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South Asian British Muslim women and their later working lives

in Greater Manchester:

Factors shaping labour market attitudes and behaviour

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Abstract

This paper explores how gendered migration and transnational lives shape the life-long attitudes and behaviour of older South Asian British Muslim women in the Greater Manchester labour market in the UK. Drawing on in-depth interviews with thirty first, second and third generation older South Asian British Muslim women living in Greater Manchester, the research situates these women's lives at the intersections of institutional, organisational and sociocultural terms and across borders to show how these intersections mobilise through shaping their attitudes and perceptions to subordinate and marginalise them in social spaces as well as dissuade them paid work. Findings show that the life-long intersections of the social categories of difference of age, gender, race, class and religion with their different meaning within different social systems and hierarchies reinforced these women's status as 'outsiders' in the UK, resulting in qualitative differences in their social and structural experiences. In highlighting their perceptions, understanding and interpretations of societal experiences, norms and expectations, the study contributes to the nuanced understanding of their attitudes and behaviour in the UK labour market. The study also contributes to 'translocational intersectionality' and 'life-course' debates by expanding on the analytical use of social categories of difference and cumulative

inequalities to unpack and explain the simultaneity of the categories' life-long positioning and effects within institutional, organisational, and sociocultural dynamics.

Keywords

Gender, intersectionality, life-course, ageing, migration, South-Asian women, Muslim women.

1. Introduction

As women grow older, they increasingly face double/triple jeopardy in almost all spheres of their lives (Wilks and Neto, 2013; Itzen & Newman, 2003; Proctor, 2001). The ageist stereotype attitudes, coupled with gender discrimination, often create acute scenarios for older women within society and workplaces alike (Wilinska, 2010; Postuma and Campion, 2009). Further, when class, race, ethnicity and religion are added to the mix, women in the older age bracket become more vulnerable given the complex set of intersectional identities which evidently places them at the centre of discussion on precarity (Calasanti and King, 2015). Research figure shows that historically ethnic minority and migrant women's employment rate has been persistently low in the UK. Of all the groups of ethnic minority women, the South Asian Muslim older group's participation in the labour market is one of the lowest. This group's employment rate is almost half of that of the native British White women and significantly lower when compared to other ethnic minority women's groups (BiTC, 2018).

Research in the area of work and employment mostly focus on the stereotyped attitudes of employers and society towards older female workers' group (Clarke and Griffin, 2008; Dennis and Thomas, 2007; McCann and Giles, 2002). On the other hand, research literature on migration history and study so far has been mostly interested in the issues around racial and gender oppression of migrant men and women of 'prime working age'

and/or skilled migrant men and women (Donaldson et al., 2009; Batnitzky et al., 2008; Faggian and Sheppard, 2007). But, there is still a dearth of research on migrant women's life-long social and work experiences in the existing literature. Moreover, research on how these women themselves perceive the life-long patterns of stereotypes, social norms and expectations, discrimination, and inequalities and understand their social as well as labour market positions and what determines and shapes those perceptions, attitudes and understanding demand equal attention in order to make sense of the bigger picture. Such research focus becomes particularly salient in the contexts of the UK's ageing population and extended working lives for women as a result of equalisation of state pension age for men and women. Considering the highly diverse career patterns and low participation of this group in the labour market and the significance of the number they represent in the Greater Manchester population, how this older women's group re-think their work and career following the changes in state pension age and post-Brexit situations is crucial for understanding how things will play out for the Greater Manchester labour market.

This study targets these gaps and explores the perceptions, attitudes and behaviour of South Asian British Muslim older women living in the UK's Greater Manchester area towards wage work and scrutinises the factors that shape those perceptions and attitudes. It further attempts to determine the extent to which these perceptions and attitudes are shaped by culture, society and religion (i.e. gendered migration and ideologies (Purkayastha, 2010)) and the extent to which these are the results of their UK social and labour market experiences. The study also examines how they perceive labour market opportunities and challenges and understand their positions in the UK labour market as 'South Asian British Muslim women'.

Informed by the theoretical framework of translocational positionality within the concept of intersectionality as well as the life-course theory, the research questions this paper explores are - 1. How do South Asian British Muslim older women perceive and understand their positions in the society and the labour market within Greater Manchester? 2. How are their attitudes and perceptions towards wage work and labour market behaviour shaped by normative (i.e. social and cultural) factors?, and 3. How are these attitudes and perceptions shaped by the UK/local labour market factors?

2. Migration: history and struggles

In order to recognise this group's diversity and differences, to write about their experiences and understanding from an informed social and economic perspective and to be able to understand their historical relationship to the UK labour market, it is important to provide an account of this group's migration and establish their socioeconomic history. The timing and status (e.g., marriage or family migration) of their initial migration, the changing structure of the regional and local labour markets following the restructuring of the national and global economies at the time of their arrival in the UK and persistent segregation of labour market by gender, class, race and ethnic background are central to such discussion.

The South Asian Muslim men (mostly low skilled and low qualified Pakistani and Bangladeshi) started arriving in the UK after the Second World War (Anitha and Pearson, 2018; Brah, 1993), but without their female kin who would join them later on. These men found employment in the textile industries of Lancashire, Yorkshire, Manchester and Bradford, cars and engineering factories in the West Midlands, and Birmingham, and growing light industrial estates in places like Luton and Slough (Brah, 1993). When the building of Mangla dam in 1966 submerged large parts of the Mirpur district of Punjab,

Pakistan, emigration from that area accelerated and more of them started arriving in the UK (ibid). Most Bangladeshi families in the UK in the present time are the result of large-scale migration in the early 1970s from the Sylhet region of Bangladesh, as people (mostly young men) fled from the civil unrest /liberation war in their homeland (Peach, 2006). They first started settling in the East London boroughs. Their arrivals peaked in the period 1980-84. These early settlers found employment in the garment industry in East London and the restaurants of the big London hotels, while some travelled to the Midlands and the north of England to work in textile factories. The women of both these Pakistani and Bangladeshi Muslim groups started arriving in the UK in the 70s and 80s and encountered the labour market in a period of major economic restructuring and recession. Census data show that migration from Bangladesh to the UK reached its peak in the period 1980-1988, which was also the period when the UK's unemployment rate was at its highest (Jenkins, 2010; Fingleton et al., 2012). All but four of the participants of this research migrated to the UK and settled in Greater Manchester around that time. This has remained a crucial factor for these women and their life-long career trajectories, for, this situation reflected the central idea of life-long cumulative effects of inequalities - 'success breeds success' or, 'vicious circle' of disadvantages (Ferrero and Shippe, 2009) for them.

Besides, the region of their settlement and its local economy also shaped the relationship of these women to the labour market. During the 1980s major job losses occurred in the West Midlands and in the North West, especially in the manufacturing sector, where there had been a concentration of South Asian workers (Brah, 1993). The devastating impact of this change on South Asian households can be easily gauged, since, according to the 1971 census just over sixty percent of male workers of South Asian origin in the region worked in the manufacturing industries. The women had also started concentrating in manufacturing, principally in the textiles and clothing industries, by that time. The decline

in the sector led to a large scale of job loss. So, for these groups, the adversities of the situation provided with a double-hit. First, amongst the early settlers, men and women who were already doing jobs in the sector, lost their jobs, creating pressure on the families' financial conditions; second, for the groups arriving later - both men and women found it difficult to find enough of those jobs that suited their qualifications.

Under such circumstances, a secondary labour market that had also been growing simultaneously, had seen an increasing number of these South Asian workers joining those sectors (those who had lost their jobs as well as the new settlers). There was also an expansion of small businesses, too, especially, those that had the 'working from home' options (Peach et al., 1990). For the women of this group, at the time of limited or no availability of a decent job within sight coupled with financial pressures on family income due to the recession, an option of paid work that could be carried out from home appeared to be a realistic one (especially for women with young children to care for). Therefore, from such historical, economic and human capital perspective, it can be argued that difficulties to enter the formal job market, initial entry as low skilled or home workers and subsequent stagnation in such labour market positions may have contributed towards this cohort lifelong low participation and precarious conditions in the labour market. Further, job loss by the partner and by themselves during the time of economic recession, facing hardship and falling into poverty as a result, difficulty to re-enter the job market after a job loss or a break could also be added to the long list of factors that might have affected their situations.

3. Methodology

In order to explore how the interviewees' transnational lives intersected with their intersectional identities of age, gender, class, race/ethnicity and religion and coupled with other intrinsic and extrinsic sociocultural factors to shape their perceptions, attitudes, behaviour and experiences, I adopted a translocational intersectional lens (Anthias 2008, 2012) complemented by the axioms of the Cumulative Inequalities model of life-course approach (Ferrero and Shippe, 2009). Such a combined lens helped in identifying and tracking 'the shifting and contested nature of the different axes of power in specific social situations and the location of individuals and groupings along those axes' (Yuval–Davis, 2011) as well as determining the role of life-long cumulative effects of advantages and disadvantages in shaping human behaviour and attitudes that eventually influence the quality of their lived experiences.

3.1 Research context

Greater Manchester provides an interesting context to explore the labour market attitudes and experiences of older South Asian Muslim migrant women because of their significant underrepresentation in the labour market coupling with the tensions around the increase in the state pension age for women in the UK and subsequent pressure upon them to find employment. The lower level of the national employment rate for this group is replicated at the local level as well. Besides, within the North West, research already has listed Manchester as one of the race disparity challenge areas (BiTC, 2018) which creates further tension since almost twelve percent of GM's population comprises of South Asian Muslim minority groups (ibid).

On the other hand, when it comes to the ageing workforce and older population, the city region was declared as the first age-friendly city in the UK to join the World Health Organisation's (WHO) Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities emphasising on establishing a culture and championing the idea of age-friendly workplaces. The city also has established a specialised 'Greater Manchester Ageing Hub', that has strategic goals to face the challenges of the ageing population and workforce. Although, how far the results of such strategic initiatives of encouraging, including and engaging the older population to be a part of the social change and dialogue are being effective and reaching the minority ethnic women's group remain debatable, since, there is still a lack of empirical understanding in research and policy measures of its significantly underrepresented and underemployed section of the population, i.e., the South Asian Muslim women in the older age bracket.

3.2 Sampling and data collection

The data reported in this paper were gathered through semi–structured face–to–face in-depth interviews with thirty South Asian British Muslim women (Pakistani and Bangladeshi) aged between 50 to 66 who had been living in the UK for at least 15 to 20 years and were either first, second or third generation British. The age range was selected based on two considerations: 1. Women who were approaching their retirement age, and, 2. The new state pension age for women (see the table below for some of the characteristics of the interviewees).

Table 1: Characteristics of interviewees	
Categories	**No. of interviewees**
Migration generation:	
First generation	24
Second generation	5
Third generation	1
Employment status	
Employed /self-employed	6
Unemployed/economically inactive with no previous experiences	5
Unemployed/economically inactive with previous experiences	11
Pensioner	8
Education:	
Qualifications obtained in home country	
Postgraduate level	3
Graduate level	3
High school level	8
Primary level	12
No formal education	4
UK qualifications	
A-level	2
NVQ level 2	2
Other (vocational and professional training)	18
No UK qualifications	8

The research was granted ethical approval by The University of Manchester's Research Ethics Committee. Access to the interviewees was facilitated by one of Greater Manchester's local South Asian women's organisation, and the interviewees were contacted and invited to take part in the study over the phone and in person. The interviewees self–selected themselves to take part in the research. Since South Asian British Muslim older women are significantly underrepresented in the Greater Manchester workforce, this presented a challenge to access a larger number of interviewees who were employed. However, this did not interfere with, rather helped to capture the nuances of their perceptions and attitudes towards such reluctance towards labour market participation.

Interview schedule included questions on interviewees' families, their social and work experiences as migrants to the UK as well as their lives before the migration, reasons for migrating to UK, their interactions within the UK societies (both with the people from within and outside their own communities), reasons for leaving the labour market (if had been employed previously), as well as questions about their career plans, aspirations and motivation. The interview schedule allowed to explore their lived experiences as migrant women working and living in Greater Manchester and the UK since the time of their migration as well as their lives back in their countries of origin before migration. The data collected in this way helped to understand how intersectional inequalities in different geographical locations and the aspects of temporality along the life-course shaped the attitudes, behaviour and experiences of this particular group (Rodriguez et al., 2016). The interviews lasted on average for an hour and a half and were recorded and transcribed in full. To maintain interviewees' anonymity, all names have been anonymised for the reporting purpose.

3.3 Data analysis

As previously stated, the focus on the categories of gender, race, religion, ethnicity, age and class is rooted in the relevance of the intersection of these categories to position these women in the work and social domains across borders. In the analysis, I highlighted the relevance of the institutional, organisational and sociocultural contexts to understand how intersections operate as part of systems of differentiation that shape the experiences and positioning of this group (see Brah & Phoenix, 2004; Choo & Ferree, 2010; Dhamoon, 2011). I also analysed the turning points of their lives and the transitions between life's different stages to emphasise the significance of building trajectories and their influences on these women's social and labour market positioning in their later lives.

The data analysis was an iterative process, and I adopted Bilge's (2009) two-step hybrid approach for this purpose. At the primary level, I started the analysis by independently reading and re-reading the interview transcripts and formulating codes that I identified as emerging from interviewees' accounts associated with their categories of difference. The codes were identified from the interview responses by interviewees. For the second-level coding, I focused on grouping categories based on the research interest in situating the attitudes/perceptions/experiences of the cohort in institutional, organisational and sociocultural terms. It was at this second-level coding that a life-course approach was operationalised where the codes indicative of any life-long /cumulative effects were included. For this, I applied the axioms of the 'Cumulative Inequalities' model by Ferrero and Shippe (2009). In cases of discrepancies, codes were either reassigned or re-coded. For the final step, I grouped the codes into theoretical categories to show how gender, age, class, race and religion as categories of differentiation were mobilised alongside time, space and location. I aggregated the codes based on how I identified them as articulating an integrated framework that shaped their attitudes and behaviour.

It is recognised that this approach is one way where there are others in which intersectional and life-course analyses could be crafted. Nevertheless, the intention remains that findings could be made sense of within the theoretical framework of the translocational intersectionality and the life-course approach that locates the life-long intersections of gender and other categories of difference within different institutional, organisational and sociocultural dynamics and structures across varying contexts, and show how resulting dynamics shape the material and relational experiences through shaping the attitudes and perceptions of the interviewees.

4. Findings and analysis: factors shaping interviewees' labour market attitudes and behaviour and their understanding of the labour market positions

In the following sections, I discuss the findings of this research and show how migration as a gendered phenomenon cross-cut other social and structural categories and hierarchies of system along with the time dimension of the life-course to shape these women's perceptions and attitudes as well as their experiences in the UK labour market. The findings are organised in two sections: in the first section, I show how the intersections operate in institutional and social terms to disadvantage their social positioning and shape their perceptions pre-migration. The second section shows how the intersections carry over as a mechanism that regulates and subordinates these migrant women in the UK social and community settings to further impact the shaping of their labour market attitudes, behaviour and experiences post-migration.

This process involved exploring and understanding how they themselves perceived, understood and described their migrant lives and the social positioning in both past and present contexts and through different transitions/turning points in their lives. These particular aspects of their migration trajectories in the interview analysis further focused on illuminating the extent to which the interviewees regarded their work attitudes and employment commitment to be driven by their changing needs to contribute to the household income or balancing care responsibilities with wage work and to what extent it reflected traditional attitudes and values regarding women's employment emerging from the surrounding normative expectations and patriarchal interventions.

4.1 Transnational lives: transitions and ties

Most of these interviewees' stories begin back in Pakistan and Bangladesh. Hence, their transnational lives cannot be understood in isolation of their national or local pictures, i.e. the contextual factors from their countries of origin before the time of their migration. All of the interviewees had rural cultural orientations from back home and belonged to a lower social class background with low family education. This early background had a particular bearing on these women's abilities to grasp certain particularities of the western European society (Choudhury, 2001); migration to the UK was a big leap for all the interviewees which began with a cultural shock and made it difficult for them to cope with the new ways of living. More than half of the interviewees got married before the age of eighteen, therefore, their recollection of 'life before migration' applied primarily to childhood and not including adulthood (as defined by post-age eighteen) for some of these women. The highlights of their pre-migration lives mainly consisted of, 1. their education and life at their parental homes, 2. information on their family education and occupations, 3. when,

why and how they migrated to the UK, and, 4. initial marital life and motherhood (if had not migrated immediately after marriage).

Their perceptions and attitudes towards wage work had been formed during the early years of their lives and within the boundaries of their family and social relations where the normative expectations from women had been different (than the UK) under a different gender regime (that had established gendered roles for women) which ring-fenced their imaginations (Bhopal, 2018). When they migrated to the UK, either with their parents or with their husbands, not only did their bodies travel, but their ethnicity, social class, cultural and religious orientations also travelled with their bodies (Anthias, 2008, 2012). Women suffer disproportionately from the normative expectations and interventions of the society and culture as it is harder for them to cross the class or social boundaries despite crossing the locational boundaries. In other words, migration tests their boundaries, that is, who belongs to the community, through the reproduction of traditions and upholding cultural values. This is particularly because women have traditionally been considered as the vessel for perpetuating cultural values and traditions. This was evident in the interviewees' early life experiences where some of the second-generation interviewees were not brought to join their families in the UK simply because of their gender identity.

Asma, a 62-year-old second-generation South Asian British Bangladeshi migrated to the UK with her husband after her marriage, since she was left behind with her sister's family back in Bangladesh and not brought to the UK simply because of her gender identity:

Researcher: So, did you come to the UK with your husband?

Interviewee: "Yes. But, I am actually a second-generation British. My parents and the rest of the family was already living here at the time of my migration. My father had come here first and then he brought my mum and my brothers. I was left behind to live with my married sister's family. My father did not bring me here because I was a girl, and could not possibly earn money by working outside the home..."

- Asma, 62, second-generation British Bangladeshi

She further claimed that living all those years apart from her parents and her family had deeply affected her psychologically. Her account alludes to the conspicuous gender hierarchy within the patriarchal social relations which was further exposed in the irregularities in her career trajectories throughout her life courses.

The high level of low education in the sample (see table) is a further confirmation that the established gender norms within the society these women were brought up in back in the time in their country of origin. On being asked about her educational qualifications, one of the interviewees responded:

Interviewee: "During those days, girls did not go to school much, and so I did not. My brothers used to go to school. I used to do household chores with my mum at home. But, I learned how to read the Holy Qur'an."

- Rahima, 62, second-generation British Bangladeshi

Rahima's account further shows here how religion was used as a paradigm to legitimise and institutionalise patriarchy through prioritising girls' religious education over the conventional education. Their entire childhood and adolescence years were focused on learning household (or better termed as 'feminised') skills such as sewing and cooking.

This had further implications since this set the course for what types of job would be available to these women when they decided to join the labour market after their migration to the UK.

Another important factor that might have played an important role in shaping these women's attitudes and behaviour towards wage work is these women's strong ancestral ties, although it does not come across as a prominent theme in the existing research literature (Shah et al., 2010; Modood, 2005; Parekh, 2000). Most of these interviewees travelled back and forth and lived in their countries of origin for most of their lives and at regular intervals. One of the interviewees returned to live in her home country at the age of six and lived there until she got married and gave birth to two of her children while a few other interviewees lived in their home country for a varying span of time at regular intervals for various reasons (e.g., marriage, childbirth and death of husbands). These ties are further explored in the following accounts:

Interviewee: "I was born here, but went to stay in Bangladesh when I was three and stayed until I got married at the age of 15. I know, quite young, right? My first child was born soon, so I stayed there for a few years more. I also had to take private exams for that reason to finish my school…"

- Najma, 61, second-generation British Bangladeshi

Interviewee: "I went to Bangladesh to get married, and stayed there with my husband's family for two/three years, had my first child and then returned to the UK. I was actually missing my family and friends from here. But, I loved it there, too."

- Fariha, 59, third-generation British Bangladeshi

Interviewee: "I went to Bangladesh to get married and stayed there with my parents-in-law for almost five years after my marriage. My husband was not there with me though. He was working in Saudi Arabia at that time."

- Asia, 56, second-generation British Bangladeshi

It was as if they were able to identify themselves as British but did not quite belong here which did not allow them to pursue a life-long career in the UK. These transnational ties are important from another perspective - these were not a mere reflection of physical relocation but also the inheritance of the cultural understanding of caring, which can be explored in the following accounts:

Researcher: Why did you quit?

Interviewee: "My parents-in-law visited us in the UK and stayed for three months. I had to look after them and cook for them. I took a break from the job at that time and never thought of re-joining. It just did not happen."

- Asifa, 53, first-generation British Bangladeshi who worked in the textile industry during the initial period of her migration

Interviewee: "What else could I do? My brother would call me every day and beg to take care of his children…so, I had to quit my job for taking care of them."

- Age 63, first-generation British Bangladeshi who quit her job to care for her disabled brother's children so that his sister-in-law (who was the breadwinner of her brother's family) could continue working

Interviewee: "I spent all my savings and even borrowed money to help my stepsons' businesses and families. I had to. This is what you do. You have to be there for them with everything you have got"

- Age 61, second-generation British Pakistani

It is evident in these accounts that the intimacies of social relations and the cultural ties conditioned these women to perceive caring as their raison d'être; it was inconceivable to them not putting everyone else before themselves; not embodying the essence of being a woman: altruism. Thus, raised in a society that recognised strong assumptions about gender hierarchy translated into particular patterns of thought, feeling and behaviour specific to each gender for these women. This essentialist thinking had repercussions on these women's private and public lives. In private, essentialist ideas were translated into rules of conduct for the women as wife, mother and daughter. In public, it was believed that women's participation in the labour market was not necessary and/or unproductive and ineffective. Trapped inside such 'cult of traditional domesticity' these women had not been outspoken about the need to challenge the status quo of women's subordinate social position. The traditional family structure acted here as the source of these women's disempowerment.

4.2 Boundaries and social positioning in the UK

As these women crossed the borders of their homeland and ventured for new lives in the UK, not only did they enter into a new geographical territory but they also encountered a new social boundary enforced by the 'othering process' (Scharff, 2011; Bowlby and Evans, 2008; Ahmad, 2003) - a process that labelled them socially as a group 'less desirable', 'an outsider', 'the other', a process that did not cease to continue with age and time, only

heightened instead. Evidence in favour of this argument may be found in the fact that, whereas the dominant discourse (e.g., Abdel-Fadil and Leibmann, 2018) presents Muslim women as hyper-visible (mostly because of their physical appearances and attires), these older South Asian women have mostly been almost invisible socially as well as economically (Mirza, 2012) which is a result of a lack of scopes for their social and economic integration stemming from transnationalism. The boundaries they encountered in the labour market were not only in terms of 'othering' in the forms of occupational and racial segregation but also in terms of their diminishing social capital in the old age and lack of integration:

Home carer Rahela, a 56-year-old first-generation Muslim British Bangladeshi migrated to the UK as a political asylum seeker and had a better education than most of the cohort. She wore hijab at her work. Her account on workplace experiences reflects clear demarcation of race and religion prevalent in the UK society and labour market:

"Some of them (clients) would not want me as their carer. I can recall a couple of incidents where one of the elderly persons I was caring for, used to lock his door behind me so that I could not steal something and run away. He behaved very badly with me at the beginning. He once made an abusive remark when something came on telly about […]. I complained to the office a couple of times, but they said trust would not come easy. I would have to earn it."

- Rahela, 56, first-generation British Bangladeshi

Another interviewee, Faiza, a 62-year-old, unemployed first-generation British Bangladeshi who lost her job in the clothing industry in the 80s and had not been able to 'upskill' and find another job since that time shared her frustration over lack of opportunities for her in the labour market:

Interviewee: "Who will give me jobs now? They all hire people who can speak English, but I cannot…"

- Faiza, 62, first-generation British Bangladeshi

Another critical element to the articulation of 'the othering' was the strict gender hierarchy within their own community in the UK, which made them the 'outsider within' or 'the second other'. Even if these women were positive about working outside the home, the decision was not theirs to take, i.e. like most other financial and family decisions, decisions related to their work were made by the male members of the families (fathers, husbands and sons) (Shaw, 2014; Dwyer, 2000). All decisions related to the place and type of jobs they would do, the hours they would work and how they should balance between care responsibilities and paid work were made by the male figures of the families:

Interviewee: "That factory was very close to my house, and I could walk there. When it closed down, my husband said there was no need to look for another job since there were no other factories nearby...he said, "it is really not necessary to go that far to work, you know. I will take care of the money matters."

- Saliha, 62, first-generation British Bangladeshi who lost her factory job during the recession in the 80s and did not do any other paid work since then

Interviewee: "My son says, you do not need to work now. You are too old to work outside the home."

- Sabira, 58, first-generation British Pakistani

Put simply, these women were not in charge of their own narratives - positioned as the 'outsider within', they felt an acute sense of social powerlessness. This was further amplified by their lack of financial freedom, which translated into a lack of economic power.

In addition, most of these women did not consider caring as a 'skill' and while caring and household responsibilities had been limiting their time and possibilities of working outside the home throughout their lives, and they invested all their time and effort into caring, it did not entitle them to any social power in return.

Moreover, their earlier experiences of community support pre-migration were highly satisfactory where they had more than adequate family and community support back in their country of origin. Post-migration, their high expectations of such support from the UK community was only met with disappointment. In these new scenarios, they hung onto what little support they could have, but believed it was not enough to motivate them to participate in the labour market. It is worth mentioning here that the community support these women expected were not only in relation to the support for caring and household responsibilities, but also in relation to the support required in times of financial and family crisis such as divorce, fighting loneliness post a partner's death and even marriage of children:

Rashida, a 62-year-old, first generation British Bangladeshi had to quit her job to look after her 30-year-old epileptic son. She expressed her extreme frustration over the lack of community support in finding a bride for her son -

Interviewee: "Nobody does anything to help you here. Nobody cares. Not only me; there are also other mothers who need help in marrying off their children. But, the community does nothing about it."

- Rashida, 62, first-generation British Bangladeshi

Firoza, a 56-year-old, first-generation British Bangladeshi also expressed her discontentment about the community support in relation to unhealthy competition to find jobs:

Interviewee: "Where are those jobs? How do we find them? Yes, we do go to the job centre. But, people around here need to spread the words too, right? But no one does. It's the competition, you know. No one wants you to know about those opportunities."

- Firoza, 56, first-generation British Bangladeshi

So, on top of feeling like 'an outsider' in the UK society as a result of their gender, racial and religious identities, these women also felt rejected as the 'outsider within' by their local ethnic community which further deterred them from actively looking for jobs. These findings also conclude that in order to motivate themselves to participate more in the UK labour market, they needed to achieve that sense of oneness with the UK society, and escape the incessant feeling of the otherness within their own local community.

5. Conclusion

As Rachel Silvey (2004) points out, feminist views of identity and subjectivity turn us towards an understanding of the migrant self as constituted through a range of intersecting, sometimes competing, forces and processes, and as playing agentic roles within these processes. This has been observed throughout the interview analysis and findings presented in this paper. These women's transnational lives and their perceptions have been shaped by the normative factors - the normative factors that have been either socially, culturally or structurally established.

To begin with, patriarchal structures of the interviewees' families meant as heads of the families, the fathers of these women prioritised the education and career of any male heirs and daughters and wives were entrusted with the household chores/responsibilities only. Further, the normative roles of women as it is understood and expected from the community played an important role in forming their perceptions, attitudes and behaviour

and assuming their orientations regarding working outside the home. As these women were married to men from the same community and with similar social class background and transitioned into mature age, these notions, perceptions and ideologies formed during the early age as informed by the normative expectations of the society were thus reproduced; and, these women merely conformed to the gendered role of primary caregivers of their families. The financial decisions were also made by the male members of the family (husbands and sons) and women were kept away from any decision making with regard to the earnings of the families. Therefore, the normative expectations from women of 'altruism' and 'caregiving' became their only reality. On top of this, the 'perceived' lack of local community support and suitable job opportunities in the UK labour market acted as additional tools for demoralising them to pursue work outside the home.

The central concern of this paper is to show the inseparability of race and gender and other social categories and how these are embedded in the societal and institutional structure and impact women's transnational lives. These women refused to see themselves as an individual first, but saw themselves as 'women' and all the roles and expectations that come with such identity. It is shown here that the concept of intersectionality which centres on the variety of axes of demarcation/identities and the concept of translocational positionality that focuses on shifting dynamics and people's identities across space and locations, are useful in understanding their attitudes and social behaviour and that these are conditioned by a variety of forces playing upon the individual both in enabling and constraining ways and options and in shaping their coping strategies as well as lived experiences (Rodriguez et al., 2019). In addition, it has been shown that paying attention to the life-courses while using intersectionality is helpful not only for understanding the life-long trajectories of older women but also for construing the correlations between the successes and failures of life's different stages. In essence, what has been flagged up here is the importance of these women's transnational lives, the

importance of the shifts in time and space and location and how age, class, culture, race and religion cross-cut gender to impact women's perceptions and attitudes to determine their labour market behaviour.

6. Directions for future research

Research literature in migration studies mostly focused on prime working age migrants while labour market research reproduced the dominant representations of these women of passivity and victimisation in the society. The discourse on gender studies and western feminism, on the other hand, often relegated them to a marginal position, using universal labels for 'South Asian migrant women' ending up in ignoring the rich variety of cultural, racial and class categories amongst them as well as the age dynamics. These migrant women do not ascribe to the tenets of western feminism, and thus, there is a need for revising the rhetoric. Future research, therefore, needs to focus more on the translocational intersectional aspects to capture the nuances of this group's transnational lives, identities and experiences to explore and understand their social positions.

7. Funding

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