

Intergenerational *Trauma*



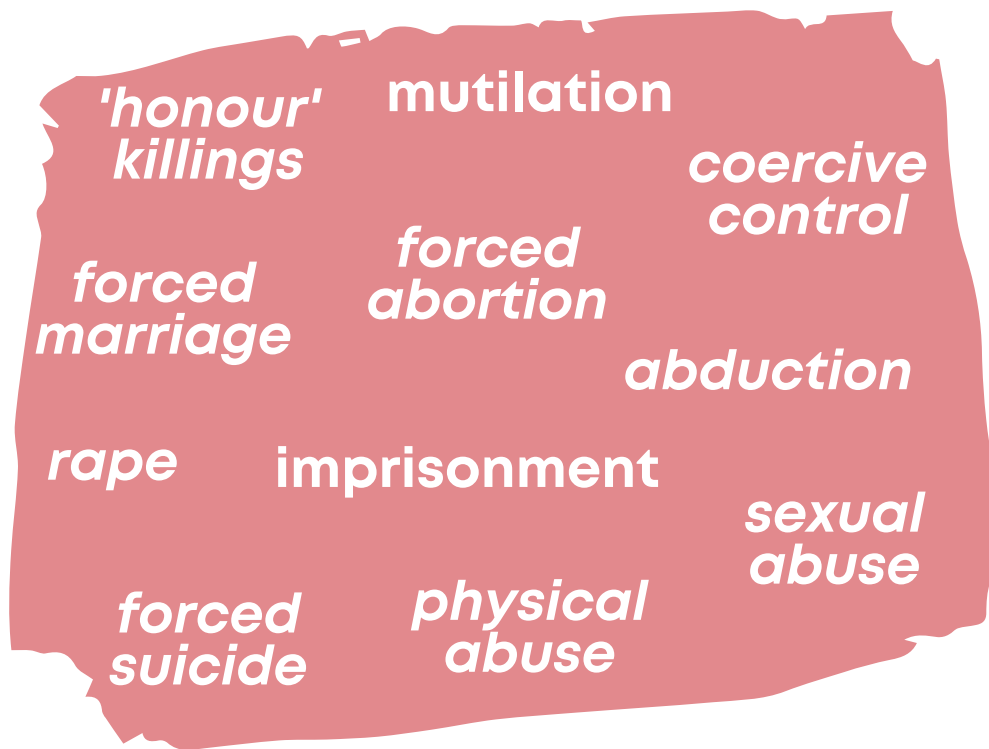
Reg in Scotland No: SC432921
Scot Charity No: SC027690

What is 'honour'-based abuse?

{'honour'-based violence
'honour' crime}

Is a term that is used to describe a range of crimes or incidents mainly perpetrated against women and girls by their family or their community.

They are acting to defend their perceived 'honour' because they believe that the victim(s) have done something to bring 'shame' to the family or the community.



It's many forms include

Definitions of honour-based abuse (HBA) and its forms vary across cultures and there is seemingly a lack of consensus on how to identify HBA in Scotland over other forms of abuse.

The experiences of Muslim women, in particular, may be compounded by additional barriers to accessing support such as:

racist and stigmatised responses from services

fear of rejection from their community

multiple perpetrators

language constraints

no recourse to public funds

Recognising the need for a deeper understanding of 'honour'-based abuse in Scotland, we at AMINA decided to embark on a journey exploring 'honour'-based abuse and the impact it can have on our communities.

Throughout this journey, understanding the mechanisms of the intergenerational transmission of 'honour' is imperative for the development of interventions moving forward.

Intergenerational Trauma

It isn't just experienced by an individual - it can extend from one generation to the next, being unwittingly suggested throughout an individual's life from an early age.

It is often:
silent undefined secretive



Surfacing through nuanced behaviour, it allows for communities to become desensitised to the trauma and powerless to the recurrence; thus allowing the cycle to continue.

It will require a huge amount of encouragement and support to stop this trauma from continuing. We must recognise our role in the eradication of 'honour'-based intergenerational trauma within our communities and act now.

Mariam Ahmed

CEO of Amina MWRC

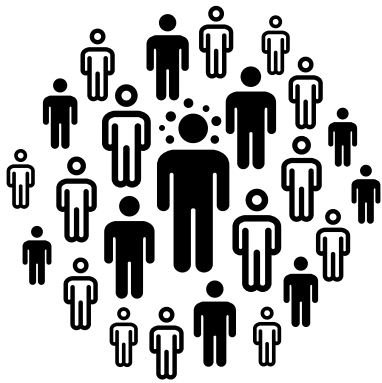


Muslim and BME women continue to be the most marginalised in Scottish society with multiple forms of oppressions and barriers.

We need to have a better understanding of honour-based abuse in Scotland, use an intersectional approach in supporting women and work with communities and women with lived experience of honour-based abuse to help better our responses to these forms of gender-based violence.

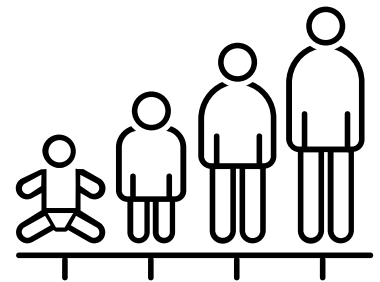
Aims and Objectives

Women, since the beginning of recorded history, have been traumatised through physical, sexual, emotional and economic abuse. All major cultures operate under a patriarchal system and we must consider this when talking about HBA.



As a society, we are, seemingly, beginning to understand more about how trauma can impact not only an individual but an entire community and subsequent generations. The term 'intergenerational trauma' details how historical trauma can determine the lives of members of families and communities across multiple generations. This can have an impact on their health, well-being, behaviour and self-esteem.

Familial trauma can be repeated, and often unconsciously, handed down to the next generation. While everyone is susceptible to intergenerational trauma, some communities are more vulnerable due to their particular histories and beliefs. This is particularly the case with gender-based violence therefore it is important that we are looking at the trauma of women differently when considering women's experience.



Recognition and awareness of 'honour'-based abuse in Scotland is low.

It is often seen as a cultural issue.



We must gain a deeper understanding on the intergenerational trauma being passed down through generations of Muslim women in Scotland and identify what changes need to be made in order to better support those impacted.

Aims and Objectives

In an effort to further develop our awareness and understanding of HBA, we partnered with **Glasgow Women's Library** in order to develop a series of workshops that would allow us to better grasp the role women play within Muslim communities and what 'honour' means to them.

Pioneers of new ideas and approaches to culture and heritage, **Glasgow Women's Library** is an organisation who aims to increase knowledge and understanding of women's history and lives.



Working together with 6 different community groups across Glasgow and Dundee, we were able to delve into the experiences of those involved through a series of interactive workshops.

We believed that by gaining a deeper understanding of the role women play within their community, this would lead to further insight into what it means to always be expected to maintain your family's honour.

Who was involved?



The Glendale Women's Cafe

The **Glendale Women's Cafe** is a cohesive neighbourhood space designed to support the empowerment of local women. Based in Pollokshields, it offers a safe and welcoming environment in which women can come together to learn, create, and support each other.

The **Urban Youth Project** is a confidential and safe space, enabling the youth of today to meet the challenges of tomorrow. Based in Glasgow, it provides a variety of services catering for young adults aged between 16-25.



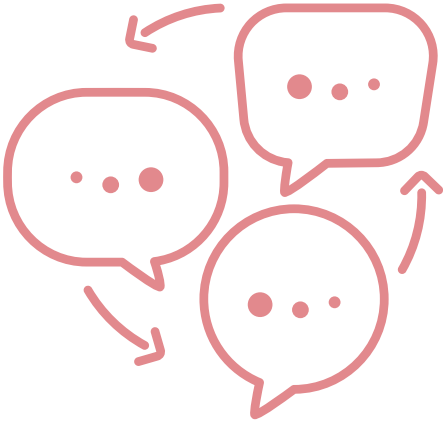
Sakina Women's Group is a friendship group for women over 50 looking to relax, meet like-minded people, and enjoy activities such as knitting, painting and gardening. Sakina Women's Group is **run by Al-Meezan**, a charity organisation based in Glasgow who aim to meet the Islamic educational and social needs of Muslim women and children.

The **Maryhill Integration Network** runs a weekly multicultural women's group, open to women from all backgrounds. It not only provides a space for women to make friends and share experiences but the group also runs a programme of activities including arts and crafts courses, and information sessions.



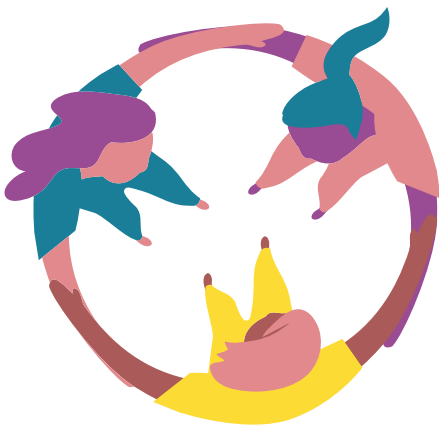
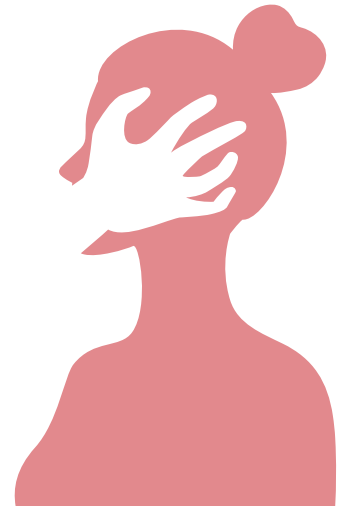
Inspire, Connect and Enable (ICE) was a Dundee-based BME and Muslim women social group with a rotating programme of events incorporating all of Amina's strands – from mental health and self care workshops, to VAWG campaigns, to information sessions on financial advocacy and our immigration clinic, and to peer-led arts and crafts activities.

Our Methods



Throughout the development stages of this project, we had many discussions speculatively exploring the potential challenges and conflict that could arise during what would be a sensitive – and potentially triggering – topic of conversation.

HBA and intergenerational trauma can have a detrimental impact on those involved and we wanted to create an emotional and insightful opportunity for the participants to question the systematic desensitisation of some of the issues surrounding HBA and intergenerational trauma within their community.



We were hopeful that through the workshops we would be able to:

establish an equal and interchanging relationship between facilitator and participant

encourage everyone to listen to the narratives of each other

support dialogue

develop new understandings and knowledge collectively

Activity One: Values Statements

The first activity was designed to **encourage participants to consider their values and concerns in the context of their own experience.**

We posed a series of statements to each group and asked them to anonymously respond with either; 'agree', 'disagree' or 'it depends'. Some of the statements included:

Daughters and daughters-in-laws should be treated the same

My daughter is allowed past 9PM // My son is allowed past 9PM

I would raise my children the same way I was raised

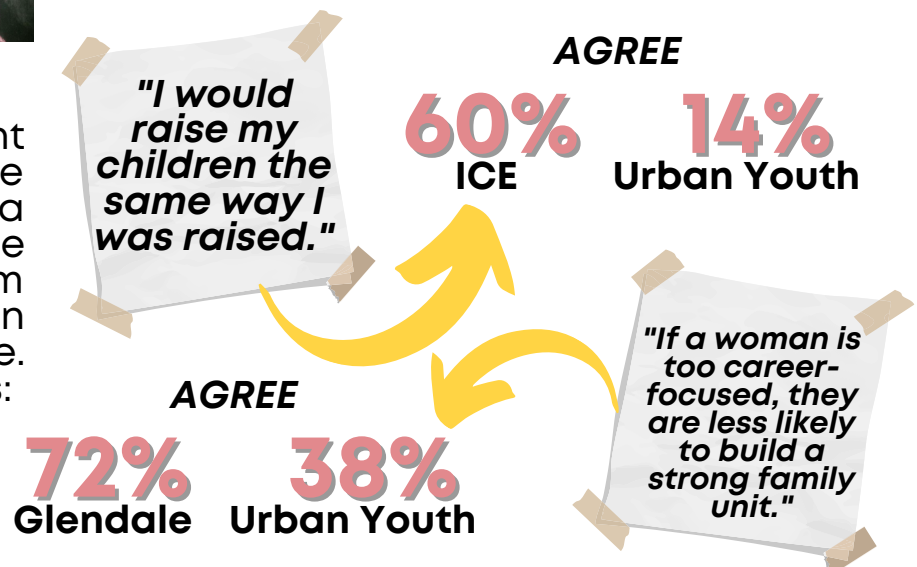
If women are too career-focused, they are less likely to build a strong family unit

Is a woman asking for divorce acceptable?



The purpose of each statement was to **spark curiosity, critical reflection and conversation amongst participants**, which can often be discouraged in other settings such as the home and workplace. Consequently, it was important that participants had the opportunity to answer anonymously in this activity to ensure those involved felt they were able to participate without fear of judgement from their peers.

After posing each statement and tallying up the results, we were then able to have a wider discussion with the group. Answers varied from group to group, especially in relation to age and culture. Here are just a few examples:



Activity Two: **Burden On Your Shoulders**

The second activity was designed to **explore the intergenerational trauma that is often passed down within families** and understand how this may contribute to the prevailing honour-based abuse within our communities.

By drawing attention to the transmission of oppression and trauma to younger generations, we were hoping to recognise the emotional distance, defensive behaviours, denial and minimisation that is sadly very common amongst generations of women.



By encouraging participants to **look beyond their own experience, the activity asked those involved to think about not only the burdens on their own shoulders but that of their grandmothers, mothers, and daughters** (depending on the age range of each group).

For this activity, we split each group up into smaller groups and allowed time for discussion before each group was asked to present their findings.

Glendale Women's Cafe, involving 11 participants with an age range of around 40 to 60, were asked what burdens did they think were on their mother's shoulders, what burdens are on their own shoulders and what burdens did they think were on their daughter's shoulders.

Urban Youth Project, involving 8 participants with an age range of 16-19, were asked what burdens they think were on their grandmother's, their mother's, and their own shoulders.

Both activities, although effective tools to promote participation, had the potential to bring up sensitive and potentially triggering topics of discussion. **In order to challenge the assumptions surrounding intergenerational trauma and the impact they can have, it was crucial that we created a safe space where participants were encouraged and empowered to develop a deeper understanding of their own experience.**

Taking this into consideration, **we decided to design a trauma information leaflet** that we discussed in-depth with the participants at each session and provided digitally to everyone involved to try and keep everyone as safe as possible during and after the session.

Trauma

What we mean by intergenerational trauma:

- Thoughts/ideas/behaviours that are specific to a generation that have been passed down to other generations.
- Intergenerational trauma can come from **harmful ideas** being passed down to other generations that then allow violence against women to happen, like the idea that women should stay quiet and accept whatever her husband tells her or does.
- This could then **prevent** a woman from **recognising** that what her husband is doing is abusive, or **stop** her from **reaching out** for support.

Traumatic events are events or situations that can leave you feeling:

Frightened

Unsafe

Abandoned

Humiliated

Trapped

Invalidated

Rejected

Ashamed

Powerless

Trauma isn't always just the extreme things that society tells us are trauma, like natural disasters, car crashes, death etc. Trauma can be a result of things like **being treated really badly**, sharing something private with someone and the **response being really negative** or nasty, **being neglected** as a child etc.

Trauma doesn't just affect how we feel emotionally but it affects our bodies and how our brain functions too.



It can leave us feeling like we're **under threat** all the time, even if there isn't a threat there. It can trigger a **fight** or **flight** response, leading to intense anxiety and panic. Intense anxiety can cause things like nausea, stomach problems, chest tightening, struggling to breathe.

It can also leave us feeling so overwhelmed with emotion that it causes us to **shut down** and **switch off** from the world. This can look like depression, numbness, not being aware of what's around you, brain fog, lack of focus and exhaustion.



This is why its so important to look after ourselves and those around us.

Our Findings

Spanning over the course of three months, we were able to run a total of ten workshops, involving over 80 women aged between 16-80, all from either South Asian, African or Middle-Eastern backgrounds. Participation from such a diverse group of women proved insightful, highlighting contrasting thoughts and feelings experienced by women of different ages and cultures, yet it also drew attention to the many similarities of experience shared by Muslim women and what is expected of them in their communities.

For the purpose of emphasising the intergenerational trauma that is occurring between generations of Muslim women, **the findings below are structured under each generation:**

1st Generation
Sakeenah Group
Aged 65+

2nd Generation
Aged 25-65

3rd Generation
Aged 16-25



Our Findings

First Generation

They agreed that women tend to carry the 'honour' of their family, more so than men do, although it appears that 'honour' is a contested term amongst individuals sharing both positive and negative connotations.

Many of them have been encouraged to keep quiet and not speak out about issues such as their mental health, and sadly they believe this has been passed generationally.

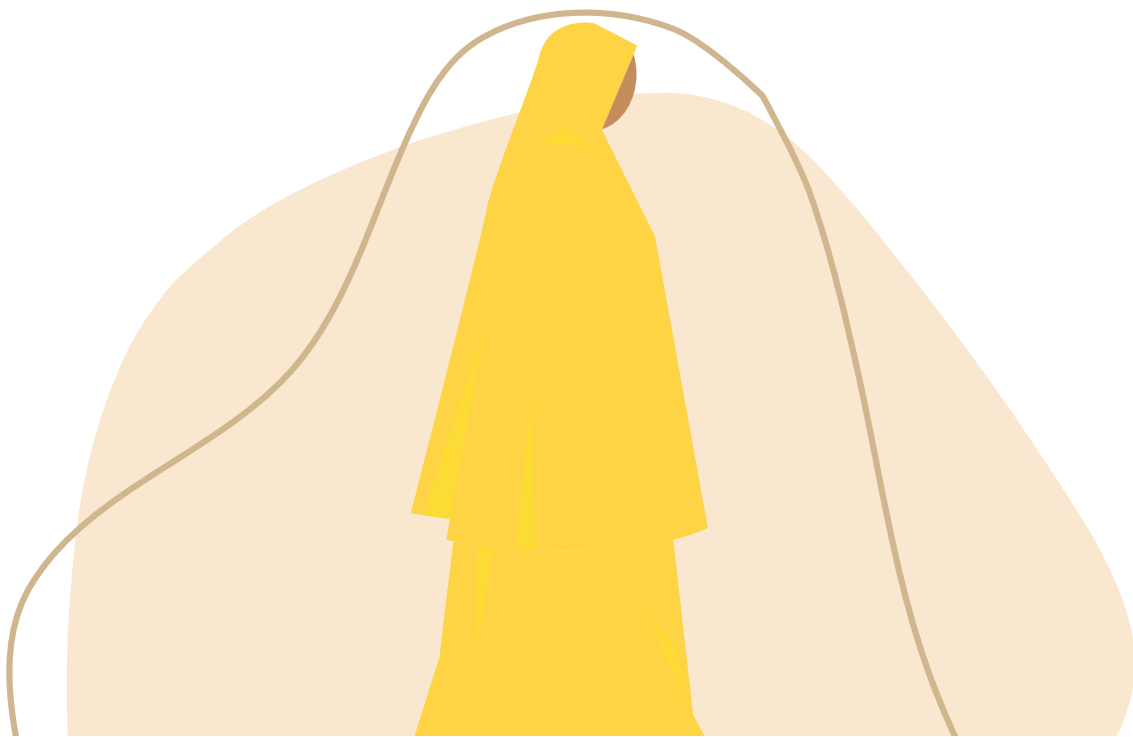
Several of the women we worked with spoke about the problematic relationships they had with their mother-in-laws. Regrettably, this led to some of them treating their own daughter-in-laws poorly due to that being their own experience.

Reflecting on their own parents, many of the women recalled being told that if they wanted to leave their husband, they would not be welcomed back at their family home.

Agreeing that different rules apply to men within their community, many women admitted to - remorsefully - treating their sons and daughters differently because of this.

Kumzor, the Urdu word for weak, was something they all agreed was often associated with women in their community.

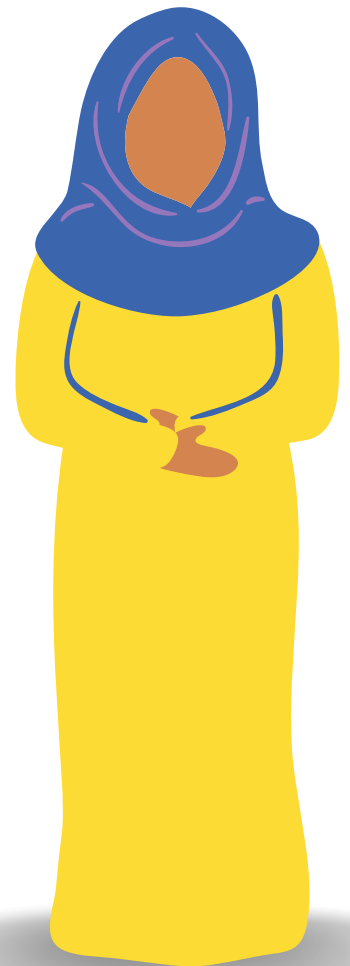
They underlined the importance of passing down traditions and values but agreed that times have changed and this must be considered when raising the next generation.



Our Findings

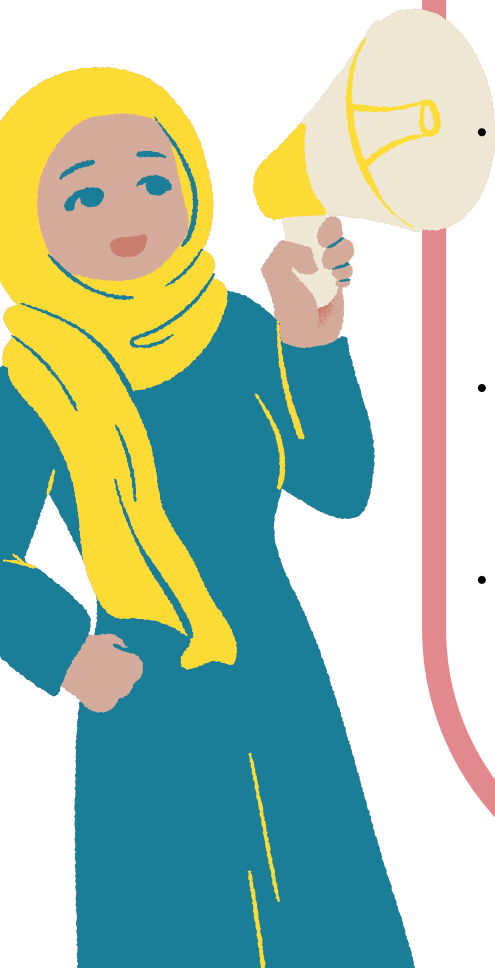
Second Generation

- Many of the 2nd generation women involved in this project chose to speak more about their daughters rather than that of their own experiences, highlighting that, generationally, they may identify with being a mother first and foremost.
- There were several conversations amongst women from this age group about the difference between culture and religion and what that means when defining a woman's role. For example, the expectations of a woman marrying into a Pakistani family may differ if she were to marry into a Scottish-born Pakistani family.
- With that being said, many of the second generation women believed that although marriage isn't forced upon women as much as it used to be within their communities, it is still expected of a woman that she gets married.
- Several women admitted to extending different rules to their daughters in comparison to their sons. Women, in general, are viewed as more vulnerable to harm in society, so many of them said this came more from a place of fear. Although everyone understood these to be safety measures, some did question whether this stemmed from a place of 'honour', concerning judgement and assumption from the community.
- Many of the second generation women spoke about their educational expectations for their daughters. Although many of them expressed their support of educational achievement due to not having the same opportunity, it was also suggested that education makes for an attractive attribute when it comes to finding a partner, despite the possibility of then not being encouraged to pursue a career.
- In contrast, a few second generation women discussed that being too career-focused can distract you from the responsibilities a woman has at home, being a homemaker and a mother. However, this created dialogue about roles within the home, and how responsibilities should be shared more equally between men and women. Many women discussed their lack of opportunity to have a career has led to a lack of self-worth and little understanding of themselves beyond their role as a wife and a mother.



Our Findings

Third Generation



- Young 3rd generation spoke of feeling empowered to ask more questions and strive for change, yet still believed they were expected to fulfil a more traditional role at home. Many of them have been told, for example, that it is difficult to balance a career, marriage and parenthood while managing a home. Many of them shared their concerns of being unavailable emotionally if they were to have a successful career.
- Despite this concern, many of these young women didn't think it was fair that women are pressured into taking a step back and hope that men of their generation will be encouraged to, at times, make sacrifices in order to support their wants and needs.
- Many of them stated that this pressure, in fact, comes from other women; mothers, mother-in-laws, grandmothers and the wider family, recognising that this is something passed down generationally due to the same expectations being forced upon them.
- However, third generation women do not seem to hold resentment due to having more awareness of their past experience and recognising the injustices they experienced.
- What was apparent in the younger generation was the amount of pressure they were experiencing on a daily basis. They felt pressured to do well at school/university, they had a role to fulfil within their family home, they were fearful of judgement from the wider community and, notably, the toxic nature of social media was impacting their self-esteem.
- These young women all agreed that women still carry a family's 'honour', regardless if their family takes a more liberal approach. 'Dishonour' can impact a woman's reputation in the community therefore determining things like who she will marry.
- Despite the immense pressure young women are experiencing today, they are still hopeful for a better future. Believing that we should all thrive for change and stand up for women's rights, they did raise cause for concern that not everyone will understand their experiences or the challenges they face as young Muslim women.

Our Findings

Using a qualitative approach allowed us to conduct a thematic analysis of our findings and use them to help shape our recommendations for working with those impacted by intergenerational trauma going forward.

We summarise the **key themes** as follows:

Muslim women continue to carry the responsibility of protecting a family's 'honour' in our communities.

There is still an expectation or pressure felt by many Muslim women to fulfil a more traditional role at home, even if they have the opportunity for a successful career.

Muslim women still feel discouraged to speak out about their own experience or mental health, although we can see this changing with younger generations feeling more encouraged to question their experience and talk openly about their thoughts and feelings.

Different rules are applied to boys/men within our communities and there is concern that this can be framed as coming from a place of society rather than be associated with 'honour'.

It is apparent that the pressure felt by Muslim women has been and continues to be applied by other women in the community due to the intergenerational trauma they have experienced themselves.

Recommendations

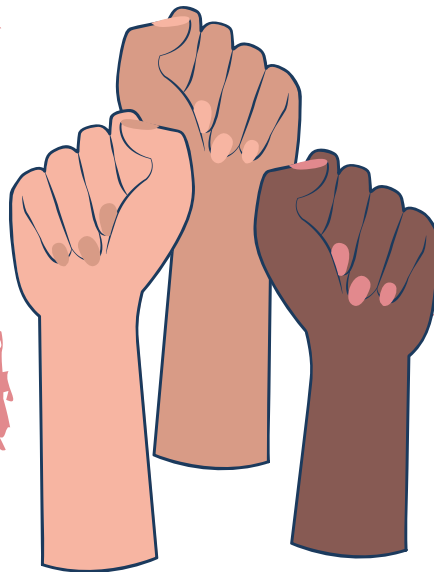
For those working with individuals and communities impacted by honour-based abuse and intergenerational trauma:

Changes to Scottish legislation to recognise extended family abuse as part of gender-based violence.

Update training materials on honour-based abuse, forced marriage and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) to include the understating of intergeneration trauma and harmful practices within communities.

Formation of a working group of women with lived experience of honour-based abuse in Scotland who can help advise on policy and better responses to honour-based abuse in Scotland.

Wider use of risk assessments for victims of honour-based abuse and referral to Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference for honour-based victims using professional judgement.



Investment in specialist agencies to deliver regular training to statutory organisations on understanding the dynamics of honour-based abuse, forced marriage, and coercive control.

Better practices of supporting women experiencing honour-based abuse including recognising honour-based abuse as a form of gender-based violence, working with victims to report any offences, and recognising the risks of harm to victims.

Police Scotland to deliver statistics annually on recorded offences identified as honour-based abuse.

Notable Quotes

From Sakeenah

My mother in-law wasn't great, she would tell me to do stuff all the time and if I didn't, she would tell my husband and he would make me do it.

You should raise your son to look after you, not get another women to do it.

If the woman is not happy, then she has a right Islamically to ask for a divorce yet some husbands and families withhold this.

You have to bring up your children based on the times. My children taught me things and I taught them to we learned from each other.

A girl can lose her honour if she is seen doing something wrong. She won't be able to get a husband.

Sometimes I can't find reasons for the things I am asking my daughter to do.

If a daughter fell pregnant outside of marriage, it would tarnish a family name. People talk.

The next generation is less obedient and needs more discussion around certain things we are asking of them.

From ICE

From Maryhill Integration Network

Do all the things you want before you get married because you can't do that when you are married.

Many women are silenced because of domestic abuse and extended family abuse.

Notable Quotes

“
People mix up culture and religion, with expectations of those from Pakistani and Scottish backgrounds being different.

.....
Most of the time I would let my daughter out but there would be curfews. I would need to know where they are and they couldn't be alone.

.....
Boys get away with more things whereas a girl's reputation can be tarnished.

.....
Some girls are told, 'go to uni, get a degree!' and then are not allowed to work.

.....
Our mothers had to make sure that everything was fine. They were never allowed to fulfil their own needs - always someone else's.

.....
My mother was a slave. I was a slave to my in-laws. If I don't break the cycle with my daughter in-law and my daughter, then we will continue to have these problems. I will be sitting down with my son too after this and reminding him that when he gets married, his wife will not be his slave or mine!

From Glendale Women's Cafe

From Urban Youth Project

“
I should take care of most of the cooking but if I am not there, my husband should be able to. I think I will enjoy taking care of my husband.

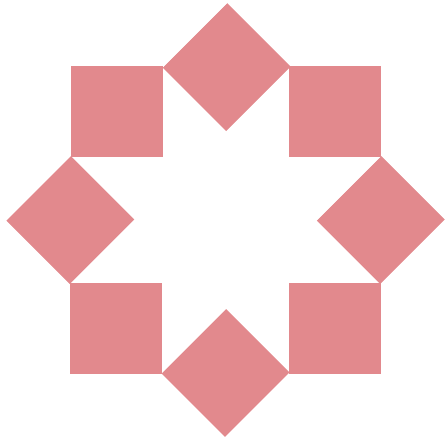
.....
I don't like the expectation of a woman needing to cook.

.....
When we don't have guests, then everyone helps but when it's guests then men don't do anything and women do the cooking and the cleaning. [It] can be because guests are older generations and attitudes are different.

.....
In Asian households, you are never taught about consent so how are women meant to know what that is.

.....
It is interesting the value put on different job roles. Being a housewife is a difficult job but not enough value is put on that. We should congratulate our mothers for being stay at home mums and recognise their work.





AMINA

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