguished between cultural practices and Islamic teachings, particularly where cultural expectations were viewed as unfair or inconsistent with their understanding of religion. These accounts extend existing research suggesting that Muslim identities are increasingly articulated through religion rather than culture, particularly where cultural practices are perceived to conflict with religious principles (Mohammad, 2015; Bolognani and Mellor, 2012; Brown, 2006; Charsley, 2005; Dwyer, 2000).

As a result, religion emerged not simply as a source of continuity but as a site through which established expectations could be re-examined and interpreted differently. While burden and honour remained recognisable features of family life, participants often drew on religious knowledge to question, justify or negotiate expectations in ways that differed from earlier generations.

6.4.1 Reinterpreting religion in relation to cultural expectations

Participants described how access to education and religious knowledge enabled them to engage more directly with questions of gender, responsibility and family life. In contrast to many first-generation women, who often encountered religious

teachings through the interpretations of others, third-generation participants described seeking knowledge independently and reflecting on how religious teachings related to their everyday experiences.

Across accounts, participants expressed dissatisfaction with practices they viewed as restrictive, particularly where these were understood as cultural rather than religious. Importantly, this did not involve rejecting religion. Instead, women often drew on religious teachings to support alternative understandings of marriage, gender roles, family relationships and personal responsibility. In doing so, they reinterpreted expectations associated with burden and honour in ways that aligned with their understandings of fairness, justice and equality.

The composite narrative of *Mariam* brings together these shared experiences and illustrates how third-generation women use religious knowledge to navigate, question and reinterpret cultural expectations.

Composite Narrative: Mariam

Mariam grew up in the UK as a third-generation Pakistani girl. At school she was known for her sense of humour and had friends from a range of different backgrounds. She enjoyed spending time with them and often compared their lives with her own. As she grew older, she became increasingly aware that different expectations applied to her at home.

Mariam enjoyed many aspects of her family's culture. She looked forward to family gatherings, loved traditional food and enjoyed wearing Pakistani clothes at weddings and celebrations. At the same time, she noticed patterns within her family that she sometimes found difficult to understand. Many of the women around her had married young and dedicated much of their lives to caring for their families. Her grandmother, mother, aunts and cousins often shared stories about the sacrifices they had made for their husbands and children.

Within her own home, Mariam became increasingly aware of differences in how sons and daughters were treated. Her brother was often given more freedom and

independence than she was. He spent time with friends, came and went more easily, and received encouragement with his studies. Mariam's experiences were different. After school she was expected to help with household chores and spend most of her time at home. Opportunities to socialise were more limited and she often felt that different rules applied to her.

Despite these frustrations, Mariam enjoyed learning and worked hard at school. As her GCSEs and A-levels approached, she became increasingly interested in higher education and began thinking seriously about university. The idea felt exciting, but she was unsure how her family would respond.

Alongside her studies, Mariam also became interested in learning more about her faith. She attended talks, read books and followed discussions online about Islam and women's lives. As she learned more, she began to reflect on some of the expectations she had encountered growing up. She found herself questioning whether certain practices were based on religion, culture, or a combination of both.

When conversations about her future began at home, Mariam spoke openly about her desire to continue her education. Her father was unconvinced.

"I can provide for you, and your future husband will take care of you. There's no need for you to work."

Her mother was more sympathetic but remained uncertain.

"Our women don't need these things, Mariam. You should start thinking about getting married. You can do all this once you're married if your husband allows you."

These conversations continued over a long period of time. Although her parents did not always agree with her plans, Mariam continued discussing her ambitions with them. She often referred to examples she had encountered through her studies and religious learning, particularly when talking about women's education and opportunities.

As university application deadlines approached, discussions about her future became more frequent. Some relatives were supportive, while others questioned whether university was necessary. Mariam found herself trying to balance her own aspirations with the expectations of those around her.

Eventually, she completed her university application and submitted it.

While disagreements within the family did not disappear, Mariam felt encouraged by the fact that these conversations were taking place. She remained committed to her education and hopeful about the opportunities it might create. At the same time, she continued to value her family, her faith and many aspects of the cultural traditions with which she had grown up.

Mariam's narrative illustrates how religion becomes an important resource through which third-generation women interpret and negotiate expectations associated with burden and honour. Unlike many women from earlier generations, who often encountered religious teachings through the interpretations of family members, third-generation women frequently described accessing religious knowledge independently through education, reading, online resources and discussion with others. This increased access to religious knowledge shaped how participants understood family expectations and their own roles within family life.

A central feature of Mariam's narrative is the distinction she makes between cultural practices and religious teachings. While she values many aspects of her cultural background, she also questions expectations that limit women's educational opportunities, independence and involvement in decision-making. Rather than rejecting religion, Mariam draws on her understanding of Islam when reflecting on these issues. Similar patterns appeared across participants' accounts, where women used religious knowledge to reconsider expectations that they viewed as cultural rather than religious in origin.

Education plays an important role in this process. Participants often described education not simply as a route to employment, but as a means of accessing new ideas, developing confidence and engaging more critically with family expectations.

Mariam's desire to attend university reflects wider patterns within the dataset, where educational opportunities created space for women to think differently about marriage, work and family life. Consistent with broader research, education appeared to increase participants' ability to participate in decisions affecting their own futures (Naz and Ashraf, 2020; Mahsud and Ali, 2020). However, access to education did not remove family expectations. Instead, women often described negotiating these expectations while pursuing educational goals.

The narrative also highlights that these negotiations frequently took place within existing family relationships. Although Mariam disagrees with some of her parents' views, she does not seek to distance herself from her family or reject her cultural background. Instead, she repeatedly engages in discussion and negotiation. This reflects a broader pattern across third-generation accounts, where change often occurred through ongoing conversations and everyday interactions rather than through complete breaks from family expectations.

In this sense, Mariam's narrative can be understood through Kandiyoti's (1988) concept of patriarchal bargaining. However, rather than accepting the terms of the bargain or reaching its limits, as evident in some earlier narratives, Mariam questions the basis on which particular expectations are justified. By drawing on religious knowledge, she reassesses assumptions about women's roles, education and future opportunities. Religion therefore becomes a resource through which the legitimacy of particular expectations can be reconsidered. Rather than rejecting family relationships or cultural belonging, participants often sought to renegotiate expectations from within familiar social and familial contexts.

This reflects wider findings that religion can function as a resource through which women access rights, challenge gendered assumptions and reshape expectations surrounding women's roles (Mellor, 2011). At the same time, participants' accounts suggest that these reinterpretations were not always accepted without resistance. Several women described disagreements with family members when expressing alternative understandings of religion, particularly where these challenged long-established cultural practices. Mariam's conversations with her parents reflect these

tensions. While some family members gradually became more accepting of educational and employment aspirations, others continued to emphasise more traditional expectations surrounding marriage and family life.

Importantly, religion did not function in the same way for all participants. While some women used religious knowledge to question particular expectations, others drew on religion to reinforce ideas about responsibility, patience and family commitment. Religion therefore operated in multiple ways across the dataset, shaping how women understood both continuity and change in relation to burden and honour.

Overall, Mariam's narrative demonstrates how third-generation women engage with burden and honour under different social conditions from earlier generations. Greater access to education, religious knowledge and wider sources of information creates new opportunities for interpreting family expectations. Rather than simply reproducing or rejecting these expectations, participants often re-evaluated and renegotiated them, drawing on religion, education and family relationships to construct alternative understandings of what it means to be a daughter, wife and future mother.

6.4.2 Education, work & changing valuations of daughters

Participants also described how increased access to education and employment shaped how daughters were viewed within families. While many first-generation women had limited access to formal education and paid work, all third-generation participants held formal qualifications and were engaged in employment. These differences reflect broader social changes, including rising rates of employment among Pakistani women in the UK (ONS, 2020), as well as research linking educational attainment to improved employment opportunities (Butt and Hamid, 2017).

These changes must also be understood within their wider social context. The UK education system provides greater access to schooling than many rural areas of Pakistan, where gender disparities have historically restricted girls' educational

opportunities (Jafar, 2005; Talbani and Hasanali, 2000). As discussed in Chapter 3, access to education varied considerably across the three generations in this study. All third-generation participants had completed formal qualifications, in contrast to many first-generation women and a proportion of second-generation participants.

Participants' accounts suggest that education and employment have contributed to changes in how daughters are valued within families. Educational achievement, professional employment and financial contribution were often associated with increased confidence, greater involvement in decision-making and stronger support for daughters' aspirations. Several participants described feeling that daughters' futures were now discussed differently from previous generations, particularly in relation to education and careers.

However, greater access to education and employment did not automatically lead to unrestricted choice. Participants continued to describe negotiations around university attendance, employment, mobility and family responsibilities. Concerns about safety, respectability and family expectations remained influential, even where daughters were encouraged to pursue educational and career opportunities. In this sense, education and employment did not replace expectations associated with burden and honour, but created new conditions in which they could be interpreted and negotiated.

The composite narrative of *Noreen* brings together these shared experiences and illustrates how changing opportunities for education and employment have shaped contemporary understandings of daughterhood, family responsibility and women's roles.

Composite Narrative: Noreen

As a third-generation British Pakistani, Noreen often felt caught between different expectations. At school she enjoyed learning and looked forward to discussing new ideas with her friends, while at home family expectations shaped many aspects of her daily life. As she grew older, she became increasingly aware that important

decisions about her future were often discussed within the family rather than left entirely to her.

Noreen spent a lot of time thinking about education, work and independence. She also became interested in learning more about her faith. As she read and reflected on religious teachings, she found herself questioning some of the expectations she encountered in everyday life. She wondered why some practices were described as religious obligations when they seemed more closely connected to culture and tradition.

As university approached, Noreen began thinking seriously about her future. She wanted to continue her education, build a career and eventually support herself financially. One evening, she decided to share her plans with her parents.

"I don't want to be dependent on anyone, and this way I can help others as well," she explained quietly over dinner.

Her mother looked concerned.

"My child, you know this is unnecessary for us. You should be preparing for marriage."

Her father remained silent for a while before responding.

"Education is a good thing, Noreen, but we worry about you. We just want to protect you."

Although disappointed, Noreen understood that her parents' concerns came from a desire to keep her safe. Over the following weeks, the conversation continued. She spoke about the opportunities that university could provide and reassured her parents that she would continue to uphold the values that were important to her.

As the application deadline approached, Noreen suggested applying to universities closer to home.

"I could stay at home while I study," she explained. "That way you won't have to worry so much."

Her parents listened carefully. While they did not immediately agree, the discussions became less tense over time. Eventually, they gave their support and Noreen submitted her application.

Starting university brought new opportunities as well as new challenges. Managing study, family responsibilities and expectations at home was not always easy. At times she felt frustrated when the freedoms available to her brother seemed unavailable to her. Nevertheless, she remained committed to her studies and looked forward to building a future for herself.

As university progressed, Noreen began thinking about other forms of independence. Learning to drive was one of them. She knew raising the subject would be difficult, but she decided to approach the conversation in the same way she had approached university.

Again, her parents expressed concerns. They worried about safety and questioned whether it was necessary. Noreen listened, explained her reasons and continued the conversation over time.

Eventually, her father agreed to teach her. Driving lessons became another space where father and daughter negotiated expectations, responsibilities and trust. Not every conversation was easy, and disagreements still occurred, but Noreen felt increasingly involved in shaping decisions about her own future.

While many family expectations remained, Noreen also recognised that some things were changing. Opportunities that had not been available to earlier generations were becoming part of her everyday life, even if they often required discussion, compromise and negotiation along the way.

Noreen's narrative illustrates how increased access to education and employment has reshaped how daughters are valued within families. Unlike many first-generation

women, and some second-generation women, Noreen grows up expecting education to form part of her future. However, her account also demonstrates that access to these opportunities does not remove family expectations. Decisions about university attendance, mobility and independence continue to be negotiated within family relationships and remain shaped by concerns about safety, respectability and family reputation.

A key feature of Noreen's narrative is the changing value attached to daughters' education and future employment. Participants frequently described education as an investment rather than a temporary stage before marriage. Educational achievement and professional employment were often associated with financial security, increased confidence and the ability to contribute to family wellbeing. Several participants spoke about supporting parents financially, assisting younger siblings, or reducing pressures on the wider household. In this sense, daughters were increasingly viewed not only as future wives and mothers but also as valuable contributors to family life. These findings challenge earlier associations of daughters as financial burdens and reflect wider social changes in the opportunities available to Pakistani women in the UK (Javed and Mughal, 2019; Agboatwalla, 2000).

At the same time, Noreen's narrative highlights that these changes are negotiated rather than straightforward. Her parents do not reject education entirely, but express concerns about independence, safety and appropriate behaviour. Similar tensions appeared across participants' accounts, where educational success was often encouraged while other forms of independence remained more closely scrutinised. Concerns about community perceptions were particularly evident in discussions about university attendance, living away from home and mobility, suggesting that honour continued to shape how opportunities were pursued (Mellor, 2011).

Like Mariam's narrative, Noreen's experiences demonstrate that change often occurs through ongoing discussion and negotiation rather than direct confrontation. Throughout the narrative she repeatedly reassures her parents, adapts her plans and seeks compromises that address their concerns while also supporting her own

aspirations. This reflects a pattern found across many third-generation accounts, where women worked within existing family relationships to create greater opportunities for themselves. In Kandiyoti's (1988) terms, these accounts suggest not a rejection of family expectations but an ongoing renegotiation of them.

The narrative also highlights the importance of education and employment as resources through which burden and honour are reinterpreted. Educational achievement, financial contribution and professional employment gave participants greater involvement in decision-making and this often led to increased influence within family relationships. Rather than eliminating expectations associated with burden and honour, these resources altered how those expectations were understood and negotiated in everyday life.

At the same time, participants' accounts suggest that these changes were uneven and not experienced in the same way by all women. While some families strongly supported daughters' educational and career ambitions, others remained cautious about forms of independence that challenged established expectations. As a result, continuity and change often existed alongside one another, creating a complex picture of contemporary daughterhood.

Overall, Noreen's narrative demonstrates how third-generation women negotiate opportunities that were often unavailable to earlier generations while remaining connected to family relationships, religious values and cultural expectations. Her story illustrates how daughters' educational and economic contributions are increasingly recognised and valued, while also showing that expectations associated with burden and honour continue to shape the boundaries within which these opportunities are pursued.

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter examined continuity and change in experiences of daughterhood through six composite narratives drawn from the accounts of three generations of Pakistani women. Across all three generations, burden and honour remained important features of family life, shaping how women understood responsibility,

marriage, education, employment and relationships with others. However, the narratives also show that these expectations are neither fixed nor experienced in the same way across time and context.

The first-generation narratives highlighted how burden and honour were often embedded within everyday family life and closely tied to expectations of obedience, sacrifice and endurance. Women described navigating marriage, motherhood and family responsibilities within a limited set of choices, often prioritising family stability over individual aspirations. Through relationships with mothers, mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law, these expectations were reproduced across the life course and across generations (Habiba et al., 2016; Nazish, 2018). Safia's narrative illustrated how women could move from positions of constraint to positions of relative authority while continuing to operate within the same broader system of expectations, reflecting Kandiyoti's (1988) concept of patriarchal bargaining. Iram's narrative further demonstrated how unequal access to education, literacy and religious knowledge shaped women's opportunities and contributed to ongoing dependence upon male relatives.

The second-generation narratives revealed greater tension between personal aspirations and family expectations. Participants frequently described negotiating opportunities for education, employment and autonomy while remaining mindful of family relationships and community perceptions. Amina's narrative demonstrated how women often created space for alternative possibilities without completely rejecting family expectations, while Sameena's narrative highlighted the limits of endurance when expectations surrounding marriage came into conflict with personal wellbeing and safety. Together, these accounts show that women did not simply accept or reject burden and honour, but continually negotiated them within the constraints and opportunities available to them.

Among third-generation participants, education, employment and access to religious knowledge created new ways of understanding family expectations. Rather than relying solely on family interpretations, many participants described engaging independently with religious teachings and using these understandings to reflect on

gender roles, marriage and family life. Mariam's narrative illustrated how religion could serve as a resource for questioning cultural practices and reconsidering the legitimacy of expectations traditionally associated with daughterhood. Noreen's narrative demonstrated how educational achievement and economic contribution increasingly shaped how daughters were valued within families, challenging earlier associations of daughters as financial burdens (Javed and Mughal, 2019; Agboatwalla, 2000).

A key finding of this chapter is that education functions as more than a pathway to employment. Across the narratives, education emerged as a resource through which women interpreted their experiences, reflected on family expectations and imagined different possibilities for themselves and future generations. While education often created new opportunities (Naz and Ashraf, 2020; Mahsud and Ali, 2020), it did not remove expectations associated with burden and honour. Instead, it altered how women engaged with them.

Religion also occupied a complex position within participants' accounts. For some women, religious knowledge reinforced ideas about responsibility, patience and family commitment. For others, it provided a basis for questioning cultural practices and supporting alternative understandings of women's roles and rights (Mellor, 2011). Rather than acting solely as a source of continuity or change, religion functioned as a site through which expectations were understood, justified and also challenged.

Rather than finding a clear transition from constraint to autonomy, I found that continuity and change often coexisted. Across the narratives, women maintained, negotiated and reinterpreted expectations associated with burden and honour in different ways. The experiences of younger generations cannot therefore be understood simply as evidence of progress or empowerment. Instead, the findings show how daughterhood continues to be shaped by family relationships, cultural expectations, religious understandings and wider social conditions. By examining these experiences across three generations, I have shown how daughterhood is

continually reshaped through the intersection of gender, family, culture, religion and social context.

Chapter 7. Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

In the conclusion to my thesis, I will be reflecting on my research journey, providing an overview of my findings, evaluating my thesis and making recommendations for further areas of research. Firstly, I reflect on my position as an insider researcher, as a student, and as a Pakistani daughter, and talk through where I began on my research journey, and all the choices, dilemmas and challenges I faced in the making of my thesis. I discuss both the personal and academic challenges I faced and how this shaped the research, methodology, analysis, and write up of my thesis. Secondly, I provide an overview of my thesis, summarising each chapter in turn, and demonstrate how I wrote up my thesis, why I did it this way, what the strengths of my approaches were and what they achieved. As I discuss each chapter, I also reflect on the limitations in my study, acknowledge alternative approaches to my research, and integrate the possibilities for future research with Pakistani women. Finally, I outline how my study has provided new insights into the complex experiences of daughterhood for Pakistani women.

7.2 Personal reflections: my research journey & the making of this thesis

In chapter one, I introduced my background as a Pakistani daughter who was regulated by certain cultural and familial expectations as I was growing up and navigating home, friends, and school. After floating through high school and sixth form, against all odds, I had made it to university. Overwhelmed with the independence, the workload, and a 'new' me, I was ready to drop out by the end of my first semester. I felt lost and started doubting my choices. Maybe I should've just stayed home? Got married? Worked instead? Maybe they were right, maybe education isn't for girls like me. With mixed emotions and nobody to really turn to for advice, I managed to convince myself that I haven't come this far just to come this far. There has to be more to this. I was in a privileged position compared to

almost every other woman I knew, and that was enough to get me through. And when I finally settled in, I finally began to grasp the possibilities education really offered. As I learned what doing social science research actually meant, the fire in my belly was ignited. I was thrilled that I could research topics that mattered to me, I could interview people about their lives, I can share their stories with the world! I finally felt like I could challenge everything that has felt so wrong, for so long. I started to believe that I can, and I will, make a difference. This determination has fuelled my academic journey to date, and as I write the conclusion to my thesis, I feel like I have almost reached my destination.

As much as my research aim was to share the stories of the women in my study, my thesis is also very personal. In many ways, it speaks about me and speaks for me. I find a small part of myself in the narratives of each of my participants. A shared feeling, a shared experience, a shared fear, a shared sense of doing daughterhood. While these connections served as motivations in the making of this thesis, there were many times when they also felt like the biggest hurdles. Switching from researcher to daughter and daughter to researcher was never so simple and I often struggled to meet the demands of both roles. This became particularly difficult during Covid-19 and impacted aspects of my thesis. It would be an understatement to say that my research journey has been a difficult one.

From the moment I envisioned the possibility of me being a post-graduate student, to submitting my application, carrying out fieldwork, keeping my head in the game, to writing up my thesis, each step came with its own trials. I reflect back to when I plucked up the courage to tell my family I was going to spend another few years in education, I remember the disappointment in their faces as they realised that I was putting marriage and children on the back burner. As my 3-year PhD journey turned into 6+ years, people around me began to lose faith in my ability to complete my thesis and I slowly began to lose faith in myself as well. My extension applications turned into a running joke amongst friends and my family members would reassure me that it was ok to drop out and settle down instead, what I had achieved was enough. But it wasn't, not for me. I had to take it all the way, regardless of the

noise around me and within me. And as I near the end and reflect on all the reasons I ever began, I feel grateful to have had my opportunity, and I hope for every woman to have hers.

7.3 Thesis reflections, resonances & futures

In this thesis I have explored how daughterhood is understood and lived across three generations of Pakistani women. My findings show that expectations associated with burden and honour remain central to how women make sense of their roles within family life, but do not always align with their personal aspirations and preferences. Rather than being fixed, these expectations are interpreted, negotiated, and reworked across different contexts and stages of the life course.

Across the three generations, there is evidence of both continuity and change in how daughterhood is experienced. While expectations of responsibility, obedience, and family obligation remain recognisable, women engage with them in different ways. In particular, participants describe how access to education, employment, and religious knowledge creates new possibilities for influencing decision-making in areas such as marriage, motherhood, work, and everyday life. These shifts do not represent a clear break from earlier patterns, but reflect changes in how expectations are understood and managed.

My analysis highlights that what may be described as increased independence or influence is shaped through ongoing negotiation within family and community contexts. Participants describe drawing on different resources, particularly education and religious understanding, to reinterpret expectations and create space for alternative ways of living daughterhood. However, these processes remain uneven and are shaped by the same gendered and patriarchal structures that produce expectations of burden and honour.

Through qualitative research with thirty British Pakistani Muslim women, my study explored the research question:

How is daughterhood understood and lived across generations and over time by Pakistani women living in Pakistani families?

The decision to adopt a broad research question enabled me to capture the complexity and diversity of women's experiences. Participants' accounts illustrate how daughterhood is shaped through the interaction of family, culture, religion, and broader social conditions, and how women engage with these influences in different ways. Across the dataset, women describe accepting, negotiating, and resisting expectations, showing that daughterhood is not a single or static experience.

My study suggests that daughterhood is experienced through a complex interplay of continuity and change. Expectations associated with burden and honour persist across generations, but they are not experienced in identical ways. Instead, women engage with these expectations from different social positions and life circumstances, producing diverse responses that range from accommodation and negotiation to reinterpretation and selective change.

In Chapter Two, I reviewed literature on Pakistani families, culture, and women's lives to situate this study within sociological and gender research. The chapter highlighted how kinship, family roles, and values shape expectations associated with daughterhood, particularly in relation to responsibility, marriage, and family life. I also examined the historical context of migration to Britain, demonstrating how family relationships and expectations are shaped across generations and social contexts.

I showed that existing research has often focused on how women are positioned as bearers of family honour, resulting in closer monitoring of behaviour and decision-making. However, I also identified a gap in understanding how these expectations are experienced and interpreted across generations, and how they change over time. In particular, limited attention has been given to how women engage with these expectations in practice, including the ways they accept, negotiate and challenge them within family life. Existing studies led me to raise the questions as to how do the experiences of grandmothers and mothers shape the experiences of

daughters in Pakistani families? How have the experiences of daughterhood in Pakistan evolved as women arrive and settle in the UK? If better access to education and employment are empowering younger generations, how can disempowered older generations of Pakistani women be better supported? Is the increased independence of younger generations shaping the experiences of older generations within families?

Building on this, I outlined the key concepts guiding my study: generation, daughterhood, gender, patriarchy, and resistance. Alongside an intersectional feminist lens, these concepts provided me with a framework for examining how expectations are maintained and reworked over time, and how relationships between generations shape women's experiences. In doing so, the chapter established the basis for exploring how daughterhood is understood and lived within Pakistani families, and how continuity and change emerge across generational and social contexts.

In chapter three, I discussed the methodologies I utilised in my research. In terms of my sample, I acknowledge that my study is not generalisable to the experiences of all Pakistani daughters, however I reiterate that my study did not set out to be representative of all Pakistani women. My 30 participants belonged to a specific community of Pakistani women. My research was carried out with heterosexual, British Pakistani Muslim women and so the narratives presented are unique to their lived experiences. Pakistani women are a diverse group of people with diverse experiences that will be shaped by various social and cultural contexts. As demonstrated in the literature review, although Pakistani women around the world have shared collective experiences, there are stark differences in terms of nationality, education levels, class, caste and religious sects. My study does not account for differences in all of these intersecting categories. My study is also focused on familial generations and only refers to nativity labels where relevant to help illustrate nuances. Adopting a migration model of generations may have yielded different set of experiences that could be correlated to wider socio-economic trends and patterns in the UK. It would also be interesting to have a larger sample size, to

explore different regions within the UK, or perhaps a more global study, to highlight shared and nuanced experiences across multiple intersecting identities.

My participants were accessed via purposive and snowball sampling techniques. Although this was well suited to my research, given the sensitive nature of my study and the need to establish trust within my participants, these techniques clearly shaped my research findings and reflect a practical approach to gaining a sample of relevant interviewees. Given the aim of my research, which was to give voice to women who are often marginalised within their families, amongst their communities and in the wider society, it would be worth researching those groups of women who are further overlooked in similar studies to mine, such as those women who outright disrupt dominant familial, cultural and religious ideals in Pakistani societies. For example, it would be interesting to explore the lives of Pakistani women who identify as queer, or women who do not follow a religion, women who do not live with their families, who have perhaps adopted children, or had children out of wed lock, have married outside of their culture, or have not married at all. There is ample potential for further interesting work in this field of research and alternative sampling techniques would be useful in accessing these even harder to reach groups of women. My area of research would also benefit from further projects that explore the experiences, attitudes and practices of Pakistani men in Pakistani families. This would provide invaluable insights into how Pakistani men view and understand their counterparts and how this shapes the treatment of Pakistani women.

Intergenerational research with Pakistani men would also provide us with insights into changes and continuities in traditional patriarchal and cultural practices. It would be interesting to explore their perspectives on Pakistani women's social and economic progression.

In this thesis, I adopted a creative approach to narrative style interviews. I asked my participants to recount their experiences of being a daughter in a Pakistani family and used collage making, mind-mapping and object-elicitation methods during the interviews to facilitate engagement and capture unique insights (Mannay, 2016). As outlined in chapter three, I found these methods to be particularly useful for making

my participants feel comfortable to talk about their life experiences in their own words, and to get rich, thick stories that enabled me to explore these lived experiences. Given that my participants were of different age groups, ranging from 15 to 86 years old, and for some this was the first time they had engaged in a research project, I anticipated for differences in skills and confidence in participating in the creative methods. Therefore, they were given the choice as to which method they wished to utilise during their interview and the order in which they wanted to use them. I was careful not to impose any particular method or structure onto them as I wanted to avoid the possibility of making them feel uncomfortable or judged. My purpose for using creative methods was to elicit deep reflections and narratives, especially regarding sensitive topics. My analysis focused on both the content of the images and participants' explanations of their meanings, helping me stay close to their meaning-making practices. However, I acknowledge that the specific materials and methods options provided to my participants have shaped the creative images to some extent as they could only make use of what was provided to them by me as the researcher. I did not suggest that they could use their own materials for their collages or mind maps. I also faced the issue of some participants asking me to draw and write on their behalf, and in this sense the methods became participatory in nature. The use of three creative methods also proved to be time-consuming and resulted in lengthy interviews, especially in cases where participants wanted to engage in all three methods. Alternative visual and creative methods could be employed in future research with Pakistani women, such as found images to invoke memories, or the use of cameras to allow them to capture moments and objects that are of significance to them. Participants could also be asked to create their visual images before the interview takes place. However, it needs to be considered that this can potentially mean that interviews do not take place until the visual data is created by the participant, and they may require prompting and reminding to complete the activities, and this can be difficult to manage for researchers (Mannay, 2016). Working more closely with visual images is something I look to do in my future work and there is also the potential to produce a methods paper that discusses the theoretical and practical challenges I have encountered in my research and write up of my thesis.

In addition to creative methods, alternative methods such as an ethnographic study with Pakistani women may also have yielded different and insightful narratives. As an insider researcher, I would argue that I am in an advantageous position whereby I can immerse myself into the culture of my participants without sticking out too much. By spending time with them, in their homes, at their mosque's, and their community events or special occasions, I would be able to build rapport with the women in my study and capture their experiences in situ. Nonetheless, this approach would raise some ethical concerns in terms of negotiating my role in the fieldwork. I may still be regarded as an outsider, my presence may shape participant behaviour, and there may be apprehensions as to the intentions of my research. I argue that narrative interviews were well-suited to my study as they minimised access issues, there was no requirements for a key informant, and I was able to carry out interviews in the privacy of my participant's homes, where they felt comfortable to talk openly and freely.

In the empirical chapters, I drew on reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) to interpret participants' accounts and identify patterns of meaning across the dataset, and composite narratives to present and illustrate continuity and change in experiences and attitudes. This approach enabled me to examine how expectations associated with daughterhood are understood and lived, while recognising the researcher's active role in shaping interpretation. My analysis is guided by an intersectional feminist perspective, examining how gender, patriarchy, and generation structure women's experiences within family life.

An intersectional lens is central to the analysis, recognising that experiences of daughterhood are shaped through the interaction of generation, ethnicity, religion, and migration. This allows for an exploration of change both within and across generations, showing how expectations are experienced differently depending on women's social positioning and access to resources such as education and employment.

My positionality as a Pakistani Muslim daughter informed both the research process and the interpretation of the data. Familiarity with the cultural context supported the identification of patterns that may otherwise appear routine, while also requiring ongoing reflexive engagement to critically examine how these practices operate within broader gendered expectations. Within RTA, this positionality is understood as an integral part of the analytic process, rather than something to be bracketed or removed.

Across my study, I pay particular attention to how gendered and patriarchal family arrangements are understood to organise responsibilities, relationships, and opportunities across the life course. Within this framework, resistance is not conceptualised as a singular or oppositional act. Instead, drawing on Kandiyoti (1988) and Raheja and Gold (1994), I understood resistance as embedded within everyday practices, where women negotiate expectations in subtle, context-specific ways. This includes moments of adaptation, reflection, and strategic compliance, illustrating how women work within constraints while, at times, reshaping them. I found this understanding of resistance particularly useful for analysing how women's actions may appear compliant on the surface, while reflecting more complex forms of negotiation in practice.

While my study does not adopt a formally indigenous methodological framework, it is informed by principles of post-colonial feminism that prioritise relationality, representation, and the importance of grounding analysis in participants' lived experiences (Bhattacharya, 2022; Dawson et al., 2017; Wilson, 2020). In her book, 'Black feminism and qualitative inquiry', Evans-Winters (2019) argues that Black women as researchers and Black women as the researched have both been marginalised and that dominant research conversations and products are more reflective of the White middle class. She stresses that it is crucial we decolonise our minds and decolonise research methodologies to capture diverse perspectives and representations, i.e., of those who exist on the margins of society (p. 2).

Bhattacharya (2016) writes about her experiences of being on the margin as a transnational Brown woman in academia. She brings attention to how colonising and micro aggressive discourses intersected and manifested materially for her in higher

education and how she uses scholarship to resist and accommodate oppressive structures (p. 317). One of the ways in which she does this is by imagining her audience to be women of colour who may have similar experiences as her. This inspires her to write, question and represent her work in a particular way that ensures 're-presentation'. Another way in which she does this is by using an arts-based approach in her research, such as plays, photos and poems (2013a; 2013b). Manning (2018) writes about her experiences of becoming a decolonial feminist ethnographer as she carried out research with Maya women in Guatemala. Her research aim was to explore Maya women's lived experiences of working and organising. Manning (2018) explains that her position as a 'White, university-educated, heterosexual, middle-class, European (Irish) woman' (p. 317) meant that she had a particular way of seeing and thinking that needed to be challenged to represent the true lived experiences and meanings of the Maya women in her study. To do this, she ensured that Maya women were partners in the research process, including the translator, and that findings were continually questioned and contextualised to avoid western interpretations and definitions. Manning (2018) explains that continually engaging in reflexive practices helped her resist 'othering' Maya women and enabled her to reflect their lived experiences in her writing.

The use of narrative interviews, alongside participatory and creative methods, allowed participants to share their experiences in ways that reflect their own perspectives, while enabling a systematic and interpretive analysis of patterns across the dataset. In this sense, my focus on every day and contextually grounded forms of resistance resonates with approaches that seek to centre locally situated knowledge and lived realities.

My methodological and conceptual approach supports a sociological analysis of daughterhood that foregrounds lived experience, relational power, and the ongoing interplay between structure and agency. It provides a framework for examining how expectations are sustained, negotiated, and reworked across generations within Pakistani families.

In Chapters Four, Five and Six, I presented the empirical findings of the study. Chapters Four and Five were structured around the central analytic themes of burden and honour, examining how these shape women's experiences of daughterhood. Chapter Six then brought these themes together to explore patterns of continuity and change over time.

Chapter Four focused on burden, examining how daughters are positioned as responsible for maintaining family wellbeing. Participants' accounts highlighted expectations around domestic labour, marriage, motherhood, and endurance within family life. These included pressures to marry early, marry within the family, have children, and in particular, give birth to sons. Across generations, women described how these responsibilities were understood as integral to daughterhood, while also showing change in how they engaged with them.

Chapter Five focused on honour as a framework shaping expectations of behaviour and responsibility. Participants described how daughters are closely associated with maintaining family reputation, particularly through marriage, everyday conduct, and self-presentation. Honour was understood as an ongoing process of evaluation, where women's actions were linked to the standing of the family and wider community. In this sense, I explored how honour builds on the responsibilities identified in Chapter Four, extending them into expectations of self-regulation and moral accountability.

At the same time, the analysis across both chapters shows that women do not engage with these expectations in uniform ways. Rather than framing experiences in terms of compliance or resistance, participants described a range of everyday negotiations. In areas such as marriage, appearance, and relationships, women spoke about adjusting, accommodating, and working within acceptable boundaries while retaining some degree of personal agency. I showed how these patterns reflect how expectations are both sustained and reinterpreted in practice.

Chapter Six brought these themes together through the use of composite narratives, which were used to illustrate both shared patterns and variations across and within

generations. This chapter mapped how expectations associated with daughterhood are maintained and reworked over time, highlighting how changing social, economic, and cultural conditions, particularly migration, education, and employment, shape how these experiences are understood.

Overall, the empirical chapters show that daughterhood is neither fixed nor uniformly experienced. While expectations linked to burden and honour remain recognisable across generations, they are engaged with in different ways. The findings therefore highlight a pattern of continuity alongside change, where daughterhood is shaped through ongoing processes of interpretation, negotiation, and adaptation across generations.

In terms of representing my empirical findings in these chapters, it is worth noting that I tried to remain open to different forms of representation and had tried multiple forms in the process of writing up my thesis. I wanted to utilise an approach that would capture the women's interesting, complex and nuanced experiences. Initially, when I began writing my empirical chapters, I had started each chapter with a quote taken from a participant's narrative that I felt captured the essence of the theme being discussed. I then tested out the use of multi-voiced poems to open up my discussions. These poems were constructed using the direct words of my participants with an aim to capture their shared experiences. I also collated all the visual images created in my study into one chapter with an aim to prompt the reader to reflect on the narratives and feel the images and their emotions, as they reached the end of the thesis. However, I felt that these forms of data representation were not enabling me to show what I wanted to show in the most effective manner. I finally settled on integrating the visuals into my first two empirical chapters and using composite narratives in my third empirical chapter. I found that integrating the visual images provided clarity and further insights to the reader as it allows them to take some time to explore the visual, reflect on what is being represented and to make connections with the accompanying narrative in the context it was being spoken about. As discussed in Chapter 3 and Chapter 6, the composite narratives enabled me to open up the narratives of my participants on a deeper level whilst presenting a picture of each generation as a whole. Within chapter 6, each

generation presents two composite narratives that address the shared and nuanced experiences in doing daughterhood that the women spoke about in narrative interviews and through their visual images. In line with my theoretical stance and research aims, representing my data in this way enabled me to ensure that my data did the talking, in all its complexities and contradictions, while remaining accessible.

In discussing my research journey and how I came to write my thesis, I have acknowledged its strengths and limitations, and proposed alternative approaches and methods to help tackle some of the practical and theoretical challenges I faced. Bhattacharya (2017) has noted how there is no one correct way of designing or conducting a qualitative study and many researchers blur boundaries between methodologies to fit their qualitative projects. She states that, “no matter how much we try, we are not able to capture the whole” (p. 109).

7.4 Contributions to existing literature

My research has contributed to existing literature on Pakistani women in the UK in a number of ways. My study is an original contribution to knowledge as the only study that has explored Pakistani women’s experiences of daughterhood across three generations in the UK. My study highlights how Pakistani women engage with and reinterpret gendered expectations within family life. Across generations, participants describe ways of responding to established roles and responsibilities, at times maintaining them and at times adapting them in relation to their own aspirations. Access to education, employment, and religious knowledge emerges as important in shaping how women participate in decision-making within their families.

At the same time, these processes unfold within ongoing patriarchal family structures that continue to shape women’s opportunities and constraints. Rather than representing a clear shift towards independence, my analysis shows how women navigate these conditions through ongoing negotiation, illustrating how daughterhood is shaped through both continuity and context-specific change.

I highlight the negotiation techniques employed by women of different generations as they attempt to resist and challenge familial and cultural expectations in their unique ways, some better than others, nevertheless both at great risk. I demonstrate how family, culture and religion remain prominent in shaping Pakistani women's lived experiences of education, employment, marriage, reproduction and identity. In doing so, I have emphasised the significance of religion in aiding women to not only cope with familial challenges but to formulate new understanding and expectations of their roles within families and in the public world. As they navigate and reinterpret religious, cultural and familial understandings, young women are actively negotiating multiple belief systems to re-work their meanings of daughterhood.

My study goes beyond previously reviewed literature that highlight how patriarchal belief systems position Pakistani women as inferior to men (Muhammad, 2009; Hussain et al., 2015; Agboatwalla, 2000; Azam et al., 2021) with an expectation to suppress their own ambitions and desires in order to fulfil family obligations and maintain family honour (Metlo, 2012; Mohammad, 2015; Fatima, 2019; Keddie, et al., 2019). The narratives in this study suggest that traditional patriarchal and familial expectations continued to shape how many first-generation women, and some second-generation women who migrated through marriage, understood and experienced daughterhood. However, rather than simply accepting or rejecting these expectations, women often described navigating them in complex and context-specific ways. Among second-generation women, particularly in accounts of marriage and family life, there was evidence of greater questioning of gendered expectations and attempts to negotiate power relations within households. These negotiations were often expressed through everyday interactions with husbands and family members, as women articulated their own perspectives and sought greater influence over decisions affecting themselves and their children. Such findings resonate with earlier research that has highlighted how Pakistani women can exercise agency within familial relationships and create opportunities for change through everyday negotiations (Afshar, 1989; Chant, 2002; Mohammad, 2015). Across the second and third generations, many women also reflected on the kinds of

lives they hoped their daughters would have, expressing support for greater opportunities, autonomy, and choice. My study extends this literature by showing how mothers can contribute to intergenerational change through everyday family practices, not simply by challenging patriarchal norms directly, but by creating space for different possibilities and futures for their daughters within the constraints and relationships that shape family life.

My study reinforced the significance of religion in younger generations of Muslim Pakistani women's assertion of their identities (Charsley, 2005; Alexander, 2000; Rozario, 2012; Bolognani & Mellor, 2012). My research has demonstrated how third-generation Pakistani women were more vocal and active about their determinations to bring about generational change, through their lifestyle choices and decision making strategies that were backed by a different interpretation of religion and financial independence. These choices consisted of delaying marriage to pursue their education and careers, marrying someone of their choice as opposed to their parent's choice, learning the religion for themselves rather than accepting what they were told, and putting the value back into Pakistani daughters through a change in attitudes and practices. My study suggests that the attitudes prevailing amongst the younger Pakistani generation of women are no longer propagated by men, but by women, and are understood to be strengthened by a more correct interpretation of religion that does not devalue women, and a sense of financial independence and shift from depending on men. My study also highlights that religion that was being used as a coping mechanism by earlier generations is now being used as a tool to negotiate and challenge disempowering power relations. Ultimately, daughterhood is not simply passed down across generations, but is continually made and remade through the ways women engage with the expectations that shape their lives.

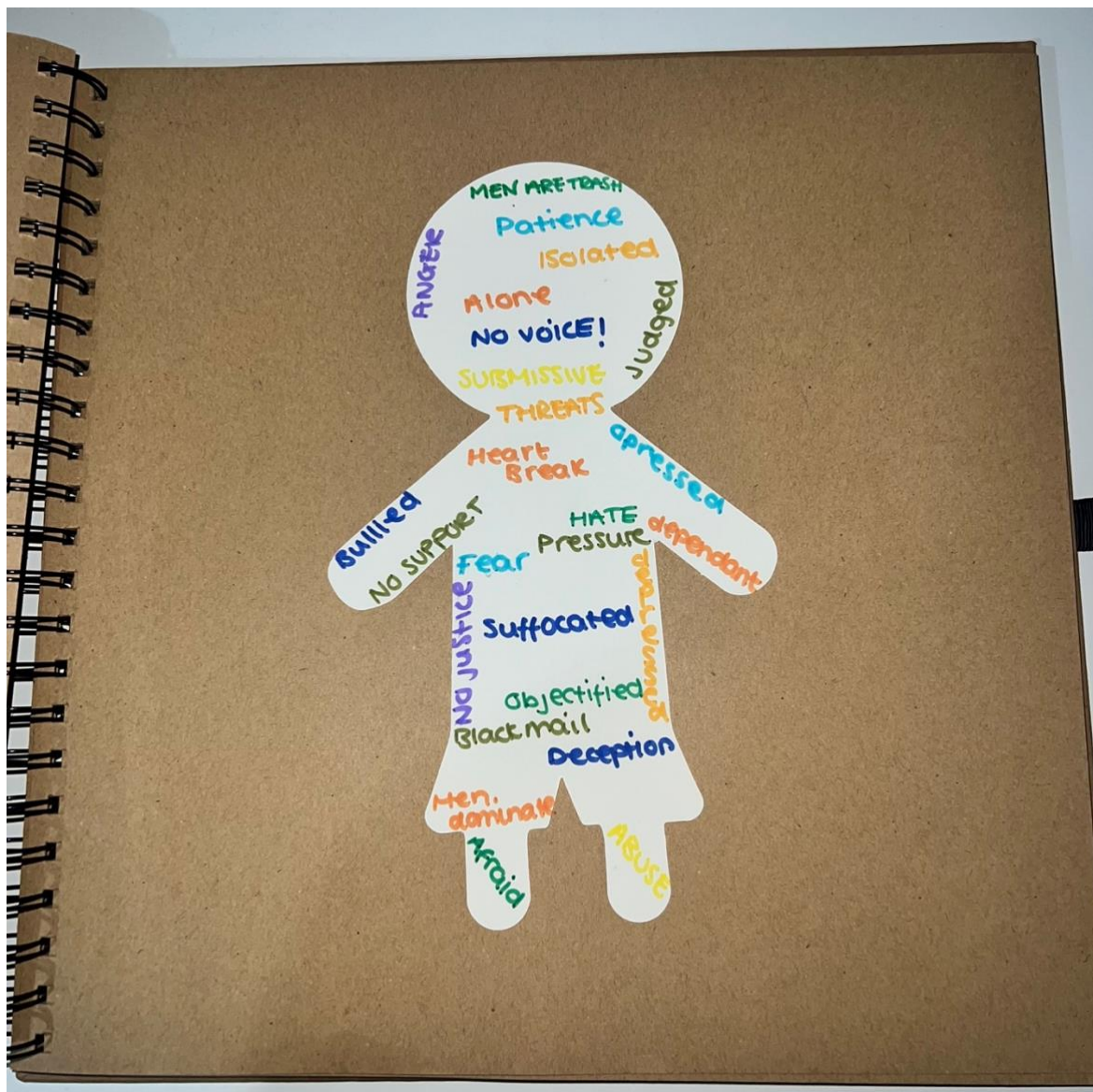
Based on the empirical findings of my study, I contend that education is essential for Pakistani Muslim women's ability to recognise and attain their rights. A compulsory state education enables them this opportunity through its acquisition of literacy and analytical skills, which women can then use to study Islam and their rights. The right to education also offers women a sense of protection when it comes to violation of

rights in other areas such as marriage. Given the increase in the uptake of higher education and employment by Pakistani women and these spaces leading women to assert new gender identities, there is also a need to further explore how Pakistani women can be better supported in employment and education as they face immense familial and societal pressures that may be inhibiting their participation, satisfaction and performance in work and academia. In essence, as I navigate through continuity and change across the three generations, I notice a shift towards more direct engagement with religious knowledge, reducing reliance on male religious authorities and family elders in shaping their decisions. An Islamic identity enables women to have both a domestic and public role. However, it is important to note that there is heteronormative and heterosexual presumption at work here, and the further research is needed to highlight how this may differ for those Muslim women who do not fit into these positions. The Pakistani community would also benefit from projects that explore and promote greater cohesion and understanding between genders and generations. Given that a reinterpretation of Islam was found to be key in the negotiating and resisting of traditional expectations, the possibilities for additional research in this field remain potent.

7.5 Final reflection

Inspired by my achievement of winning 1st prize at the Images of research competition for my doctoral study, as a final reflection I have created a visual image of my own that is representative of my personal experiences of doing daughterhood in a Pakistani family.

Figure 21: Researcher's visual image



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Appendix A



PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET



Daughters in Pakistani Families

April 2019

What is the research about?

I want to explore the experiences of Pakistani women from different generations and what it is like for them as daughters in their families and communities.

I am hoping to learn about the positive experiences of daughterhood as well as the challenges women may face and how they try overcome these challenges.

Why would I like you to be involved?

You will be able to share your thoughts, opinions and experiences. This is your chance to tell your story and help improve our understanding and future work with women just like you!

What will it involve?

We will spend some time together to talk about your experiences and we will use fun and creative methods to help us do this (see attached sheet). This may take a minimum of 1 hour and can last as long as you need it to. You can decide whether you would like to do this at home or at a familiar public place where you feel comfortable.

What happens with the research?

Our conversations will be audio-recorded for later analysis when writing my thesis. Data collected may also be used in future reports, publications or presentations.

Data will be retained for no less than 5 years or at least 2 years post-publication and then destroyed in accordance with the Data Protection Act.

Confidentiality

The identity of your or your family will **not** be made public in any research publications. I will ensure both anonymity and confidentiality to all participants involved in the study.

Consent

Participation in the research is totally voluntary, but does require written consent. You will have the opportunity to discuss your involvement and have any questions answered before giving your written consent.

What happens if you no longer want to be involved?

You are free to withdraw from the study at any point without having to give reason. In this instance data that has been collected will be destroyed and you will cease to be part of the study.

Who is doing the research?

I am a Post-Graduate PhD student at Cardiff University, School of Social Sciences. I am happy to be contacted with any questions about this research study:

Name: Henna Nisa

Email: NisaH@cardiff.ac.uk

Mob: 07383985345

Below are the contact details of my supervisors overlooking this project, should you wish to contact them:

Professor Sin Yi Cheung

Professor Emma Renold

Email: cheungsy@cardiff.ac.uk

Email: renold@cardiff.ac.uk

Tel: [+44\(0\) 29 2087 5446](tel:+44(0)2920875446)

Tel: [+44 29208 76139](tel:+442920876139)

Next steps?

Attached you will find the consent form. This needs to be completed and returned directly to me. I will then get in touch with you to discuss the next steps.

I thank you in advance for your time and participation. If any questions do arise, please feel free to contact me at any time.

Appendix B



PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM



Daughters in Pakistani Families

Participant Identification Number:

April 2019

Please tick box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated April 2019 for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily. ☐
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason. ☐
4. I understand that any information given by me may be used in future reports, publications or presentations by the researcher. ☐
5. I understand my contribution will be anonymous and my name will not appear in any reports, articles or presentations. ☐
6. I agree to take part in the above study. ☐

Name of Participant

Date

Signature

Researcher

Date

Signature

You may decline to participate in this study. You may end your participation in this study at any time. All materials generated from this or any interview will remain confidential.

Please sign and return this form to the researcher. Thank You.

Appendix C



PARENT/GUARDIAN INFORMATION SHEET



Daughters in Pakistani Families

April 2019

What is the research about?

I want to explore the experiences of Pakistani women from different generations and what it is like for them as daughters in their families and communities.

I am hoping to learn about the positive experiences of daughterhood as well as the challenges women may face and how they try overcome these challenges.

Why would I like your child to be involved?

Your daughter will be able to share her thoughts, opinions and experiences. This is her chance to tell her story and help improve our understanding and future work with women just like her!

What will it involve?

I will spend some time with your daughter to talk about her experiences and we will use fun and creative methods to help us do this (see attached sheet). This may take a minimum of 1 hour and can last as long as she needs it to. You can decide whether you would like your child to do this at home or at a familiar public place where you both feel comfortable.

What happens with the research?

Our conversations will be audio-recorded for later analysis when writing my thesis. Data collected may also be used in future reports, publications or presentations.

Data will be retained for no less than 5 years or at least 2 years post-publication and then destroyed in accordance with the Data Protection Act.

Confidentiality

The identity of your child or your family will **not** be made public in any research publications. I will ensure both anonymity and confidentiality to all participants involved in the study.

Consent

Participation in the research is totally voluntary, but does require written consent. You will have the opportunity to discuss your child's involvement and have any questions answered before giving your written consent for their participation.

What happens if you no longer want your child to be involved?

You are free to withdraw your child's participation at any point without having to give reason. In this instance data that has been collected will be destroyed and your child will cease to be part of the study.

Who is doing the research?

I am a Post-Graduate PhD student at Cardiff University, School of Social Sciences. I am happy to be contacted with any questions about this research study:

Name: Henna Nisa

Email: NisaH@cardiff.ac.uk

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Tel: [+44\(0\) 29 2087 5446](tel:+44(0)2920875446)

Tel: [+44 29208 76139](tel:+442920876139)

Next steps?

Attached you will find the consent form. This needs to be completed and returned directly to the researcher. The researcher will then get in touch with you to discuss the next steps.

I thank you in advance for your time and consent. If any questions do arise, feel free to contact me at any time.

Appendix D



PARENT/GUARDIAN CONSENT FORM



Daughters in Pakistani Families

Participant Identification Number:

April 2019

Please tick box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated April 2019 for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily. ☐
2. I understand that my child's participation is voluntary and that my child is free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason. ☐
4. I understand that any information given by my child may be used in future reports, publications or presentations by the researcher. ☐
5. I understand my child's contribution will be anonymous and my child's name will not appear in any reports, articles or presentations. ☐
6. I agree for my child to take part in the above study. ☐

Name of Parent/Guardian

Date

Signature

Researcher

Date

Signature

You may decline for your child to participate in this study. You may end your child's participation in this study at any time. All materials generated from this or any interview will remain confidential.

Please sign and return this form to the researcher. Thank You.

Appendix E



METHODS INFORMATION SHEET



Daughters in Pakistani Families

You will have the opportunity to talk at length about what it is like to be a daughter in a Pakistani family and your hopes for the future.

I will bring along some fun and creative stuff for us to use to help us talk about your experiences.



It would be great if you could bring along an object that is special to you. We can talk about what this object means to you and how it makes you feel. Here are some ideas to help you decide: a photograph, piece of clothing, jewellery or perhaps an ornament.

Together, we could create a map about the most memorable moments in your life and what they mean to you. You can draw, stick and write as much as you like.

You could even design and create your own 'Pakistani daughter' using a cut-out template of a mannequin. You get to decide how she looks, what she says and what she represents.



If possible, I would really enjoy spending some time with you at an activity that is part of your everyday life, for example, your walk to school or university, whilst you cook, clean, or sew, maybe a social event which you attend. It would be a great way for me to learn more about your life as a Pakistani daughter.

I would like to take photographs of all the amazing work you create during our time together and use them in my work.