

ANGLIA RUSKIN UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF HEALTH, SOCIAL CARE AND EDUCATION

**IDENTIFYING FACTORS THAT FACILITATE OR
INHIBIT THE INTEGRATION OF FEMALE AFGHAN
REFUGEES INTO BRITISH SOCIETY**

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A thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Anglia
Ruskin University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Submitted: April 2021

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Undertaking this PhD has been a valuable experience for me, and it would not have been possible to complete without the support and advice that I received from many people.

First and foremost, I would like to express my sincere thanks to the participants who gave me their time and shared their unique experiences with me. I am especially grateful to all the members in the refugee organisation whose support and work during data collection has made an invaluable contribution towards my PhD.

I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisors, Dr Pauline Lane and Dr Melanie Boyce, for their invaluable advice, and consistent source of practical and emotional support during the journey of my PhD degree. Many thanks also to Dr Lyndsay Baines and Dr Nazee Akbari who encouraged me to embark on this journey in the first place. I would like to offer my special thanks to Dr Hilary Bungay for her insightful and detailed critical review.

And finally, I would like to thank my parents, my husband and my children for their unwavering support and belief in me.

ANGLIA RUSKIN UNIVERSITY

ABSTRACT

FACULTY OF HEALTH, SOCIAL CARE AND EDUCATION
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

IDENTIFYING FACTORS THAT FACILITATE OR INHIBIT THE
INTEGRATION OF FEMALE AFGHAN REFUGEES INTO BRITISH SOCIETY

Fatemeh Azizi

This thesis sought to identifying some of the factors that facilitate or inhibit the integration of female Afghan refugees into British society. The research was designed within interpretivist paradigm of inquiry. Qualitative, semi-structured interviews were conducted in Farsi and English with fifteen Afghan women refugees from a refugee organisation in London. The resulting data was analysed using thematic analysis and this revealed the importance of understanding pre-migration trauma, as well as post-migration stressors, in relation to integration.

While the pre-migration experiences of the women were dominated by patriarchal control and violence within the home, and political violence and persecution outside of the home, these experiences of repression were also moderated or exacerbated by the tribal/ ethnic origin of the women. The research also found that while the Afghan women had come to seek asylum and safety in the UK, many of them continued to face violence from both men and other women in the family. Although the violence within the home appeared to be less prevalent amongst women from the Hazara ethnic group with a higher educational background.

The study contributes new insights into the research on refugee women and the findings suggest that while some Afghan women refugees may be able to show adaptive and coping strategy upon resettlement, this is more difficult when traditional patriarchal values are enforced within the home, and women find themselves trapped in situations of familial power relations. Moreover, the research indicates that the ethnic / tribal origins of Afghan refugee women may impact on their experiences of integration. However, the analysis also highlighted the benefit of joining refugee organisation in providing social support and enhancing their confidence and resilience among Afghan women refugees.

Key words: Afghan women refugees, patriarchy, Pashtun, Hazara, intersectionality, qualitative

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| 1. Chapter One: Introduction | 1 |
| 1.1 Chapter overview | 1 |
| 1.2 Context of the research | 1 |
| 1.3 Research questions and aims | 3 |
| 1.4 My motivation for undertaking this research | 4 |
| 1.5 Structure of thesis | 6 |
| 2. Chapter Two: Understanding the nation-state and its role in protecting citizens | 9 |
| 2.1 Introduction | 9 |
| 2.2 The construct of the Nation State | 9 |
| 2.2.1 <i>A Nation state and forces of change</i> | 9 |
| 2.2.2 <i>The nation state and emergence of forced displaced people</i> | 11 |
| 2.3 The gendered nature of the refugee experience | 13 |
| 2.3.1 <i>The impact of war and internal forced displacement on women</i> | 13 |
| 2.3.2 <i>The impact of forced displacement across borders on women</i> | 15 |
| 2.4 Chapter summary | 16 |
| 3. Chapter Three: The history of Afghanistan as a nation state and women's contemporary experiences | 18 |
| 3.1 Introduction | 18 |
| 3.2 State structure | 18 |
| 3.3 Cultural background | 21 |
| 3.3.1 <i>Purdah</i> | 22 |
| 3.3.2 <i>Gender roles</i> | 23 |
| 3.3.3 <i>Arranged marriage</i> | 25 |
| 3.3.4 <i>Polygamous marriage</i> | 26 |
| 3.4 Historical overview | 26 |
| 3.4.1 <i>Modern Afghanistan (1880-1996)</i> | 26 |
| 3.4.2 <i>The rise and fall of the Taliban (1996-2001)</i> | 28 |

| | | |
|-----------|---|-----------|
| 3.4.3 | <i>The current situation</i> | 30 |
| 3.5 | Afghan women's forced displacement | 32 |
| 3.6 | Chapter summary | 33 |
| 4. | Chapter Four: The protection of asylum seekers and refugees | 35 |
| 4.1 | Introduction | 35 |
| 4.2 | International co-operation for the support of refugees | 35 |
| 4.2.1 | <i>The origins of the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol</i> | 35 |
| 4.2.2 | <i>Defining a refugee</i> | 36 |
| 4.3 | Debates upon definition of refugees | 38 |
| 4.3.1 | <i>Humanitarian theorists</i> | 38 |
| 4.3.2 | <i>Political theorists</i> | 39 |
| 4.3.3 | <i>Philosophical insights</i> | 40 |
| 4.4 | Debates concerning the obligations of nation states towards refugees | 41 |
| 4.4.1 | <i>Debates concerning the obligations of states for refugees living in refugee camps</i> | 42 |
| 4.4.2 | <i>Debates concerning state obligations being linked to 'rights versus the idea of deterrence'</i> | 43 |
| 4.5 | Anti-refugee discourse | 45 |
| 4.6 | Chapter summary | 46 |
| 5. | Chapter Five: Refugee policy in the United Kingdom and special issues for female asylum seekers and refugees | 48 |
| 5.1 | Introduction | 48 |
| 5.2 | Refugees in the United Kingdom | 48 |
| 5.2.1 | <i>Afghans' migration into the UK</i> | 49 |
| 5.2.2 | <i>A brief history of immigration policy in the UK</i> | 49 |
| 5.3 | Conceptualising integration | 51 |
| 5.3.1 | <i>Theoretical perspectives on integration model</i> | 52 |
| 5.3.2 | <i>Dimensions of Refugee Integration Framework</i> | 55 |
| 5.4 | Challenges that women face during the asylum process and beyond | 59 |
| 5.4.1 | <i>Challenges during the asylum process</i> | 60 |
| 5.4.2 | <i>Successful asylum decision and the move on period</i> | 61 |

| | |
|---|-----------|
| 5.5 Chapter summary | 64 |
| 5.6 Gap in Knowledge | 65 |
| 6. Chapter Six: Methodology | 67 |
| 6.1 Introduction | 67 |
| 6.2 Definition of philosophical stance | 67 |
| 6.2.1 <i>Research paradigms</i> | 68 |
| 6.2.2 <i>Thinking about ontology and epistemology</i> | 70 |
| 6.3 The research questions and aims | 71 |
| 6.4 Research design | 71 |
| 6.4.1 <i>Qualitative study</i> | 71 |
| 6.4.2 <i>Positionality</i> | 73 |
| 6.4.3 <i>Developing my own reflexivity as a researcher</i> | 74 |
| 6.4.4 <i>Sampling and recruitment of participants</i> | 75 |
| 6.4.5 <i>Data collection methods</i> | 78 |
| 6.5 Data analysis and trustworthiness | 80 |
| 6.5.1 <i>Analytical process</i> | 82 |
| 6.5.2 <i>The trustworthiness of the findings</i> | 84 |
| 6.6 Ethical considerations | 85 |
| 6.6.1 <i>Ethical issues in recruitment of participants</i> | 86 |
| 6.6.2 <i>Anonymising the participants and the study location</i> | 86 |
| 6.6.3 <i>Ethical concerns in conducting the interviews</i> | 87 |
| 6.7 Challenges in bilingual research setting | 89 |
| 6.7.1 <i>Interviewing in Farsi language</i> | 89 |
| 6.7.2 <i>Transcription in bilingual research</i> | 90 |
| 6.8 Chapter summary | 91 |
| 7. Chapter Seven: Findings and discussion about Afghan women's pre-migration experiences | 93 |
| 7.1 Introduction | 93 |
| 7.2 Participants descriptive background | 93 |
| 7.3 Findings related to Afghan women's pre-migration experiences | 95 |

| | |
|---|----------------|
| 7.4 Context of life in Afghanistan and how it impacted on the women | 95 |
| 7.4.1 <i>Gender-based violence</i> | 96 |
| 7.4.2 <i>Marriage practices in Afghanistan</i> | 98 |
| 7.4.3 <i>Internalisation of patriarchy</i> | 100 |
| 7.5 The challenges that women face during the Taliban rule | 102 |
| 7.5.1 <i>Oppression and lack of women's rights</i> | 102 |
| 7.5.2 <i>Afghan women's pre-migration mental health</i> | 106 |
| 7.6 Women's experiences during their displacement | 108 |
| 7.6.1 <i>Agent-arranged journey</i> | 110 |
| 7.6.2 <i>Pre-planned journey through the family reunion</i> | 112 |
| 7.7 Chapter summary | 113 |
| 8. Chapter Eight: Findings and discussion about Afghan women's post-migration experiences in the UK; inhibitors of integration | 115 |
| 8.1 Introduction | 115 |
| 8.2 Post-migration stressors | 115 |
| 8.2.1 <i>Forced separation from family</i> | 116 |
| 8.2.2 <i>Asylum claim refusal</i> | 118 |
| 8.2.3 <i>Housing-related issues</i> | 119 |
| 8.2.4 <i>Intimate partner violence</i> | 128 |
| 8.2.5 <i>Pervasiveness of patriarchy</i> | 136 |
| 8.3 Language barriers | 139 |
| 8.3.1 <i>The main obstacles to access to education</i> | 145 |
| 8.4 Chapter summary | 150 |
| 9. Chapter Nine: Findings and discussion about Afghan women's post-migration experiences in the UK; enablers to integration | 153 |
| 9.1 Introduction | 153 |
| 9.2 Development of social relationship | 153 |
| 9.2.1 <i>Support from family</i> | 154 |
| 9.2.2 <i>Support from friends</i> | 156 |
| 9.2.3 <i>Support from refugee organisation</i> | 158 |
| 9.3 A journey of resilience | 164 |

| | |
|--|------------|
| 9.4 Expressing gratitude | 169 |
| 9.5 Chapter summary | 171 |
| 10. Chapter Ten: Conclusion | 173 |
| 10.1 Introduction | 173 |
| 10.2 Original contributions to the research | 173 |
| 10.3 Policy and practice recommendations | 176 |
| 10.4 Limitations of the study | 178 |
| 10.5 Future research | 179 |
| 10.6 Closing summary | 179 |
| Figures | |
| I. Map of Afghanistan | 19 |
| II. Berry's model of acculturation | 53 |
| III. Depiction of Adjusted Ager and Strang's Indicators of integration Framework | 58 |
| IV. The relationship between ontology, epistemology, and methodology | 68 |
| Tables | |
| I. Details of the participants | 78 |
| References | 181 |
| Appendices | |
| I Participant consent form in English language | 230 |
| II Participant consent form in Farsi language | 231 |
| III Participant information sheet in English language | 232 |
| IV Participant information sheet in Farsi language | 236 |
| V Interview guide | 239 |
| VI Faculty Research Ethics approval letter | 240 |

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Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Chapter overview

This thesis sought to identify some of the factors that facilitate or inhibit the integration of female Afghan refugees into British society. This introductory chapter begins by setting the study context by identifying the significance of research on refugee migration. It then follows with a discussion on my personal interest and motivation in undertaking this study with female Afghan refugees before offering an overview of the whole thesis.

1.2 Context of the research

A report by United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2020) shows that 79.5 million people had been forcibly displaced from their home country during the year 2019 due to war, persecution, and human rights violation. This number of people included 4.2 million asylum seekers, 45.7 million internally displaced persons (IDP), 26 million refugees, and 754,500 stateless people.

Following the Soviet invasion in 1979, millions of people have been displaced within Afghanistan or cross borders into neighbouring countries to flee from conflict and violence (Amnesty International, 2019). Additional factors have also escalated the number of people fleeing Afghanistan, including a need to access education, employment, refugee family reunions, and citizenship in another state (IOM, 2019). Traditionally, refugees fleeing the country have been single young men (UNHCR, 2020). More recent reports indicate an increasing number of Afghan families on the move, including single women who travel independently or with their children (Amnesty International, 2020). Research suggests that the initial destinations for most Afghans have been the refugee camps in Pakistan (2.5 million Afghan refugees) and Iran (1.5 to two million Afghan refugees) (Amnesty International, 2019). However,

some Afghan refugees have made their way to Western host countries, with research suggesting that more than 2.6 million Afghan refugees were registered in Europe by the end of 2019 (Amnesty International, 2019).

Indeed, since the EU Member States attempted to close their border as a policy of deterrence, the journey for many refugees and asylum seekers has often become more dangerous (IOM, 2019). Apart from the physical dangers of the routes into Europe, women refugees also face additional dangers. They often experience violence and insecurities such as sexual exploitation, violence, and abuse (Pickering and Cochrane, 2013; Freedman, 2016). Moreover, reaching the destination countries may not terminate many of refugee women's vulnerability, as restricted asylum policies, economic insecurity, and destitution have all been highlighted as additional factors that may increase female refugees' vulnerability (Freedman and Jamal, 2008; Canning, 2017). However, it cannot be assumed that all refugee women are victims of the same experiences. Walker (2009) suggests that women refugees face different experiences based on their age, educational backgrounds, classes, ethnicity, and belonging to particular religious groups.

Afghan refugees in the UK:

For a decade, Afghans have been amongst the top ten most common nationalities seeking asylum in the UK (Home Office, 2020). In the 1980s, fleeing from the pro-Soviet Union Afghan Government, the first group of Afghans -who mainly were educated people- sought asylum in the UK (IDEA, 2018). A more significant number of Afghans migrated to the UK between 1990 and 2000 to escape from civil war and the Taliban regime (IDEA, 2018). While the break down of the Taliban regime in 2001 brought a period of peace, the Taliban's resurgence following the year 2004 resulted in more Afghans leaving the country (Refugee Council, 2016). However, a report by the British Refugee Council for the first quarter of 2020 stated that there were 423 asylum applications from Afghanistan, including 44 Afghan female applicants.

There has always been tension in UK government policy about refugee protection and the control of immigration. Indeed, this led to a policy that distinguished refugees from other immigrants (Zotti, 2020). The UK government has also needed to balance these

policies to promote community cohesion and integration of those granted refugee status (Turner, 2015). Moreover, the UK government's recent statement is now offering political and facilitation support for Afghan refugees' voluntary repatriation (Home Office, 2020). Across the UK, the Ager and Strang IOI Framework (Ager and Strang, 2004; 2008) has become a foundational framework for refugee integration policy, as well as the measurement of integration, and it has also been influential in policy, practice, and academia (Cheung and Phillimore, 2016; Alencar, 2018). Indeed, some studies have examined the gender-specific experiences of refugees, in terms of their experiences of leaving their home country and their experiences of integrating into their host country (Young and Chan, 2015; Phillimore, 2019). However, there is limited research exploring the experiences of female Afghan refugees of integration into British society.

1.3 Research questions and aims

This research study aimed to understand the integration experiences of female Afghan refugees of integration into British society. Therefore, this study intended to allow these refugee women's voices to be heard to identify what factors inhibited or facilitated their integration into British society. To achieve this purpose, I set out to answer the following research questions:

- What were some of the experiences of female Afghan refugees before seeking asylum in the UK?
- What factors did the refugee women identify as facilitating their integration into British society?
- What factors did the refugee women identify as inhibiting their integration into British society?

An interpretivist approach framed my methodology, and qualitative, semi-structured interviews were conducted in Farsi and English with fifteen Afghan women refugees from a refugee organisation in London. This approach allowed the women's voices and experiences to be heard. Because the women who participated in this research arrived in the UK at different times, they would have been subjected to different UK

asylum policies; however, an analysis of this changing policy context was beyond the scope of this thesis.

1.4 My motivation for undertaking this research

My journey started when I moved to the UK in 2013. At first, I could not be happier since I reunited with my husband and started a new life in peace. Soon after arriving, I found myself lost, like a person who lives in a cave, without having the slightest idea about what is going on outside. As a fluent speaker in English, it was expected by my family that I would need little help in integrating into British society. Undoubtedly, my language skills that I learned in my home country during my early youth were an advantage in terms of initial settlement through communication with other people for activities of daily living. However, it did not generate the social networks that I would need in order to negotiate the education and support systems.

Ironically, through attending events and seminars hosted by Farsi-speaking communities and organisations, I was able to establish the social networks that would lead me into further education (studying psychology) and social integration. Less than a year after arriving, I gained much information about the UK's educational, health, and employment system, which helped me successfully continue my education into postgraduate study. My English language skills were an essential element in this domain. I also expanded my networks into several British organisations, where I built my work experiences and found a social position.

During this period when I was attending Farsi-speaking community events, I was interested in meeting a couple of refugee women who could not speak English, even though they had been living in the UK for nearly ten years. I was surprised when I found that some of them, especially middle-aged women, remained dependent on their children and husband for shopping, travelling, and hospital appointments because of their linguistic barriers. Around this time, I started my voluntary work at different charities and organisations that provided support, particularly in English language skills, to refugees and asylum seekers with different ethnic groups from Iran, Afghanistan, Eritrea, Zimbabwe, and Iraq. What motivated me to take a voluntary job at these charities, apart from expanding my knowledge, was to help to empower the

service users by sharing experiences of my journey and providing information and support based on my knowledge.

In this role as a volunteer support-worker, I became aware of the different kinds of barriers that refugee women encountered based on their nationalities during their settlement. I noticed that some ethnic groups (such as women from Zimbabwe) usually had prior English language skills, which seemed to enable them to settle down quickly. Besides, it came to my attention that when refugee women had a high dependency on male relatives or household responsibilities, this often made it difficult for some women to take part in educational workshops.

After working in a voluntary capacity for nearly a year and achieving a Master's degree in psychology, I worked as an assistant psychologist in the NHS Forced Migration Trauma Service, where my qualifications, bilingual skills, and networks with people from different ethnic groups were valued. Once again, I came across several clients struggling to settle in British society even after living in the UK for many years. Because they had been referred to the trauma service, the clients often explained how their chronic mental health issues (such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) often prevented them from accessing mainstream services, and they often found themselves very isolated. During this period, the experiences that I gained later informed some of my interests in my research topic area.

Therefore, my interest in the field of refugee women was informed both by my personal experiences and my initial reading of previous research that indicated to me that there was limited research in the UK about the integration of female refugees from diverse ethnic groups. Therefore, I took the decision to continue my educational career to doctorate level to explore the factors that inhibit or facilitate the integration of Afghan women refugees in the UK.

I have chosen Afghan refugees for my study because there are many cultural similarities between my home country and Afghanistan as neighbouring countries. Such similarities include similar language, religion, culture, and geographical position. Apart from that, choosing Afghan refugees for my study helped me reflect on my role as a researcher. Likewise, I acknowledged that seeking guidance from two

supervisors who are native to the UK (and not migrants) would be beneficial to moderate the influence of my position on the research.

Therefore, the basis for undertaking this study is rooted in my enthusiasm and interest to further understanding the issues that female refugees face during their integration into British society.

1.5 Thesis structure

This thesis has been framed around ten chapters, including this introductory chapter that presents my motivation for undertaking this research.

The next four chapters provide a context and foundation for the thesis through a thorough and systematic review of the literature. The steps I followed to achieve this, involved developing a concept map with a list of topics relevant to my research questions. Next, I undertook a search examining the various definitions of refugee and the reasons behind forced displacement. Because this research was mainly about Afghan population, I decided to review literature on the political and historical situation of Afghanistan with a focus on Afghan women. I then limited my search to gender-specific experiences of forced displacement and how states respond to the refugee crisis. This guided me to read more critically about the nation-states' obligations towards refugees, particularly UK policies, where this research was conducted.

Chapter Two presents the geopolitical landscape of the emergence of refugees in Europe and examines the role of nation-state in protecting its citizens. In this chapter, I outline how a 'failed state' contributes to the production of both internally displaced people and refugees. This chapter also explores the historical development of the emergence of refugees, and I examine some of the theoretical approaches concerning the association between the nation-state formation and the emergence of refugees in general. In this chapter, I also turn my attention to the gendered nature of the refugee experiences and its impact on women's physical/psychological wellbeing. The final part of this chapter discusses the challenges that women face in passing through the Mediterranean and how many women refugees experiences risks from external and

internal insecurity during this journey. In conclusion, I argue that while many refugee women often face extremes of danger, not all female refugees can be seen as victims of similar violence during the war and forced displacement.

Chapter Three provides the historical overview of Afghanistan's cultural, political, and geographical position as a failed state and the position of women during previous regimes (the Soviet Union, Mujahedin, and Taliban rule). In this chapter, I provide an overview of the literature concerning the Afghan patriarchal society, addressing the gender roles and gender divisions within Afghan culture, with a particular focus on challenges women faced during the Taliban rule. The final part of this chapter discusses Afghan women's current situation and the role of international agents.

Chapter Four explains the significance of the 1951 United Nations Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol as the binding agreement in international law that offers refugees' rights and protection. The chapter defines refugees' legal status and then discusses the debates around this definition and the obligations that states have towards asylum seekers and refugees. In this chapter I also discuss the nation-states' responsibilities towards refugees and highlight the unequal burden-sharing amongst the nation-states. I further discuss anti-refugee discourse that some states have undertaken in response to mass migration, and how this has exposed many refugees to a range of secondary harms in camps and within their informal resettlements in host countries.

Chapter Five focuses on UK policy in relation to refugees and examines Afghan migration flows into the UK since 1990s. In this chapter, I discuss the existing literature related to refugee integration and outline some of the distinctive experiences of female asylum seekers and refugees during the integration process. In the final part of this chapter, I present the gap in knowledge and my unique contribution to the knowledge.

Chapter Six is the methodology chapter and here I start with an examination of the philosophical underpinnings of my research. My research is located within the interpretivist paradigm, and I used qualitative research methods, as this allowed the voices of the refugee women to be heard. In this chapter, I discuss my research

positionality and the role of reflexivity in my research process. The discussion concerning my research methods includes a reflection on some of the ethical issues, a description of the recruitments of participants, the complexities of undertaking bilingual interview, my data collection methods, and a summary of my data analysis and research trustworthiness.

Chapter Seven is the first of three chapters that present my research findings. It begins with a descriptive background of participants. However, because of the need to protect the refugees' identity, this is not very detailed (and likewise, the name of the refugee organisation where I conducted my research has not been disclosed). Chapter seven focuses on my findings related to the pre-migration experiences of the Afghan women refugees. These findings are organised in three parts, including the challenges Afghan women face within Afghan patriarchal society, challenges that the Afghan women face in the broader context of the Taliban rule, and the challenges Afghan women face during their migration journey into the UK.

Chapter Eight is the second chapter of my findings, and it has been framed around the Afghan women's post-migration experiences in the UK, related to inhibitors of integration. This chapter is organised into two parts, including post-migration stressors and language barriers.

Chapter Nine is the third chapter of my findings and discusses the Afghan women's post-migration experiences in the UK, related to enablers of integration. This chapter is organised into three parts, including developing social relationships, a journey of resilience, and expressing gratitude.

Chapter Ten is the concluding chapter of the thesis and therefore discusses my contribution to knowledge and the limitations of the research. I end the chapter by making some recommendations for future studies.

Chapter Two

Understanding the nation-state and its role in protecting citizens

2.1 Introduction

To have background for my research, in this chapter, I outline the geo-political landscape of the emergence of refugees in Europe. In section one, I outline a number of different theories about the past routes of the nation-state formation. The section discusses why a nation-state fails to protect its citizens and how this failure contributes to the emergence of forced displaced people. In section two of this chapter, I describe the gendered nature of the refugee experiences, focusing on the impact of war and internal/external forced displacement on women.

2.2 The construct of a nation-state

I start this section by outlining some debates concerning the nation-state's construction; this is important because people only become refugees when a nation-state fails to protect its citizens.

2.2.1 A nation-state and forces of change

The nation-state has replaced the empire, the kingdom, and other political organisations over the past 200 years. A cursory glance at the literature illustrates that many different debates exist in the literature regarding the past routes of the nation-state formation. For instance, world polity theorists -such as Meyer (1997)- argued that the nation-state has created as a result of a global diffusion process, and historical institutionalism -such as Wimmer and Feinstein (2010)- stressed that nation-state emerges owing to the increase in local and regional process. However, despite the different arguments, much of the literature concurs with the idea that the nation-state has been a worldwide political organization model (Fjader, 2014). Some authors have suggested that nation-states' sovereignty and autonomy have been destabilised due to globalisation and that a homogenous economy and culture are emerging within the

states (Negash, 2015). Friedrichs and Rothe (2014) suggest that globalisation has created a threat to nation-states, not only because of the removal of many of the trading barriers based on economic and political liberalisation principles, but also the emergence of new communicational technology. For example, the increase in global crime, such as worldwide weapons trade, terrorist networks, human trafficking, the spread of disease, and conflict within national borders, are all considered as a result of globalisation (Flew, 2018). Therefore, the nation-state has undergone substantial changes (including economic, political, and cultural changes) in the globalised world, and this can also account for forced migration over the last decades. Moreover, when a nation fails to protect its citizens (or persecuted them), it is often deemed a failed state.

What does it mean when a nation-state fails?

A ‘failed state’ can be understood as a condition when a state loses its legitimacy and is no longer able to perform the nation-state’s job in the modern world (Holton, 2011). Besides, a failed state is unable to provide political goods -such as security, educational and health services, economic opportunity, a legal and judicial system- to its citizens, and this may increase violence and loss of border control or limited official power to areas (Guibernau, 2013). Moreover, when states forfeit their function as political goods providers, control can often transfer to other powers, such as warlords and other non-state actors. Concerning my study, Afghanistan exemplifies a failed state’s criteria, and the Taliban has oppressed the majority of the countries’ citizens (Urban, 2016).

However, sometimes states collapse because they fail to intervene in significant scale events, such as climate catastrophe, natural disasters or human-made war. The resulting economic chaos and neglect often lead to physical hardships such as food scarcities and hunger. Once people have lost their subsistence and security, they are forced to displace internally or migrate across borders (Holton, 2011). However, states can also fail in other ways. For example, people are often forced to leave their country due to the fear of persecution by their state government, and sometimes people may experience a condition of ‘statelessness’ (UNCHR, 2019), meaning that they are not citizens of any nation-states. The different pressures that people may experience

resulting from the state's failure mean that the migrants are usually classified in different ways; for example, economic migrants and forced migrants (Dustmann et al., 2016). Economic migrants are usually considered to be people who choose to leave their country of origin for economic gain. They often have greater freedom in deciding the timing of the move and their destination (Dustmann et al., 2016).

In contrast, forced migrants are usually considered people who have a genuine fear of persecution, famine, a crisis caused by war, and other disasters (Gibney, 2018). Therefore, the migration decision is not planned for these people and is less based on economic reasons. Forced migrants are often classified into internally displaced people (IDP) -who are forced to leave their homes but still reside inside their country- and refugees -who fled their home country and sought asylum in another country (UNHCR, 2019).

Having explored some of the nation-state's construction, it is now necessary to explain the possible link between the state and the refugees. In what follows, I will present some of the academic debates over the relationship between nation-state and refugee production.

2.2.2 The nation-state and emergence of forced displaced people

Most of the dominant theories that focus on the relationship between the emergence of the nation-state and refugee production tend to be classified in terms of internal and external causality.

One of the possible internal causes of refugee construction is when countries containing several nations deal with the issue of integrating the norms of nation-state with their political realities (Stavenhagen, 2016). To deal with multinationalism, the state often attempts to develop a multinational identity separate from any constituent group or establish a national identity based on a single majority group, which demands other groups adhere to the dominant culture (Modood, 2019). Although this may result in producing a nation, it may also lead to destruction and suppression of some citizens' national identities and increase the possibility of conflict among groups (Stavenhagen, 2016). Bulutgil (2016) also highlights the impact of ethnic cleansing as another route to nation-building. Well-known examples of ethnic cleansing are the Turkish genocide

of Armenians (1914-1923) and the Holocaust of European Jews during the second world war. These forms of state violence were used to re-edify the state. Indeed, when violence erupts in a state as a result of multinationalism, there seems to be a chance that people are fleeing because they disagree with a state ideology (politically, ethnically, or religiously). Therefore, when nation-building attempts to manage or alter multinational realities, displaced people are likely to arise (Stavenhagen, 2016).

Moreover, author such as Kennedy (2016) claims that state implosion can occur when there is no government in control, and there is a lack of a justice system, schooling, and medical services (for example, Afghanistan). Kennedy (2016) also suggests that former colonial powers that withdraw assistance from former colonies may also cause state implosion. An important example of this is the decolonization after World War II, which led many refugees to move across and into Europe (Kennedy, 2016). Therefore, whenever a state changes due to internal conflicts, revolution, religious and ideological fractions (especially Islam in recent decades), the potential for producing refugees exists (Piguet, 2018).

Whether it is because of government forces or non-state actors (e.g., Islamic State), the forced displacement and presence of refugees question the nation-states' legitimacy (Currion, 2016). Each refugee embodies the accusation that the state has failed the nation and the implication is that it may occur to other nations. Therefore, refugees pose a global challenge beyond their social or economic impact, even to the most stable nation-states. However, the creation and dismantling of nation-states around the world have continued whenever the established regime is usually weakened by internal conflicts or external war (Hansen, 2014).

In addition, environmental factors such as climatic changes, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, drought, and famine are not independent of socio-political and economic causes of migration, including revolution and civil war (Castelli, 2018). These natural disasters destroy food and supplies or housing, threatening citizens' life, health, and livelihood. If states are unable to provide adequate protection, the forced migration may precipitate (the sub-Saharan regions, Ethiopia, Sudan exemplify this). What is more, Heslin et al. (2019) have highlighted the effect of global warming and other ecological disasters in the future and how this could also contribute to the growing

problem of environmental refugees. In addition, the environmental hazards of war, including chemical weapons and oil pollution, have also previously been warned by some scientists to instigate mass migration (Abel et al., 2019). Nevertheless, another layer of complexity is the inequalities of wealth and resources between different states and regions of the world combined with states' political instability, and Castelli (2018) suggests that this may have also increased the probability of forced migration.

In summary, while theorists have attempted to identify how the failure of the nation-state can generate the forced migration of its citizens, it can be concluded that the reasons are complex, and often it is an intersection of political, economic, environmental, and social causes that are involved in the forced displacement of people.

2.3 The gendered nature of the refugees' experiences

Because my thesis focuses on refugee women, I thought it would be helpful to take a brief look at some of the debates concerning the impact of forced displacement on women, mainly as my own study focuses on women from Afghanistan, and research suggests that conflicts and wars have different impacts upon both gender (Bichall, 2019).

2.3.1 The impact of the war and internal forced displacement on women

A review of literature has highlighted that during wars, women, as either combatants or citizens, are more at risk of sexual exploitation, violence, and abuse than men (Gururaja, 2000). It has been proposed that much of the violence directed at women during arm conflict is linked to assumptions about masculinity in which not only do men abuse women but also reassert ideologies of manhood and control over females (Mazurana and Proctor, 2013).

Indeed, sexual violence and sexual abuse against women are common during the conflict. For instance, in a country like Afghanistan, the underreporting of sexual harassment continues to be a problem, emanating from an overarching situation of gender disparity, discriminatory social expectations, and stigmatisation, which discourage women and girls from obtaining knowledge resources (UN, 2020). This

situation is compounded by an environment of impunity, systemic brutality, and restricted access to regions controlled by armed groups (UNAMA, 2018). Moreover, sexual abuse often has long-term consequences on women as it can result in forced pregnancy, forced abortion, and sexual slavery (Carpenter, 2006). It can undoubtedly increase women and girls' vulnerability to sexually transmitted diseases, HIV, and AIDS (Hudson, 2005; Burton, 2010).

Moreover, women's health often deteriorates more rapidly than men during forced migration, as they are physiologically more susceptible to vitamin deficiencies - particularly during pregnancy- and health problems, such as nutritional problems, infections, and unsafe abortion have all been documented as a leading cause of death among pregnant displaced women (Martin, 2011; WHO, 2017). In addition, it has been suggested that the psychological trauma of sexual abuse often results in a high prevalence of mental health problems in women during the war and internal displacement (Martin, 2011; Haldane and Nickerson, 2016). In some cases, refugee women who experienced sexual violence and rape are also stigmatised by their family and community members, and research suggests that this may give rise to conditions that make further sexual violence more probable (Walker, 2009).

Not all violations and harms suffered by women are sexual in nature. In fact, women also suffer family losses as a consequence of war. When husbands or other male family members are absent, injured, or killed in the conflict, unaccompanied women may abandon their homes while taking the additional responsibilities for meeting the needs and security of their children, something that they may be not prepared for (Walker, 2009). Previous research has pointed out that insecurity and war force many women to relocate externally across borders seeking a safe place (Pickering and Cochrane, 2013; Amnesty International, 2019).

However, it is also essential to recognise that refugee women are not just victims. There has been further development in the academic debate on the representation of refugee women as an active agent; as Bailey (2012, p.852) stated, "although women are victimised in different situations, they also work in the junction between oppression and agency to create a better life". I will further investigate the relationships between gender and refugee status in chapter five of this thesis.

2.3.2 The impact of forced displacement across borders on women

In 2019, the United Nations High Commission estimated that more than a million of refugees arrived in Europe by sea, most of them originated from Syria, Venezuela, and Afghanistan. The majority of these refugees were men; however, the number of women (traveling alone or with small children) have also been involved in these dangerous journeys are increasing (UNHCR, 2019). Smugglers often ship women refugees across the Mediterranean in boats that are hardly prepared for the voyage and there are possible risks of drowning in shipwrecks, dying of dehydration and hypothermia, in addition to direct and indirect violence (Pickering and Cochrane, 2013; Turner, 2015, Freedman, 2016; Last, et al., 2017).

Traditionally, during the war, conflict, or extreme poverty, men are forced to leave their country, often leaving women behind in either their own country or transitory situation in neighbouring countries, hoping to send for them at a later date (Pittaway and Batolemei, 2001). It is argued that in some cases, this is a strategy of men, who believe that women and children will be more successful in the entry to Europe, as unaccompanied women or pregnant women are perceived more vulnerable and, therefore, more easily they can get protection from the EU states (Freedman, 2016a). In other cases, women are traveling alone because they are single or have lost their husbands during a war or due to family separation either by smugglers or officials (Freedman, 2016a).

Apart from dangerous routes in reaching Europe, female refugees frequently experience violence and insecurities during their migration. Research suggests that sometimes the transit camps provided for female asylum seekers may not be adequately safe and thus expose them to further risks such as sexual abuse, physical assault, or rape (Freedman and Jamal, 2008). This insecurity may be aggravated for those women who are reluctant to report the abuse to the police due to the lack of legal documents (Freedman and Jamal, 2008).

In addition to external insecurities, some refugee women are victims of abuse by their own husbands or partners. Research suggests that many women may not approach police in this situation because they may face more risk in continuing their journey alone (Freedman, 2016a). In other cases, reported violence may not be taken seriously

by the authorities and may be considered cultural differences (Freedman and Jamal, 2008). Women and girls may also be victims of trafficking, which is recognized as a significant source of violence amongst women migrants (Amnesty International, 2019). It has been argued that the closure of borders in response to the refugee crisis in Europe may increase women's vulnerability to gender-based violence in the hands of smugglers (Giuffre and Costello, 2015).

There have been increasing concerns about the use of immigration detention centres (Amnesty International, 2019). Women are held in together with men who are not their relatives, which may severely impact refugee women's physical and mental health (Amnesty International, 2019). Reports have also highlighted the unsatisfactory conditions of many refugees in reception centres that put women refugees at additional risks of sexual violence, rape, and forced pregnancy, and it is noted that most of these crimes remain unreported because of different reasons, including victims' cultural norms and fear of deportation (UNHCR, 2019).

In summary, this section highlighted some of the gendered impacts of war. Specifically, I discussed how conflict and war increase the likelihood of violence and sexual abuse against women and contribute to the prevalence of mental/physical health problems. This section further illustrated that insecurity and war force many women to relocate internally or externally across borders to find a safe place. This section also pointed to the danger that border crossing impose on women, particularly for those travelling alone or with small children.

2.4 Chapter summary

In this chapter, I have outlined some different theories regarding the past routes of nation-state formation and how nation-state formation dynamics have resulted in refugee production. In examining the relationship between the nation-state and the emergence of forced displaced people, the chapter then provides an overview of some of the theories in terms of internal and external causality. In addition, in this chapter, I have also reviewed the gendered aspects of the refugee experiences and discussed the physical impact of war and forced displacement on women. The chapter, therefore, highlights that many women are more at risk of sexual violence and abuse during

internal and cross-border displacement. I argued that not all harms suffered by women are sexual, and many women suffer family losses because of war, which results in a high prevalence of mental health distress among these people.

Furthermore, I highlighted how unaccompanied women risk their lives through the dangerous route across the Mediterranean and displaced far away from their home country in the hope of reaching a safe place. Moreover, apart from the external risks of dangerous routes in reaching Europe, I discussed that some women refugees could also be at risk of abuse by their husbands or partner during displacement. On many occasions, the abuse is not reported by women to avoid continuing their journey alone. The chapter, therefore, illustrates that all women refugees are not victims of similar violence during war and forced displacement. I also suggested that refugee women are not simply ‘victims’ as many refugee women take a substantial role in deciding to leave a country and often only survive because of their strengths.

Because this thesis is focused on Afghan women refugees’ experiences, in the following chapter, the history of Afghanistan and Afghan women’s recent experiences are considered and discussed. This focus further illustrates how Afghanistan as a state failed to protect its citizens, resulting in the mass migration of Afghan refugees into European countries, including the UK.

Chapter Three

The history of Afghanistan as a nation-state and women's contemporary experiences

3.1 Introduction

Because my thesis focuses on the experiences of Afghan refugee women, I thought it would be helpful to give some historical background, as well as discussing some of the cultural, political, and military factors affecting Afghanistan -as a failed state- and I also explore the position of women since the Taliban rule. Therefore, the first part of this chapter outlines the country's geographical position. The second part of the chapter offers an overview of Afghan's cultural background, focusing on gender roles and inequalities within Afghan society and addresses society's patriarchal nature. The third part provides a brief historical overview (post-1880) about Afghanistan and the challenges women faced during previous regimes (the Soviet Union and the Mujahidin), focusing on the Taliban rule. This section also examines the current situation of Afghan women in Afghanistan. Lastly, the chapter illustrates Afghan women's internal/external displacement due to prolonged war, conflict, and lack of human rights. However, before commencing this chapter, it is essential to note the challenge of representing Afghan women in general terms in this chapter, as there are apparent differences between individual women and women's relationships with men across different social and historical moments.

3.2 State structure

This section provides some geographical, ethnic, cultural, and religious background to Afghanistan because these factors have a significant role in Afghan women's lives.

The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan is a landlocked multi-ethnic nation in south-central Asia (Figure 1). The nation is located along vital trading routes that link southern and eastern Asia to Europe and the Middle East, and it has long been

considered a prize coveted by empire-builders due to its strategic position. It has, nevertheless, resettled many powerful colonial forces, but it has also had to suffer a three-decade civil war (Petrov et al., 2016).

Figure 1: Map of Afghanistan



Source: The World Factbook-Central Intelligence Agency, South Asia: Afghanistan, 2019

Today Afghanistan has a population of almost 36.6 million people (The World Bank, 2020), and it is made up of numerous ethnic, religious, linguistic, and cultural groups that form distinct micro-societies, the majority of which have substantial cross-border relations with surrounding countries (Saikal et al., 2006). The main Afghans' ethnic groups include the Pashtuns, Tajiks, Hazaras, and Uzbeks (CIA, 2020). The Islamic religion (Sunni and Shi'a Muslims) is practised by most people, and other religions,

such as Sikhs and Hindus, are represented by a limited number of people (Shahrani, 2002). Dari and Pashtu are the country's official languages, with Dari spoken by 50% of the population and Pashtu by 35% (CIA, 2020). However, the vast majority of people are bilingual (Saikal et al., 2006).

Throughout its history, Afghanistan has been invaded and colonised by different empires (Ansary, 1991). It has been suggested that all the invaders have left their marks on the landscape, language, religion, and genetic heritage of the country and created an ethnically diverse population (Shahrani, 2002). The largest ethnic group, comprising between 40 per cent and 50 per cent of the Afghanistan population, is Pashtuns, and this ethnic group is concentrated in the southern and southeast regions of Afghanistan. The majority of the Pashtuns practise Sunni Islam. The second and third largest ethnic group in Afghanistan is Tajiks (primarily settled in Herat, Mazar-e-Sharif, and Kabul) and Hazaras (CIA, 2018).

After the Pashtuns and Tajiks, the Hazaras are Afghanistan's third largest ethnic group, who are believed to be ethnical of Mongolian or East Asian descent, and many of them feel the kinship with Iran due to having a shared Shi'a faith (CIA, 2018). Hazaras ethnic group mainly resides in the Hazarajat region (in central Afghanistan) (CIA, 2018). Hazaras' common language is Dari (Persian), and the majority of this ethnic group is Shi'a Muslims, with some minorities of Sunni Muslims in Afghanistan (CIA, 2018).

Hazaras have traditionally placed a high value on educational achievement- including for girls-, however, their religious affiliation (Shi'a Muslims) and the ethnic belonging (not seen as real Afghans) has often prevented this group from having access to education and public services (Home Office, 2018). As an ethnic group, they have been subject to prosecution throughout history (CIA, 2018). Tens of thousands of them killed by the Pashtun King Amir Abdul Rahman Khan in the late 1900s (Shahrani, 2002), and for decades Hazaras has been under threat by the Taliban and Isis (both are Sunni Islamic Fundamentalist organisations) (Home Office, 2018). The report by the Home Office (2018) highlighted that this population's marginalisation has resulted in many of the Hazaras change their names to Tajik ones to access education, and some migrated to the neighbouring countries, particularly Pakistan and Iran.

Emadi (2005) claimed that during the nineteenth century, religion and ethnicity have been the main reasons for ongoing conflicts between the Pashtuns and Hazaras ethnic groups. The socio-economic status in Afghanistan is linked with ethnicity, and Emadi (2005) suggested that Pashtuns have traditionally been among the wealthiest and educated people. At the same time, the majority of low-income Afghans with lower social class belong to the Hazaras and Gypsies (Emadi, 2005). However, a recent report shows that Hazaras people have recently achieved some success by gaining some political positions in Afghan government (Home Office, 2018).

Uzbek, the fourth largest ethnic group in Afghanistan, is mainly settled in the country's mountainous northern regions, next to the Tajiks (Lamer and Foster, 2011). Living in the distance from Kabul (the capital city of Afghanistan) has allowed them to maintain a cohesive community with some autonomy, in which the leader (called khan) has the most power (Rubin, 2015). Uzbeks are Sunni Muslims and speak the Uzbek language (Barfield, 2015).

In the following, I will examine Afghan people's cultural background as this helps the reader understand some specific cultural challenges that Afghan women face in their home country.

3.3 Cultural background

Afghan patriarchal society, as Moghadam (2002) argued, is recognised by a low level of literacy and educational achievement among women, high fertility level (which results in high rates of maternal mortalities), and women's restricted participation in the labour market. Indeed, Rubin (2015) suggests that Afghan women's educational, health, social status, and economic prospects are so profoundly rooted in family and social roles that changing them would take a lifetime.

Research suggests that in Afghanistan, the family has a strong impact on women's lives, especially in rural areas, where the family's elder members (e.g., fathers, siblings, elder sons, husbands) make decisions about women's lives (Azarbaijani-Moghaddam and Schmeidl, 2002). Under patriarchal Afghan culture, women and children take the concept of property that belongs to their men (this is more common

among Pashtuns), and girls are often married at a young age into households led by their husband's parent (Moghadam, 2002).

However, Kandiyoti (1988) suggested that patriarchy in Afghanistan is not the product of men wielding authority over women. Kandiyoti (1988, p.279) has claimed that women also practise power over other women due to women entering into a "patriarchal bargain", where "subordination to men offset by the control older women attain over younger women and also over their sons". In this sense, many Afghan women experience patriarchy, from both men and women. Research suggests that women are adversely affected by family abuse, like spousal and intrafamily violence (Ramirez, 2015). Moreover, the husband's mother and sisters are equally likely to practice domestic violence against his wife (Crane, 2009).

3.3.1 Purdah

Many Afghan women live in Purdah (more common with Pashtun people), which is often considered to limit women's freedom and autonomy, and as Karlsson and Mansory (2007) suggested, this cultural and religious practice restricts women from participating in activities outside the house. Papanek (1971, p.289) describes Purdah as "the system of secluding women and enforcing high standards of female modesty, and for men, Purdah is seen as prestigious because a man's honour is partially derived from the behaviour of his woman". According to this social practice, women must act in such ways, particularly when they are in public places, and Ramirez (2015) suggests that men have full influence and control over women's mobility under the Purdah system.

Women in Afghan culture are extremely insecure and very vulnerable while they are in public places, and Purdah, on the other hand, provides them with a feeling of safety (Papanek, 1971). Papanek (1971) suggested that Purdah is also used as a mechanism for impulse control, this is achieved through the social construction of shame used as mechanisms of social control. The honour-shame complex has long been seen as fundamental to women's segregation and an integral part of patriarchy, especially in the Mediterranean region (Moghadam, 2002). According to Moghadam (2002), the honour-shame complex is based on women's behaviour and sexual regulation. Nevertheless, the ideology of controlling women and confining them to the private

sphere also derives from material interests, such as the marriage market. In Afghanistan, as Hawthorne and Winter (2002) suggested, many families used forced marriage as a way to end tribal conflicts and increase their family's wealth and prestige.

Purdah is also expressed by women's clothing. When visiting public spaces, women are encouraged to dress in particular ways; for example, when outside, some women are expected to cover up and wear a burqa (and this is more common in the provinces than in the cities) (Murray, 2012). The custom of women wearing a burqa (mainly associated with women in the Pashtun community) is another feature of culture that has a negative impact on women, especially in public places. According to Emadi (2002), men may use the need to be covered up as a reason to prohibit women from education and employment. Emadi (2002) also pointed out that Afghan women can only go to school or work in specific regions if a burqa covers them. However, the tradition of Purdah, or seclusion, is not practised in the same way anywhere, and it is often found to be stricter for urban women from lower-middle and lower-income families (Barakat and Wardell, 2002; Karlsson and Mansory, 2007).

3.3.2 Gender roles

The idea of women's role as a form of oppression is not accepted by all writers; for example, Moghadam (2002) has suggested that gender roles are shaped by the Purdah system (more common in Pashtuns). Although most Afghan people define gender roles as separate, they are also considered complementary (rather than egalitarian) (Moghadam, 2002). Other authors, such as Manganaro and Alozie (2011) have argued that there are distinct positions for men and women and the construction and expectations of women's obedient is conveyed to balance men's more dominant role. Indeed, Moghadam (2002) has suggested that the construction of masculinity in Afghan culture is that men are typically seen as the protectors, breadwinners, and decision-makers in their families. In contrast, women have considered men's property (more visible among Pashtuns), and they responsible for house chores and looking after children and elderly members of the family (Moghadam, 2002). Moreover, men's guardian and breadwinner roles enable them to function in public spaces, while women are restricted to private and safe spaces (Schmeidl, 2009). However, where men are considered the unquestionable ruler of the house, and household issues are seen as

private matters, this ideology often contributes to domestic violence (traditional wife battery) (Moghadam, 2002).

In addition, research suggests that women may find themselves vulnerable to dowry-related crimes such as bride burning, as well as kidnapping for prostitution, and honour killings (Moghadam, 2002). Women and girls subjected to sexual assault are seen as a 'disgrace' to their families and are often murdered by their husbands, brothers and fathers, in order to save their honour (UNAMA and OHCHR, 2014). Therefore, the victim of rape is often marked as a disgraced person, and the offenders are not held responsible for what they have done (UNAMA, 2018). A report by the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) has documented about 238 incidents of murder of women during 2019, 96 per cent of which constituted honour killings.

These gendered roles are socialised, and they are usually assigned to boys and girls from puberty, once girls and boys are no longer able to engage with each other, and girls are expected to exhibit more culturally acceptable behaviour toward males, such as honouring men and not talking loudly in their presence (Karlsson and Mansory, 2007). Moreover, the cultural values dictate that women should not go outside without excuse or be seen by men outside the family and should only socialise with female member of the family (Karlsson and Mansory, 2007). Education also impacts the degree of acceptance of the normative principle, and many women from the middle and upper class in Kabul who attain higher educational levels have a lower inclination to agree with the gender norms, such as women taking care of domestic tasks (Moghadam, 2002).

Depending on the ethnicity and region, certain gender norms are stricter than others (Zulfacar, 2006). For instance, in the Pashtun tribes (concentrated in southern Afghanistan and parts of the east), gender stereotypes are stricter and more popular, as Pashtunwali guides Pashtuns, a patriarchal honour code that encourages women's reliance on men rather than equality (Kakar, 2005; Rashid, 2001). Pashtunwali is both a code and a philosophy (Roy, 2009). Women's constraints are so entrenched that they reject any legislative efforts that would favour them and their families (Kakar, 2005). However, gender roles in the Hazaras' culture (the third-largest ethnic group

concentrated in central and western provinces of Afghanistan) seem to be more balanced than in the Pashtun community and education is often seen as a matter of pride (Saikal, 2012).

3.3.3 Arranged marriage

The tradition of arranged marriage is closely aligned with the mechanism of Purdah, in which the aspect of free choice and independence is greatly diminished, and the family makes marriage decisions, and in most cases, the girl has no alternative but to agree (Stickland, 2007). A young girl is still regarded as a commodity that can be traded for cash, and according to a report by UNICEF (2019), 59 per cent of all marriages are forced and under the age of eighteen. In response to the restrictions placed on girls by their families, many people choose to strike back by fleeing, but they are often tortured or killed by their own families for their actions (Winthrop, 2003).

It is worth noting that, apart from the Afghan culture, a girl's marriage is usually considered to be socially conciliatory as it is deemed to strengthen ties between rival families, settle disputes, and as an economic relationship which is more common in rural areas (Zulfacar, 2006). Moreover, research indicates that a level of education also drives child marriage practices in Afghanistan, and girls with no formal education are three times more likely to marry under the age of 18, compared to the girls above primary education (Human Rights Watch, 2017).

Moreover, a report by UNFPA (2017) shows that when a girl is married off, her sister often has to take on her household duties and consequently drops out of school, and consequently, they often become vulnerable to child marriage. The research by UNICEF (2018) points to the negative impacts of child marriage in devaluing girls as an individual who forces to stick to household chores.

The condition of child marriage also leads to high maternal morbidity and mortality among girls (Abbasi-Shavazi et al., 2012), and Afghanistan has one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the world (CSO, MoPH, and ICF, 2017). Since the girls are most often pubescent and sometimes pre-pubescent when married, their bodies have not developed sufficiently for sexual relations or pregnancy and childbirth (Barakat

and Wardell, 2002). Moreover, research highlights additional challenges that can often result from child marriage, including girls' restricted mobility, unhappy marriages, violence, and attempted suicides (MoLSAMD and UNICEF, 2018).

3.3.4 Polygamous marriage

Since polygamy is practised in Afghanistan, a girl bride may be the second, third or fourth wife (Hassounah-Phillips, 2001). Research suggests that polygamy often creates stress for the previous wives and children so that each new wife may be the target for jealousy and abuse by earlier wives; for example, a first wife is often ignored or mistreated by the husband if he takes the side of a second wife. The pattern often continues with subsequent wives (Hassounah-Phillips, 2001). Additional stress is that if the husband lives a distance from the girl's family, she may rarely if ever, see them again, and this is especially significant because in Afghan culture, as a wife is generally absorbed into the husband's family and lives under their authority (Kabeer and Khan, 2014).

Having now outlined the state structures and cultural background of Afghanistan, which has been based on the patriarchy and unequal gender norms, I will now examine the history of modern Afghanistan. This focus further helps to establish an understanding of history prior to the Taliban's rise to power and its impact on women's lives.

3.4 Historical overview

3.4.1 Modern Afghanistan (1880-1996)

The birth of modern Afghanistan is usually attributed to Abdur Rahman Khan (1880–1901), who was the first ruler to consolidate the nation into a centralised state, alongside changes in some laws to improve Afghan women's rights (Fishstein, 2010). For example, he abolished the forced marriage to deceased husbands' next of kin and raised the marriage age with some rights to divorce (in cases of husbands' cruelty and non-support) (Dupree, 1998). However, it needs to be noted that during the kingdom of Abdur Rahman Khan, the Hazaras (an ethnic minority group in Afghanistan) population were ruthlessly subjugated and massacred due to belonging to Shi'a affiliation (Monsutti, 2005).

Habibullah (1901-1919) the son of Abdur Rahman Khan, followed his father's plan to develop the Afghan state (Fishstein, 2010). He tried to eliminate expensive marriage customs, a reason for poverty in many Afghan families (Diyarbakirlioglu and Yigit, 2017). He also allowed his wives to attend public places with western clothes and without a veil (Lee, 2018). During this period, a number of public structures were established, including secondary schools and hospitals (Fishstein, 2010). Furthermore, several prominent Afghans -who had exiled from Afghanistan by order of his father- returned to the state with having new ideas of modernisation (Fishstein, 2010).

During King Amanullah's reign (1919-1929), the country's first constitution was established in 1923, and the state entered a decade of modernisation (Ahmed-Ghosh, 2003). At this time, the king emphasised the monogamy and separation of the religion from the state constitution (Fishstein, 2010). He also made education compulsory and introduced initiatives to abolish veiling and encouraged women in Kabul to dress in Western style (Muhammad, Hazarah and Muhammad, 1999). However, this reformation was against the ideology of many of those representing conservative religious and tribal interests, which led to King Amanullah's overthrow in 1929 (Lee, 2018).

After the disturbance had fallen, the country has undergone more developments during the reign of King Nadir Shah (1929-1933) and King Zahir Shah (1933-1973) (Bearak, 2007). During King Mohammad Daoud's (1973-1978) reign, many of the state's institutions, including the airport and state's army established, and women gave the right to vote (Marsden, 2009). Except for the civilian disturbance or local riot, it is argued that Afghanistan was in peace for almost 50 years from the disruption of 1929 until the Communist coup in 1978 (Lee, 2018). However, conflicts remained between the conservative tribes and those favouring Western modernisation (Bearak, 2007).

Nevertheless, the Afghan state's political development and progress became weak in 1978 with the Communist-led coup and the resulting Soviet invasion and subsequent uprising, and it has been argued that civil conflict and war has been a way of life since 1979 (Tomsen, 2013). When the Soviets left Afghanistan in 1989, the country was void of a legitimate government, and the power gap was filled by the Mujahidin (freedom fighters) (Goodson, 2001). These men, rulers from the various clans and

villages, were determined to rule the country, resulting in continued civil unrest until 1996 (Moghadam, 2002). Moreover, while the warlords' main objectives were gaining power, they also ensured the well-being of their families and a few close friends (Barakat and Wardell, 2001). However, research suggests that most warlords were brutal men who used their power to extort money or possessions as bribes for several reasons, such as the use of the roads in their villages and they were also involved in sexual violence against women, and violence and corruption became a way of life with the broader population living in terror (Ahmed-Gosh, 2003).

3.4.2 The rise and fall of the Taliban (1996-2001)

Amid the violence and corruption emerged a group of strict fundamental Muslim men from the Pashtun ethnic group, the Taliban, to counter the mismanaged politics and unexpected brutalities of the Mujahedeen (Qamar, 2014). They fought their way from province to province, finally gaining control and taking over the capital city Kabul, and officially became the ruling power in 1996 (Coburn and Larson 2014).

The Taliban quickly became known for the oppression of human rights, in particular women's rights, and their cruel treatment of women became noticed by the broader global communities (Rostami-Povey, 2007). Some authors claim that the Taliban used women as a sign of manhood to keep their powers and discourage young men from being corrupted by women (Goodson, 2001; Thruelson, 2010). Their laws were mostly based on their political ideology, which included patriarchal views that women should be kept at home (Zulfacar, 2006).

The Taliban's rigid laws were felt more strongly in large cities, where women had previously had more rights than in rural areas (Tomsen, 2013). For example, the Taliban made it illegal for women to go to school, work, or even go out without a male family member accompanying them (Rostami-Povey, 2007). Women were required to wear the chador -the head to toe's garment which had only a small mesh opening from which to see out- and those who opposed the Taliban's rule faced severe punishment, public beating, and imprisonment (Cortright and Wall, 2012).

Hazaras was the vulnerable ethnic group that has been under continued attack by the Taliban forces (Home Office, 2019). Lee (2018) claims that the Taliban forces' attacks

on Hazaras are related to ethnic tensions as many Taliban leaders are ethnic Pashtuns. The land confiscation, various target killings and kidnappings, road blockage, and severe restriction on Hazara women (who usually enjoy more freedom in the Afghan society compared to the other ethnic groups) had been proclaimed by the Taliban regimes (Lee, 2018). Belonging to a Shi'a faith of Islam has been suggested as an additional reason for further subjugation of people from Hazaras (Home Office, 2019).

It is noticeable that woman's scholarship on the Taliban has mostly focused on women who have been victims of Taliban law and human rights violations; however, this stereotype has been challenged by some other authors (Rostami-Pavey, 2007; Lemmon, 2011). For example, Rostami-Pavey (2007) claimed that there was a small group of women who were the Taliban supporters and assisted them by working as official spies and paid informers. However, Rostami-Pavey (2007) suggested that these women's motivations could be supporting the ideological mission or due to poverty, fear, and coercion. Based on interviews that Rostami-Pavey (2007) conducted with Afghan women in Iran and the UK in 2002, she suggested that while most women were forced to remain at home and adhere to domestic duties, the Taliban would visit the women's compound to see if the Taliban laws were being observed and reported this to their male commander. Moreover, Lee (2018) pointed to Terese Christiansson's (2012) findings, a journalist who identified that some women assisted the Taliban by carrying weapons for them and taking care of the Taliban injured combatants.

Afghan women's resistance and struggle:

Women have undoubtedly been victims of the violence and political disturbance in Afghanistan for many years; however, many did not remain silent victims (Leede, 2014). Following the defeat of the Soviets in 1989 and the rise of the Taliban, the Taliban persuaded many Afghan men to join them (Leede, 2014). In her research, Ross-Sheriff (2006) describes how Afghan women risk persecution and hide their male relatives from the Taliban soldiers. Besides, while many Afghan men left the country, women had a pivotal role in keeping their families safe during economic hardship, political instability, and violence (Ross-Sheriff, 2006). Women, therefore,

often had to be resourceful in order to support their families while their men were away from home, or they had died as a result of civil war (Leede, 2014). Likewise, authors such as Lemmon (2011) described how many Afghan women struggled to make a living under Taliban rule, citing Kamila Sidiqi, who began a dressmaking company from her home and developed it into a successful business. In addition, many female Afghan specialists, such as surgeons, have chosen to remain in Afghanistan and assist other women (Rostami-Povey, 2003).

Moreover, women's rights organisations were founded to empower Afghan women with vocational and language skills, but these were officially closed by the rise of the Taliban (Rostami-Povey, 2003). However, these groups have also continued working their operations from their homes (Rostami-Povey, 2003), even though threats of imprisonment and torture were made against the heads of those organisations, as well as female teachers (Lemmon, 2011). These women's determination and ability to persevere in the face of adversity reveals an unquestionable willingness and ability to thrive (Leede, 2014).

3.4.3 The current situation

Violence against women imposed by the Taliban continues to have serious social, cultural, and economic effects on Afghan women's lives. A report in 2019 by AIHRC indicated that violence against women resulted in severe psychological problems (8.1%), suicidal ideations (7.1%), fleeing from home (14.6%), marriage separation (10.6%), injuries (17.2%), and other problems such as prostitution and sexually transmitted diseases. Research also suggests that violence is not reported to authorities in many cases and domestic abuse is not often considered a felony due to the prevalence of a patriarchal and traditional Afghan culture (AIHRC, 2019).

There are fewer schools for girls than boys, and in half of the country's provinces, fewer than 20 per cent of teachers are female, which is a significant barrier for girls whose families will not allow them to be taught by a man (UNICEF, 2019). Moreover, underage marriage, insecurity, poverty, social, and cultural barriers still hinder many girls and adult women from getting an education (Human Rights Watch, 2019). The UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2019) confirmed that there is a low literacy rate for Afghan women (30 per cent) compared to Afghan men (55 per cent).

Regarding protection mechanisms for women, in recent years, women who are victims of violence face challenges in trying to access safe refuge centres, with limited opportunities for them to return to their families and reintegrate into society (UNAMA, 2018). Other challenges include a lack of women's access to justice, corruption in the criminal justice system, insufficient resources, and a lack of support teams to deal with offences committed against women and children (UNICEF, 2018).

The impact of US intervention in Afghanistan:

Following the 9/11 attacks, one of the strategies of the US government intervention in Afghanistan, was to align with Afghan Northern Alliance to create a defensive war against the Taliban regime and to counter al Qaeda (Misra, 2004). At the time, many of the counter-terrorism measures may have succeeded to overthrow Taliban leaders and forced al Qaeda out of the state, but the US military intervention expanded the fight beyond borders (into Pakistan), resulted in the growing number of civilian casualties, resulting in Afghanistan being the country with the highest number of terrorism-related deaths (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2018). Moreover, the loss of a family members and/ or friends due to the US intervention, created deep resentment among many people and served as a motivating factor for terrorist recruitment (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2018).

Another arm of United States' intervention strategy was to fight for women's rights in Afghanistan and establish a stable state, where women can live in safety and have equal rights (Connah, 2021). Since the invasion of the US in 2001 in Afghanistan there have been some positive improvements towards education and laws to prevent violence against women, (such as the Elimination of Violence Against Women Law), however, research suggests that in practice women are not really served any differently than they were during the Taliban rule (Human Rights Watch, 2019). Connah (2021) argues that the United States cannot be portrayed as liberating Afghan women from the Taliban because of the primary role of the US that first enabled the rise of Mujaheddin, and then supported the rise of the Taliban. Indeed, it has been argued that the conflict was more likely to harm Afghan women as it destabilised the state and deprived women from basic economic rights such as food, water, medical care, and security (Connah, 2021).

Moreover, the current announcement of the US military withdrawal from Afghanistan and release of thousands of the Taliban prisoners in 2020 (as part of a peace agreement mediated by US) has raised concerns about the safety of Afghan staffs who worked for the Americans (De Jong, 2021) and nearly 3000 Afghan interpreters who have served both the Afghanistan and the British Army between 2001 and 2018, have been refused from protection through resettlement in the UK (De Jong, 2021). De Jong (2021) claims that throughout this lengthy conflict NATO's Afghanistan mission failed to set up a coordinated resettlement programme to protect local staffs.

3.5 Afghan women's forced displacement

In recent years, Afghanistan has gradually recovered from the devastating impact of years of conflicts; nonetheless, there are still high levels of insecurity, poverty, and human rights violation. It was reported that, by the end of November 2019, 500,000 individuals had been internally displaced in Afghanistan, which is broadly consistent with trends over the past four years (OCHA, 2020). Most displaced people in Afghanistan live on the edges of major cities, but the overcrowding raises the risk of harassment and human trafficking for women (Majidi and Hennion, 2014). A report by Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC, 2011) indicated that most women and children trafficking happens inside the country (60 per cent), and in 40 per cent of the cases, women trafficked across borders for the purposes of sexual exploitation. Further research shows that some female victims of trafficking are not only subjected to sexual abuse and slavery at the hands of the attacker, but they are also exposed to honour killings and brutality by their own relatives after being saved (AIHRC, 2011).

The push factors for Afghans' displacement (prolonged conflict, insecurity, and socio-economic consequences) corresponded with pull factors (including access to education and employment, reunion with family, and obtaining citizenship) has accounted for much of the continued out-migration in Afghanistan (IOM, 2019). Afghans' secondary waves of contemporary movement was initiated in the 1980s and early 1990s, through seeking refuge across nearby borders of Pakistan and Iran (Amnesty International, 2019). Reports show a high number of single Afghans

traveling on their own (Amnesty International, 2020), and this is more of a problem for female Afghans with their children as female Afghan women require written permission from male guardians to be issued a passport (Hanmer and Elefante, 2020). After coming into touch with smuggling networks in Afghanistan, most women and children have been forced to leave by land through Pakistan and Iran (UNHCR, 2019). However, they continue to face numerous obstacles in proving their identity to be able to claim legal rights and access to services in host countries. Moreover, the situation has changed radically, with both Pakistan and Iran were no longer promising an open-border policy to Afghans escaping conflict or oppression (Donini, Monsutti and Scalettari, 2016). The loss of the ability for Afghans to seek asylum in neighbouring countries (and forced returns from Iran and camp closures in Pakistan), has resulted in a redirection of refugee flows into the European countries, as more than 2.6 million refugees were registered by the end of 2019 (Amnesty International, 2019), and with the USA and UK withdrawal of troops in August 2021, the future remains uncertain.

However, research also suggests that Afghans from the middle classes with connections to the more expensive smuggling networks are more likely to fly directly to Europe (Donini, Monsutti, and Scalettari, 2016), despite the fact that many Afghan people face challenges travelling to European countries due to them having the lowest passport ranking in the world (Passport Index, 2021). Therefore, many Afghans have no choice but to make hazardous sea crossing in order to reach European countries (Donini, Monsutti, and Scalettari, 2016). According to the UN statistics in 2021, Afghans made up 45 percent of arrivals coming over the Mediterranean and Aegean Sea, and there is often trauma associated with the journey, including being separated from a family member, physical harassment, sexual abuse, drowning, or witnessing the death of a fellow traveller (IOM, 2019).

3.6 Chapter summary

Women's identities in Afghanistan are multifaceted, with women's experiences in Afghanistan intersected by race, language, and social status, which are dependent on socioeconomic divisions, schooling, and family origins. Men's and women's positions in Afghan society are primarily focused on common ideals of public and private distinction rather than gender equality. Through the use of the *Purdah* system, men in

Afghanistan restrict women to access to public spaces, as well as participation in social community. In this chapter, I have also discussed the ideology behind Afghan patriarchy and women's segregation, and I explained how the honour-shame complex is based on female behaviour and regulate their sexuality. As a result, recognising the role of Afghan women requires distinguishing between public and private spheres.

Throughout Afghanistan's history, women's contribution to the public domain has always been politicised, challenged, and withheld. When it comes to women's rights in Afghanistan, it can be seen that regulation over the female body and autonomy have always been used as a symbol by various governments to articulate their basic philosophies. Women were used by the communist government to achieve their socialist and imperialist goals of training women so that they could enter the labour force, despite the fact that women were paying less than men. The Mujahidin, on the other hand, used women's bodies as mothers who had to remain at home and away from public places. The Taliban have also used female bodies as a sign of manhood to wield strength and banned women entirely from the public arena. Hence, the 1990s were a horrifying chapter in Afghan women's culture, depicting sexism, inequality, brutality, and the erosion of basic human rights.

After the supposed 'fall' of the Taliban in 2001, politicisation shifted to a higher, more complicated dimension. Women's rights have become a sign of the new Afghan state's modernity, as well as the progress of the foreign organisations that fund it. There is, however, a distinction between propaganda and fact in Afghanistan when it comes to women's problems. On the one hand, women are granted opportunities for education and jobs in society; on the other hand, women's welfare and daily lives in both cities and suburbs remain intact. The persistence of deeply entrenched patriarchal societal values and cultural traditions, as well as restrictions on women's freedom of travel have all contributed to women's forced displacement internally or across borders of neighbouring countries -including Iran and Pakistan- and ultimately towards Europe and the UK.

The following chapter describes how nation-states have collectively responded to refugee flows and the measures that they have taken to protect and assist refugee.

Chapter Four

The protection of asylum seekers and refugees

4.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to discuss some of the complexities of the protection of refugees. In the first section, I identify some of the key international organisations that have sought to both recognise refugees and their rights and how nation-states have attempted to resolve the ‘refugee problem’. This is followed by a discussion concerning the development of the refugee protection regimes and how the Status of Refugees has been constructed and exploring some of the debates around the obligations that host states have towards the protection of asylum seekers and refugees. Because my study was conducted with female refugees in London, I also discuss some of the critical issues relating to refugee policy in the UK and special issues for female asylum seekers and refugees.

4.2 International co-operation for the support of refugees

I thought it would be helpful to start this chapter by briefly discussing the origins of the 1951 Refugee Convention on refugees, as this convention clarifies the rights of refugees and the obligation of signatory states.

4.2.1 The origins of the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol

The League of Nations (1921-1946) was initially established as an international response to refugee flows produced during the Balkan Wars (1912-1913), the first World War (1914-1918), and its ramifications in the Middle East -the wars in the Caucasus (1918-1921) and the Greco-Turkish War (1919-1922)- (Jaeger, 2001) and they appointed several High Commissioners to deal with specific refugee groups such as Russian, Armenians, and Germans (UNHCR, 2011). Later, during and after the Second World War, millions of displaced people in Europe were mainly originating from Germany, Austria, and Italy (Goodwin-Gill and McAdam, 2007). The United

Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) was established in 1943 to assist refugees and people who had been displaced by the war by administering refugee camps and later assistance in their repatriation to their countries of origin (UNHCR, 2005). However, the failure of the UNRRA on handling repatriation programs resulted the termination of the financial support from US government (UNHCR, 2011), and this contributed to the creation of the International Refugee Organization (IRO) in 1946, which undertook the primary responsibility to resettle displaced people and refugees from central Europe (Jaeger, 2001). When the original three-year program of the IRO completed, it was evident that the post-war refugee problem had not been resolved as people continued to flee to the West of Europe. Hence, there was a general agreement between UN members on the need for continued international co-operation in dealing with the refugee problem (UNHCR, 2011). In 1949, the UN General Assembly decided to establish the United Nation of High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), which included the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the four Geneva Conventions on international humanitarian law that remains in place today (UNHCR, 2005).

4.2.2 Defining a refugee

The centrepiece of the refugee protection regime is the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees, which emerged as an aftermath of the Second World War to coordinate states' responses to displaced population in Europe by the war (UNHCR, 2011). According to this Convention, a refugee is;

“Any person who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.”

(UN General Assembly, 1951, p.152)

It is notable that the convention was initially narrow because it was limited to protecting European people who became refugees before 1 January 1951. Therefore

the 1967 Protocol was drafted to remove both the geographical restriction and time limitation on the refugee definition (UNHCR, 2011). In addition, the 1967 Protocol confirmed the crucial principle of non-refoulment, the term related to the practice of not returning refugees to the countries where they will be persecuted (UNHCR, 2011). While 148 states were initially signatory to the 1967 Protocol, the United States and Canada did not become members of the international system until 1968 and 1969, respectively. Taken together (i.e., the convention and the protocol), these specifications provide the basic legal framework for the current international refugee protection system. There are, however, some ambiguities in the refugee definition. Traditionally, under international refugee law, refugee protection is served for those that have fled their home country. Therefore, individuals who do not cross the borders have been deprived of international protection, which has led to the call for a new declaration relating to internally displaced people (Steiner, Gibney and Loescher, 2013). Furthermore, those who have managed to cross borders due to war and civil conflicts often remained outside of international refugee protection because, according to refugee definition, they are not considered to have a fear of political persecution.

Another limitation of refugee definition was that for an individual to be entitled to refugee protection, the ‘persecution’ must come from a government source. Besides, the individual must show evidence of herself or himself as a particular social group member. These critical aspects of refugee definition have caused many refugees to lose the protection of other states, which is often difficult to prove (UNCHR, 2011).

Additional protection:

Human Rights Law was developed to support refugee protection, keeping the refugee definition relevant and securing additional protection to specific groups of refugees (Harvey, 2015). Therefore, some human rights instruments have offered additional protection for refugees, such as Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR, 1948), which provides that everyone has the right to seek asylum in other countries from persecution (Harvey, 2015). However, as stated in Article 1F of the 1951 Convention, the right of the Status of Refugees may not be raised when the refugee poses a threat to the state’s national security or has been convicted with non-political offences or actions that violate the United Nations’ values (UN, 2016).

In addition, the right to seek asylum was reinforced by Article 33, the principle of non-refoulment, which provides that “it is the obligation of states not to expel or forcibly return a refugee to a state where they would face prosecution on account of their race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular group or political opinion” (UNHCR, 2005, p.89). Article 31(1) of the Geneva Convention, which forbids any fines based on the irregular entry of refugees, reinforced this protection where Article 1 and Article 33 read together also place a duty on states to grant access to asylum procedures for the purpose of refugee status (Edwards, 2005).

The primary definition of the term ‘refugee’ is that set in the convention related to the Status of Refugees; however, several scholars have tempted to adopt a broader interpretation of the definition of a refugee since it takes into account the capability and desire of a state or multi-national body to offer assistance to refugees. My interest here is not, in the main, to argue about the well-established meanings of refugee. However, I believe that understanding the definition of refugee and the debates around it may clarify how states define refugee and the states’ obligation.

4.3 Debates upon definition of refugees

The new drivers of cross-border displacements, such as environmental change, famine, and state fragility, have created debates amongst theorists regarding who can be defined as a genuine refugee in the current era. Although there is a broad range of perspectives discussing this issue, I have focused on the essence of the humanitarian, political, and philosophical approach in my thesis.

4.3.1 Humanitarian theorists

A vast number of people worldwide are unable to enjoy basic needs for their lives, and to some scholars, there is a need to expand the definition of refugee convention to encompass these people.

In this regard, humanitarian theorists such as Shacknoves (1985) has suggested that all individuals are entitled to enjoy basic needs and protection, and therefore when the states are unable or unwilling to provide basic needs to their citizens, the ‘political bond’ between the individual and the state breaks. Therefore, people have a right to

claim asylum in other states where they can be supported. Based on this concept, moreover, Shacknoves argued that if the political prosecution establishes a valid claim to be entitled to refugee protection, then other threats to physical security, such as civil war, terrorism, and natural disasters, should entitle people to protection as well (Shacknoves, 1985). In support of this theory, writers such as Gibney (2004), Miller (2008), and Betts (2013) have provided similarly expansive refugee definitions. For instance, Betts (2013) broadened the scope of people in need of protection and defined the term survival migrants, in which he refers to people fleeing not only from civil and political violation but other socioeconomic rights deprivations. For Betts (2015), the current refugee definition encompasses protection for people fleeing deprivations of fundamental liberty and basic security; however, he believes that people's right to basic subsistence has been ignored.

4.3.2 Political theorists

The humanitarian perspective has been refuted by others, such as Lister (2013), who holds the view that there are strong reasons, both practical and theoretical, for rejecting the humanitarian approach, and stated that “the group picked out by Convention definition has particular characteristics, that make refugee protection distinctly appropriate for it. While many people in need of assistance can be helped 'in place', in their home countries, or by providing a form of temporary protected status to them, this is not the convention on refugees” (Lister, 2013, pp.645). According to Lister, the UN refugee concept identifies a normatively distinct category to which states owe special obligations of providing asylum in a safe country.

Moreover, Lister (2013) argues that the humanitarian approach proposed by Shacknove (1985) fails to give adequate practical guidance to meet the needs of those in danger and therefore fails on one of the requirements for an adequate definition. As Lister (2013) argues, the humanitarian approach also fails to meet a standard methodological requirement. In questions of political philosophy, Lister (2013) claims that there must be a clear distinction between fundamental principles and the obligations that arise under the principle in question in a particular context or situation, and Shacknove (1985) fails to make this distinction, and it is this that leads him to his broad definition. Additionally, Lister (2013) argues that resisting the demand for a

wider concept of refugees would help states to better fulfil their obligations to those in need.

Other political theorists such as Hathaway (2007) and Durieux (2013) have also predominantly argued for retaining asylum's focus on political persecution. To these authors, the duty to grant asylum is for individuals who have lost their state membership. At the same time, for those people who flee from other forms of a humanitarian crisis, such as civil war or environmental disasters, they have suggested other protection such as humanitarian aid or temporary resettlement. Hathaway (1997, p.86) emphasised the fact that the social marginalisation of refugees on the ground of race, religion, or other political oppositions, makes convention refugees "the most deserving of the deserving" of forced migrants, and the uniqueness of refugees' circumstances should not be lost by incorporating them into forced migrants.

Therefore, the authors position against the developing protection idea that asylum should be granted to anybody who requires protection; otherwise, the protection approach would lead to all people, whose basic human rights are at risk, become entitled to get refugee status. In practice, the political approach will lead to an easy way out for states, which want to offer protection to as few asylum seekers as possible. However, as suggested earlier, the reason that people need protection have changed, and many asylum seekers are not suffering from political persecution but persecution by non-state entities, wars and natural disasters.

4.3.3 Philosophical insights

Political philosophers have also reflected on the issue of refugees and their rights. For example, Fine (2020) has a view that in the current global situation in which the plight of millions of people has displaced internally/externally, political philosophers have a valuable reflection on pressing political issues. Fine (2020, p.9) stated that "in the current global situation, refugee and asylum issues have risen to alarming levels of global political salience, and the rights of refugees are under scrutiny and attack across the world". Thus, she argues that the context in which political philosophers theorise may put genuine refugees at additional risk since philosophical analysis on the refugee situation is often done from the perspective of individuals who are not themselves refugees and have little contact with the difficulties that refugees encounter.

Moreover, Fine (2020) highlights that philosophical discussion of asylum and refugees takes place against the definition of refugee status in the 1951 Refugee Convention and 1967 Protocol. She believes that, despite the fact that it is still weak, under-supported, and vulnerable to non-compliance, this mechanism can be effective and presents a significant success of international collaboration and extending its scope and robustness may serve to destabilise and undermine it. Therefore, having an appropriately crafted refugee definition is important since a refugee may enjoy rights and benefits in a state different from other migrants, and the formulation of definition can help states better meet their duties to all who need support or protection from the international community (Fine, 2020). Also, Fine (2020) suggests that the construction of the categories matters because it influences how refugees are explained, as well as the benefits and obstacles to their inclusion in transit or through resettlement in the receiving country.

In the next section, I explore the current debates about the contours of states' duties to refugees and how these duties should be distributed between states employing a system of burden-sharing.

4.4 Debates concerning the obligations of nation-states towards refugees

The aim of the international 'refugee regime' has been protecting refugees around the world through setting the right to asylum and securing one of the three 'durable solutions' of voluntary repatriation to their country of origin, local integration within the host community, or resettlement within the third country for those who cannot repatriate (Parekh, 2016a). To accomplish the successful durable solutions, the 'refugee regime' comprises two sets of obligations; the most robust obligations related to asylum seekers who arrive on states' territories and a more marginal obligation towards those refugees living in refugee camps (Betts, 2015).

While the three durable solutions considered for refugees following the Second World War, it is argued that a small number of the current global refugee population have access to these solutions (Betts and Collier, 2017). Indeed, many of the countries that have taken the most refugees (such as Turkey) have not signed the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The literature suggests that despite being signatories to

the UN Convention on Refugees, most Northern states prefer marginal obligations, preventing refugees from arriving on their state territories while supporting them in refugee camps or settle them in their neighbouring countries (Parekh, 2020). This makes room for debates amongst theorists, which I outline in the following section.

4.4.1 Debates concerning the obligations of states for refugees living in refugee camps

While many countries attempted to resettle refugees in camps and informal urban settlements, refugees remain vulnerable to a range of secondary harms (Parekh, 2020). Indeed, the vast majority of forcibly displaced people live in refugee camps for an average of seventeen years, and to some theorists, a refugee is exposed to second harms when temporary camps replaced with long-term settlements (Parekh, 2020). In most refugee camps, people are accessed to basic needs for living -such as food, water, a place to sleep- however they are not allowed to work or leave the camps (Parekh,2020). Indeed, as McDonald-Gibson (2016, p.80) argues, “resigning yourself to a refugee camp meant putting your life on pause, receiving just enough food and water to get through to the next day, but robbed of any chance to provide for a family or plan for a future”.

Therefore, many refugees might reasonably think that if they are going to start life over in a new place, it would be better to do so in a place with long-term opportunities for themselves and their children, and this might justify their primary motivation to seek asylum in a prosperous state rather than somewhere else (Parekh, 2020). Parekh (2020) suggests that this is in part why refugees increasingly decide to use smugglers to enter European countries, the US, or Australia to claim asylum. However, research suggests that even if a refugee is safely smuggled into Europe, their plight would not stop there, since many reception centres in Europe also arrive with a new collection of harms that are linked to the asylum policy (Gammeltoft-Hansen and Tan, 2017). I will now examine the measures that Member State have taken in response to their obligations related to asylum seekers who arrive on states’ territories and some possible consequences that these measures have upon displaced people.

4.4.2 Debates concerning state obligations being linked to ‘rights versus the idea of deterrence.’

Liberal theorists such as Carens (2013) has sought to address the gap between the ideal refugee regimes and has suggested that justice requires open borders, which comes from the states’ commitments to freedom and equality, and by restricting immigration, states deny equal opportunity to those who are entitled to it. In this regard, Carens has suggests that immigration restrictions constitute an unjust form of discrimination, similar to discrimination based on the people class, race, and sex because the primary needs of refugees as a consequence of displacement is safety and although refugee camps may be appropriate in emergencies, they are “not sufficient as a permanent solution” (Corens, 2013, p.203).

However, some communitarian theorists have criticised this point of view, who believe that states ought to prioritise their own citizens’ benefits and only help non-citizens in a limited way. For instance, Hardin (1974), in his article “Living in a Lifeboat”, argued that the capacity of the states depends on its ability to aid refugees without causing harm to their citizens. He argued that every nation’s land has a limited carrying capacity, and the influx of refugees threatens to create runaway population growth inside the receiving country, producing political instability. Other more controversial authors, such as Wellman (2008), also argued for the right of freedom of association and suggested that states’ citizens choose which ethnic minorities they want to associate with within their society.

Indeed, some scholars have suggested that the main reason some Western states are interested in refugee camps is to protect their sovereignty (Betts and Collier 2017; Parekh, 2016a). Other authors have also suggested that Western states have used deterrence policies to make it more difficult for asylum seekers to enter their countries. Indeed, Gibney (2004, p.229) has suggested that “Western states have employed both fair means and foul to make seeking asylum as difficult as possible”, and in some instances as Hansen (2014, p.258) stated, “to simply block migrants from accessing their soil”.

While there have been different views over states’ moral obligations, to some authors, the current debates around refugees are the consequences of asymmetry between these

two obligations (Gibney, 2015; Parekh, 2016b). Parekh (2020) has been claiming that Western states have performed two main principles of the refugee regime; however, they still cause secondary harm to refugees and asylum seekers. Parekh (2020) argues that although the principle of non-refoulment (if refugees have a well-founded fear of persecution in their home countries, they cannot be returned) can be helpful for refugees, this has intended many Western states to introduce rigid immigration control and make claiming asylum as difficult as possible.

To Parekh (2020), another harm by some Western states imposed once they consider the resettlement of refugees as a sign of good faith, not the implementation of a legal commitment, and this resulted in a small number of states resettle refugees in their country. Taken together, Parekh (2020) argues that the interpretation of these two principles by the Western states resulted in a significant difference in the distribution of refugees among continents and a situation that many refugees around the world remain unprotected. According to UNHCR (2019), the vast majority of refugees have sought protection in neighbouring countries, which has resulted in an unequal share of the refugee population worldwide. For example, Turkey, with 3.6 million Syrians, Colombia, with 1.8 million Venezuelans, and Pakistan, with 1.4 million Afghans, housed the most people displaced across borders (UNHCR, 2019).

Considering all these debates upon the obligation of states toward refugee flows, some authors suggested that states need to see the refugee protection through the lens of global public good theory, in which the benefit of refugee protection through any forms of durable solutions, once provided, will extend to all nation-states, and the absence of international co-operation will result in global instability (Suhrke, 1998; Thielemann, 2003). Increased insecurity is likely to result from a state's failure to protect refugees or attempts to divert refugee movements to other nations. Furthermore, increased instability as a result of border tensions, and erratic onward movements could make other countries a new destination for such migrants (Human Rights Watch, 2016). However, providing security decreases the incentives and need for asylum seekers to participate in upward (secondary) migration, thus limiting the destabilising consequences that such movements can have (UNHCR, 2015).

As a result, what makes refugee resettlement a public good, according to some scholars, is that the refugee protection and security offered by one nation helps not only that country, but also all other countries in the region, even though some other countries have not provided direct protection (Suhrke, 1998; Thielemann, 2003).

This idea has been refuted by other authors such as Betts (2009), who argues that all states prosper from refugee protection; however, the burdens remain to those who contribute, creating strong motivation for certain states to shirk their national responsibilities and not to contribute to refugee protection. Although, as suggested earlier, this is not borne out in practice, as exemplified by Turkey.

The current situation illustrated that not all states are willing to provide asylum on an equal basis and many have developed new policies to both limit the admission of asylum seekers and facilitate their return to countries through which they passed.

4.5 Anti-refugee discourse

Anti-immigration views have pervaded public debate in the global North, especially in the aftermath of the 2015 refugee crises. According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2019), the world population of internally displaced people almost doubled from 41 million in 2010 to 70.8 million in 2019. There are an estimated 79.5 million people worldwide who have been forcefully displaced as a result of war, prosecution, or human rights violations, including 45.7 million internally displaced people, 26 million migrants, 4.2 million asylum seekers, and 754,500 stateless people (UNHCR, 2020).

The influx of refugee migrants towards European countries is usually considered to be a burden on some of the hosting states at both national and local level, and this caused unease on the European continent; often assumed as a threat to their cultural identity and potential causes of extremism, radicalisation and terrorism (Massaro, 2016; Martin et al., 2018; Ruegger, 2019). Moreover, an increase in anti-immigrant attitudes, often articulated as a fear that refugee migrants have ties to terrorist groups, is fuelling the popularity of populist and nationalist sentiment, who seek protectionism

(Postelnicescu, 2016). Therefore, refugee protection has become a significant issue for both guaranteeing human rights and protecting international security.

In response to the current global forced migration, some EU Member States have developed a series of measures that ranged from formal physical fences to informal disincentives such as border violence and push backs into neighbouring states (Freedman, 2016b). These measures, however, did not act as a deterrence, and thousands of refugees and migrants have been stranded at national borders (Breen, 2016; Canning, 2017). For example, with new border restrictions for Afghan refugees in 2015, thousands of men, women and children were left stranded in Greece and the Balkans, many of them face being victims of violence, abuse, and exploitation from police, as well as smugglers (Human Rights Watch, 2016).

As Turk (2016) suggests, using border deterrents as a management policy (used by most nation-states) may be counterproductive in terminating the criminal network of smugglers and traffickers and facilitating protection for refugees. He suggests that the border closure may also aggravate the security situation, as refugees often accumulate in border areas or are forced back to the conflict zone and the situation of internal displacement. Brennan (2016) argues that restricting or preventing the right of individuals to seek asylum is a violation of international refugee and human rights law and could also send a message of exclusion, feeds into xenophobia and further violence against asylum seekers and refugees.

4.6 Chapter summary

Millions of people are currently displaced worldwide because their home country is too weak to protect and provide them with the basic needs for living or actively persecuting them due to their political or ideological oppositions. These people have little choice but to turn to the international community for help. This chapter has explained the significance of the United Nations Refugee Convention in dealing with the refugee problem worldwide by securing one of the three durable solutions of voluntary repatriation to their home country, local integration, or resettlement within the third country.

The chapter has further highlighted the definitional challenges in defining a refugee from a humanitarian, political, and philosophical perspective. I have suggested that the formulation of a definition provides an essential core of who states consider refugee and what state owe to them. Furthermore, the concept of refugee shapes explanations of the refugee movement's reason and their integration process during settlement in the host countries.

The chapter has then explored different debates concerning nation-states responsibility towards refugees. To highlight an unequal burden-sharing amongst the nation-state, I have discussed that despite being signatories to the UN Convention on refugees, most Northern states prefer marginalised obligations and prevent refugees from arriving in their state while providing support in refugee camps and resettlement programme in their neighbouring countries. I have argued that refugees are often subjected to a variety of secondary harms in camps and informal urban settlements that have been created in neighbouring countries. Moreover, the restrictive asylum policy may not discourage refugees who believe that reaching European countries provides them more safety and a life of dignity, and thus, refugees risk their lives and employ hazardous routes to make it to Europe.

Therefore, it is essential to identify the unique needs of women refugees concerning their background conditions to develop measures and policies that facilitate their integration into the host society. In chapter five, therefore, I will focus on disseminating the refugee population in the UK and examining the strategies and policies that have been taken to protect women, refugees, and asylum seekers through local integration as one of the durable solutions.

Chapter Five

Refugee policy in the United Kingdom and special issues for female asylum seekers and refugees

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I thought it would be helpful to look in more details at refugee policy in the UK as my study is located in London. I begin with a short discussion on the number of people seeking asylum and refugees, particularly Afghan migration flows to the UK since 1990 and a brief history of the development of immigration control in the UK as a response to the mass migrations. I then provide a brief overview of UK policy initiatives since 1945 that were adapted to maintain British society's cultural homogeneity and stability. I also expand upon the existing literature in conceptualising different theoretical perspectives on integration models. Finally, I identify some of the distinctive experiences for female asylum seekers and refugees during their integration process.

5.2 Refugees in the United Kingdom

The numbers of refugees entering the UK has dramatically changed over time. To put the UK data in context, the number of the number of asylum seekers rose from 4,256 in 1987 to 84,132 in 2002; however, this number declined gradually to 17,916 in 2010 (Asylum Statistics, 2020). Since then, this number has risen each year, and in the year ending June 2020, it was estimated that there were 32,423 asylum applications in the UK, similar to the previous year (Asylum Statistics, 2020); however, the COVID-19 pandemic and associated lockdown has had an enormous impact on asylum application process and resettlement in the UK (Refugee Council, 2021). A report by Refugee Council in 2021 indicates a decrease in asylum applications by 41% during 2020 compared with 2019, which is the lowest since 2010. The report also shows that the granting refugee status or other leave to remain, at an initial decision, were fallen

55%, which is the lowest level since 2014, despite an increase in asylum claims during the recent years. Moreover, issuances of refugee family reunion visas during the second quarter of 2020 dropped by 92%, and refugee resettlement declined to zero (Walsh, 2020).

5.2.1 Afghans' migration into the UK

In the 1980s, the first wave of Afghan asylum seekers arrived in the UK, fleeing the pro-Soviet Afghan government, and at that time, those seeking asylum mainly were educated people (ONS, 2017). However, between 1990 and 2000, a larger influx of Afghan refugees arrived in the UK, fleeing the country's civil war and the Taliban rule in the 1990s (Jones, 2010). According to the Office for National Statistics in the UK (ONS, 2013), 30 percent of Afghans arrived in the UK during this period. After the Taliban's fall from power in the autumn of 2001, there was a period of stability, but following the Taliban's return in 2004, more Afghans fled the region due to the threat of violence in their homeland (Refugee Council, 2016). For a decade, Afghanistan has been among the top ten most common nationalities seeking asylum in the UK (Home Office, 2020). A report by the British Refugee Council (2021) in the first quarter of 2020 states that there were 423 asylum applications from Afghanistan, including 44 from Afghan female applicants. However, in a recent statement, the UK government offered its political and facilitation support for Afghan refugees' voluntary repatriation (Home Office, 2020).

In the following section, I thought it would be pertinent to discuss some reforms in UK immigration and asylum policy during the past 30 years and highlight some legislation introduced by the British government that intends to prevent asylum seekers from entering the country and assist others who have been refused asylum to leave.

5.2.2 A brief history of immigration policy in the UK

As suggested in chapter four, following Second World War, most developed countries have experienced large-scale immigration from populations worldwide, although there are some similarities amongst the immigration countries. Some of these similarities are, for instance, either in regards to the dynamics of the migratory process and the formation of ethnic diversity, or the interaction between immigrants and the host

society in the form of a peaceful or violent co-existence (Castle, Hass and Miller, 2014). Nonetheless, there are considerable differences in policies, attitudes, and behaviour towards migrants in different states (Castle, 2014).

Prior to the late 1800s, there was no restriction on entry and settlement in Britain; in part, this can be explained through the needs of the British colonial empire, which needed a large number of emigrants to work in the colonies and a greater demand for labour during the industrial revolution, until 1880s, when Britain entered a period of economic crisis and high unemployment (Bloch, 2000). When the demand for labour was reduced, the 1905 Aliens Act attempted to regulate immigrants' flow into Britain (Bloch, 2000). The pressure to control immigration also grew in the 1950s, which led to a distinction between refugees and other immigrants, and there was also a change in policy decisions about particular groups of arrivals into Britain. For example, refugees and migrants from Hungary (in the 1950s) had little difficulty gaining refugee status from the UK because they have been from a European country and fled from Second World War (Schuster and Solomos, 1999). However, people from Kenya, Uganda, Chile, and Vietnam (in the 1960s and 1970s) were often faced difficulty in obtaining refugee status, and Schuster and Solomos (1999) suggested that it was due to their origins out of the European countries and the complex economic condition of UK during that period.

However, the late 1970s marked a turn in national policy with Margaret Thatcher's election in 1979, when the Conservative government increased restriction on immigrations and enhanced the power of the Home Office to control entries into the country (Bloch, 2000). For example, the UK also saw a new visa limitation for nationals of Sri Lanka in 1987, and carriers (lorry drivers) were penalised under the Carriers Liability Act of 1987 if they imported illegal immigrants into the UK. However, the number of asylum claims increased from 5,000 in 1980 to approximately 160,000 in 1989 (Home Office, 1990). With growing geopolitical instability, the origins of different refugees have changed over time; for example, following the Islamic revolution in Iran during the 1980s, the largest group of asylum seekers came from that country, and by 1989, Turkey had the largest number of asylum seekers (Turner, 2015).

Some authors have suggested that the flow of new migrants and asylum seekers from diverse countries has caused the population of the UK to overgrow (Cantle, 2008; Phillimore, 2011), and this culminated in significant legal reforms in the UK, such as the British Nationality Act (1981), which narrowed the qualifications for citizenship in the UK (Turner, 2015). Other steps include the Asylum and Immigration Act (1996), which established a new criminal penalty for workers who hire individuals (including asylum seekers) who do not have permission to work in the UK (Turner, 2015). In addition, UK policy and legislation changed to make the process of seeking asylum less attractive by making changes to the benefits system and introducing a dispersal policy under the 1999 Immigration and Asylum Act.

This initiative was implemented to ease pressure on the southeast of England and to disperse the burden of asylum seekers in the UK; however, some authors, such as Stewart (2012) and Canning (2019), have suggested that this was a purposeful mechanism of exclusion. Asylum seekers have been housed on a no-choice basis since 2002 and they are often located in socially deprived areas around the country (Hynes, 2006). This programme was based on temporary housing availability, which is generally concentrated in areas of economic deprivation (Hynes and Sales, 2010). Moreover, detention, destitution, and deportation were all parts of the restriction policies and, more recently, policies to deter and return asylum seekers (Canning, 2017). However, the growing use of smugglers and traffickers continues to increase the number of people arriving in the UK (Turner, 2015), and as Crawly (2010) has suggested, there is no clear evidence regarding the impact of restrictive asylum policies upon the decision of people to claim asylum in the UK. Moreover, while such policies have limited asylum seekers' civil and social rights, the UK government has also placed a strong emphasis on policies aimed at integrating those who have been given refugee status (Parker, 2017).

5.3 Conceptualising integration

In the following section, I will briefly discuss the meaning of integration from academic and policy perspectives before outlining the key policy initiatives aimed at facilitating integration in the UK.

5.3.1 Theoretical perspectives on integration model

While the concept of integration is well discussed within academic literature and among policymakers, there is no unifying definition for it (Ager and Strang, 2010; Candel, 2016; Kontowski and Leitsberger, 2018). In the context of refugees and displaced people, however, the concept requires even greater attention, as the experiences of refugees can be qualitatively different to those of other migrants (Kreichauf, 2018).

In the early twentieth century, the Chicago School of Urban Sociology combined the terms *integration* and *assimilation*, and the word ‘integration’ became a prevalent phrase in public policy discussions regarding immigration’s implications (Hamberger, 2009). The two most often debated terms are assimilation (often found in American debates) and integration (often found in Western European debates), and both consider the mechanism of immigrants’ settling and contact with the receiving community (Favel, 2003). However, the term assimilation is often deemed a negative term because it usually understood that immigrants must conform to the norms and values of the dominant majority of the host society (Bhugra and Becker, 2005). Therefore, even if some Western European countries tacitly call for assimilation, integration is typically the preferred concept in Western Europe (such as Denmark and France) (Hamberger, 2009).

Social psychologists’ work, especially that of Berry (1997), builds on the notion of integration as a mechanism, arguing that migrant communities and host cultures evolve with time and new identities develop. The theory of acculturation developed by social psychologist, Berry (1997), who claims that the most positive acculturation strategy is integration, where newcomers form bonds with the dominant group while still preserving their own culture (see figure 2). To Berry, clear integration policies will be required to ensure that intercultural relationships are possible, and therefore institutions have a crucial role in facilitating these interactions and adapting to meet migrants’ needs.

Figure 2: Berry's model of acculturation

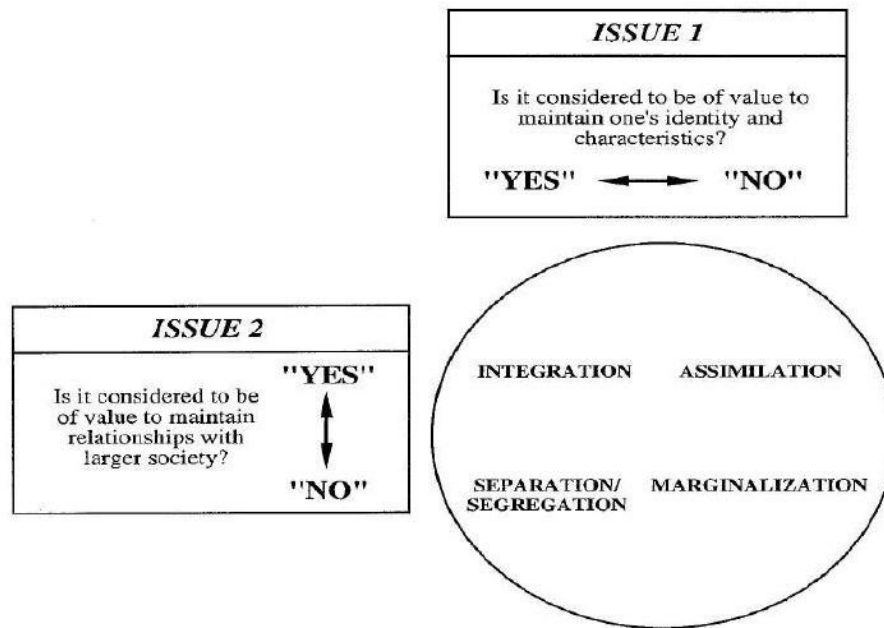


FIG. 1. Acculturation strategies.

Source: Berry, et al., 1997, p.10.

Berry (1997) argued that a range of factors influences migrants' willingness to form new relationships while maintaining cultural values. These can be related to circumstances that existed prior to acculturation, such as economic conditions, political conditions, and social and cultural considerations (Philimore, 2011). They may also happen after acculturation and involve the host society's views toward refugees as well as the community's support. According to Berry, the technique used prior to acculturation is influenced by a number of factors such as age, gender, status, cultural distance, and moderate factors during acculturation such as prejudice, xenophobia, coping mechanisms, financial resources, and social support (Berry, 1997). However, other authors such as Bhatia and Ram (2009, p.140) have condemned this strategy as "fixed, invariant, and apolitical", and they proposed that in a period of increasing globalisation and rapid creation of multinationalism, acculturation becomes increasingly complicated and it should be understood as contested, mixing, and moving.

Other research by some sociologists and social policy analysts has also highlighted the multidimensionality of the integration approach in which migrants, society and

refugee organisations have a role (Portes, 1998; Zetter et al., 2003). In addition, authors such as Fyvie et al. (2003) pointed to the functional dimensions and suggested that progress in health, housing, employment, and education is necessary to have a successful integration.

Zetter et al. (2003) have developed ‘integration typologies’ within which they suggested the functional, social and civic areas that impact the process of integration. Their model of refugee integration reflects two critical characteristics of refugee integration; firstly, it cannot be seen as a set of measurements, but rather as components of a process, and secondly, the refugee experience of integration is a diverse one, differing for groups and individuals on many grounds. This integration model includes different domains; for example, the citizenship domain, which pays attention to gaining citizenship rights (the period within which refugees receive entitlements). The governance or statutory domain relates to government and NGOs’ role, and the functional domain, which involves access to housing, employment, health, welfare, education, and language skills (Zetter et al., 2003).

Although some of the theoretical debates outlined above are over a decade old, many refugees’ issues have been remained. Certainly, the UK Home Office has recognised the need to address refugee integration (Zetter et al., 2003). Since 2002, the UK has introduced a number of strategies to promote community cohesion in migrant communities, yet problematically focused initially on measuring outcomes rather than on understanding integration’s process (Zetter et al., 2002; Ager and Strang, 2004). This functional emphasis has occurred at the expense of searching refugees’ more comprehensive cultural needs and social integration, which Zetter and Griffiths (2003) attempted to remedy by identifying a fourth domain, the social domain.

The social domain illustrates the extent to which refugees are active social participants and focuses on less formal integration areas highlighting cultural identity, ethnicity, social networks, and social capital (Zetter et al., 2003). Indicators, such as the formation of refugee community groups, access to social resources and the individual capacity of refugees to be proactive, are all applied in an attempt to reveal barriers and facilitators to integration (Zetter et al., 2003). Even though this integration model was thorough, failure to sufficiently explore the interrelationships between domains was

one of the limitations of this model. Atfield, Brahmabhatt and O'Toole (2007) argued that neither does the model include the role of the public domain nor does it highlight the reaction of the host society reaction and media portrayal of refugee integration. Moreover, the authors suggested that Zetter and Griffiths (2003) failed to draw on empirical research, allowing refugees to articulate their views and experiences. However, a further influential study by Ager and Strang (2004) includes both the theoretical and empirical dimensions. The following part of this chapter describes this framework in greater details because their work has been influential in the Home Office policy.

5.3.2 Dimensions of Refugee Integration Framework

A research programme commissioned by the UK Home Office was undertaken (from 2001) by Ager and Strang to clarify the concept of integration and to make recommendations for refugee policy, and the result of this research was a development of a conceptual framework of Indicator of Integration (Ager and Strang, 2004; 2008).

In their study, twenty-nine interviews were conducted with refugee residents in the specific areas and thirty-three with a cross-section of the non-refugee community's population (Ager and Strang, 2004). The aim was not to measure the level of integration achieved but, rather, to judge the extent to which the residents felt integration had been achieved. Overwhelmingly, the respondents highlighted the centrality of local social relationships to their subjective understanding of integration. With regards to the nature of social relations, three understandings of integration arose from the interviews. This includes "no trouble" (Ager and Strang, 2004, p.4), which stresses safety, an absence of discrimination and equal rights; "mixing" (2004, p.5), which emphasises the acceptance of diversity, friendliness, participation in shared activities and equal rights in practice as well as theory; and "belonging" (2004, p.7), which extend attention to the importance of committed friendships -including with British people-, shared values and mutual respect and knowledge of each other's cultures.

Healthcare, education, housing, and employment are also mentioned in the study as structural factors that foster or impede integration and fluency in English, and broader cultural understanding issues emerged as significant (Ager and Strang, 2004). The

outcome of the interviews was the construction of a set of crucial integration domains, and Ager and Strang (2004; 2008) suggested that a conception of ‘successful integration’ in the resettlement of refugees is related to accomplishments in these domains. After its inception in 2004, policymakers, professionals, and researchers have used the first Home Office Indicators of Integration framework.

A group of policy and academic institutions across the UK developed the second version of the Indicators of Integration framework in 2019 by considering feedback from policy and practice stakeholders (Home Office, 2019). The new version of the framework’s main shape remained the same with some extension to the domains (see figure 3). Under the heading *Markers and Means*, the system has five domains: employment, accommodation, education, health and social care, and recreation. These domains reflect the context in which integration will take place, as well as important areas of achievement that are generally recognised as vital to the process (Home Office, 2019). The domains include measures of sense of identity, as well as social and emotional well-being. This represents their central position in the integration process (Home Office, 2019).

The second field of *Social Connections* is where the means and markers are mediated. The realms of the *Social Connections* party emphasise the role of interpersonal relationships in both defining and achieving integration. This heading further recognises that social connections can help people gain access to opportunities, both individually and collectively (Home Office, 2019). Since they allow people to use and share services, networks of relationships marked by confidence and reciprocity can be thought of as producing capital (Portes, 1988; Putnam, 2000). However, as some scholars have pointed out, social networks may often help to uphold inequality, owing to disparities of power and wealth (Bourdieu, 1986).

The social relations area, based on Putnam’s (2000) work on social capital and Berry’s (1997) theories, encompasses three dimensions of social capital; bonds within a refugee’s culture, bridges with other populations, and links to institutions such as government services. However, it is noticeable that the use of these definitions in the ‘Indicators of Integration Framework’ does not indicate that social interactions imply increased resource access. The individual is guided to assess social interactions and

access to other critical services independently by the system (Home Office, 2019). Therefore, in this way, dynamics of social connections and service provision are not expected to follow one another, but rather emphasised the importance of convergence on the concurrent growth of each form of relationship (Home Office, 2019).

The *Facilitators* is the third area of Ager and Strang's framework, representing forms of language, culture, digital skills, safety, and stability. There are five main areas of expertise established, each of which is recognised as essential for individuals to successfully integrate into the larger society. Language and culture are represented as distinct domains in the current system, ensuring that each is assessed independently. The inclusion of the term 'internet capabilities' acknowledges major advancements in emerging communication technology since the first incorporation metrics were released in 2004 (Home Office, 2019). Technology is increasingly reliant on or facilitating access to people, services, and rights. Personal internet connectivity may, for example, be calculated to account for its role in gaining access to resources and privileges. The value of both a sense of personal protection and social security in helping individuals to interact with resources and other people to build their life and integrate is confirmed by research and experience (Hek, 2005). This may include thoughts of security while walking alone and hate crime reports.

Lastly, the fourth area of *Foundation* is the practice and assumption of citizenship and rights and the duty towards the state and other individuals. This domain expressly incorporates obligations and protections, recognising that each must be assessed from the perspectives of groups such as refugees and receiving populations (Home Office, 2019). The term 'receiving communities' is often used to recognise that communities are sites of transition, with layers of displacement from newly arriving foreign groups and longer settled immigrant populations culminating in diverse receiving cultures (Home Office, 2019).

Figure 3: Depiction of Adjusted Ager and Strang's Indicators of integration Framework



Source: Home Office Indicators of Integration framework, 2019, p.15.

Integration has emerged as a complex and contested term, and other concepts have sometimes been used alongside it or in its place. The existing theoretical framework suggests that integration occurs within a number of domains (Zetter et al., 2002; Ager and Strang, 2004) and those refugees may respond in different ways to their circumstances regarding their particular individual and group characteristics (Berry, 1999). Refugees vary by country of origin, language, ethnicity, and specific area of the country of origin (Spencer, 2004), gender, sexuality, age and class background, and these characteristics may change the experiences of individual refugees trying to integrate into the UK. Moreover, research suggests that different psychological states, dispersal area in Britain, the length of settlement, and arrival time, which determine being subject to particular policy implications or social atmosphere, will undoubtedly affect the experience of integration (D'Onofrio and Munk, 2004). Research has also highlighted those issues such as gender and parenthood in relation to English language acquisition (Bloch, 1999), education, employment, and cultural expectations (Bloch and Atfield, 2002) can also influence person integration experience. Accounting for

such diversity can be achieved theoretically and methodologically by emphasising qualitative research that allows refugees to tell individual stories.

Atto, Hirst and Hall (2020) have suggested that in recent years there has been a shift in the UK's integration approach, as the UK Government has shifted burden-sharing from state provision to both local authorities and the migrants to hold most of the responsibility for integration into their new communities. Furthermore, the UK's integration policies are non-interventionist compared to European countries, which resulted in fragmentation of policy and practice (Atto, Hirst and Hall, 2020). For instance, concerning asylum seekers, decreased government support, limits in appeal's right, dispersal accommodation, and the use of detention centres, are all the UK Government's approaches that contribute to marginalisation of asylum seekers (Hirst and Atto, 2018). In contrast, for those refugees who enter the UK via the resettlement programmes, there is a more accommodating integration policy and inclusive approach (Hirst and Atto, 2018).

The following section addresses some of the challenges that female asylum seekers and refugees face during the asylum process and beyond and the consequences of these challenges on their integration into British society.

5.4 Challenges that women face during the asylum process and beyond

Reaching a safe country may provide physical security; however, arriving in a host country does not stop the problems, and many female asylum seekers experience extra difficulties in the UK. People who are seeking asylum but have not yet been granted leave to stay are not permitted to get a job. They cannot apply for the right to work until they have been waiting for a decision on their application which in some cases it takes for more than a year (Dudhia, 2020). A report by Women for Refugee Women (WRW) in 2020 indicates that due to being banned from working, the vast majority of women seeking refuge would depend solely on the state for assistance. Owing to post-migratory pressures, uncertainties in the asylum application process, and social alienation, research suggests that asylum seekers have higher rates of PTSD and depression than refugees (Stenmark et al., 2013; Nickerson, 2019). Yet, the UK dispersal policy means that asylum seekers are often housed in socially deprived

neighbourhoods with inadequate housing standards, which exacerbates isolation, poverty and social inequality, as well as negatively affect female asylum seekers' wellbeing and safety (Phillimore and Goodson, 2010; Canning, 2017).

There is a guideline for asylum caseworkers in regards to how to consider asylum claims involved with gender-based prosecution. Still, as I will discuss below, the Home Office is not always adhered to.

5.4.1 Challenges during the asylum process

There are some debates that reaching a correct decision on asylum case is not guaranteed, as there is often the potential of bias intentionally or unintentionally against female asylum seekers. For instance, Freedman and Jamal (2008) have highlighted 'the non-recognition of gender-related prosecution' as a factor that increases female refugees' vulnerability. Gender is not included in the international definition of Refugee Status. Yet, women might be fleeing from gender-based prosecution when their state's government are unwilling or unable to protect them (Martin, 2011). During the past thirty years, an emphasis has been placed on recognising violence against women as a ground of persecution. In this regard, United High Commissioner for Refugees issued two guidelines, the Guidelines on Gender-Related Persecution, and the Guidelines on Membership of a Particular Social Group, to ensure that the Convention's interpretation does not disregard gender-related experiences of persecution (UNHCR, 2011).

Crawley (2000) suggested that the Gender Guidelines could have an essential role in raising the awareness of challenges that female asylum seekers face. In spite of this, women's claim on the ground of gender-related persecution may still be refused by national authorities. This leads to refusal of an asylum claim, and consequently, this often results in women's detention, destitution, or deportation. Therefore, Crawly (2000) held the view that policymakers must recognise the concept of 'political opinion' in the Refugee Convention. He suggested that because women are less likely to be involved with politics, the idea of political opinion should not be disregarded in women asylum seekers' claim. For instance, in many Muslim countries, including Afghanistan, having sex outside of marriage or in opposition to religious behaviour

may be seen as an expression of ‘political opinion’ in theocracies, and it can lead to persecution (Home Office, 2016).

Ferracioli (2014), on the other hand, pointed to the role of diplomatic relationships between the refugee-producing country and the recipient states; if they do not enjoy a friendly relationship, it is politically more manageable for the recipient countries to accept the asylum claims. Other authors believed that asylum decision outcomes open to influence by external factors, including the gender of judges (Ramji-Nogales, Schoenholtz and Schrag, 2007) and the psychological state of asylum seekers during the Home Office interviews (Bogner, Herlihy and Brewin, 2007). The research highlighted that those female asylum seekers who were survivors of sexual violence and had a history of PTSD and depression, have often experienced negative gender bias in their asylum decision procedure (Bogner, Herlihy and Brewin, 2007). These authors suggested that the discrepancies in the narratives given by asylum seekers during the Home Office interview necessarily do not mean deception, but it could be owing to mental distress.

All these factors result in the refusal of an asylum claim, which harms female asylum seekers. A report by Refugee Council (2019) revealed that the majority of women were destitute after their original refugee application was rejected and the appeal was overturned. This report demonstrated that women who have been left with no support once their asylum claim has been denied faced many challenges, including homelessness, dependency on charities and friends for food and shelter. Moreover, some women are forced into becoming involved in other survival strategies, such as begging, illegal work or prostitution (Dorling, 2012). Furthermore, research also revealed that some women asylum seekers avoided approaching the police to report incidents of sexual harassment and assaults in fear of detention and being deported (Doyle, 2014; Canning, 2020).

5.4.2 Successful asylum decision and the move on period

The experiences of gaining refugee status can also be stressful, in part, this is due to government policy because when an asylum seeker is satisfactory in their claim to be recognised as a refugee, all Home Office asylum services they have been provided will be terminated 28 days after they are informed of the decision (Home Office, 2018)

and if they have been in provided accommodation by the Home Office, they will have to leave the house as well. The ‘move on period’, which lasts 28 days, is when a newly recognised refugee is supposed to transition from Home Office-provided assistance to securing their own housing and wages, either privately or through conventional welfare assistance (APPG, 2017).

According to the Refugee Council (2016), for newly recognised immigrants, the transition process is particularly difficult because they are unlikely to have sufficient savings to pay a deposit and first month’s rent, which are also typically necessary to obtain private rental housing. Furthermore, many refugees have a limited or non-existent network of friends or relatives in the UK who can offer financial assistance during the transition process. In addition, refugees often face difficulties accessing private rented accommodation because they are usually unemployed and do not have bank accounts (Refugee Council, 2016). Indeed, research on the experiences of refugees in their first year of transition after gaining refugee status show that delays in receiving ID documents (e.g. Biometric Resident Permit and National Insurance Number) can lead to more delays in receiving state financial assistance and access to mainstream benefits and this can result in severe hardships (Doyle, 2014).

Moreover, research suggests that lack of language skills contribute to refugees’ isolation and prevalence of psychological difficulties (Refugee Action, 2016). There is evidence that not having English language proficiency is a primary barrier for many refugees to access health support, gain employment, and take part in community activities (Nellums et al., 2018). As Refugee Action (2016, p.3) referred to, “attaining a sufficient English level is the key that unlocks all other aspects of integration for refugees”. However, it is reported that funding for English language classes has been drastically reduced in recent years, and this resulted in long waiting lists to enrol for English classes (Refugee Action, 2016). Moreover, research shows that entry to programmes such as English classes is more difficult for women. For example, Refugee Action (2016) reported that many women are often unable to attend English classes owing to child-caring responsibilities and cultural barriers. The inability to communicate in English prohibits refugees from accessing facilities, increases alienation, and poses a major obstacle to their integration (Refugee Council, 2016).

Research has emphasised the relationship between employment and successful integration. Work allows refugees to become active citizens, giving them a sense of purpose and feeling of societal contribution (Chung, Hong, and Newbold, 2013). Many female refugees have skills and expertise from their home country that they want to use in the UK. Using their skills and expertise will rebuild a sense of identity in refugees, but it can also help with mental health challenges caused by war, trauma, family disasters, and issues of travel and exile (Nellums et al., 2018). Moreover, employment can lead to social contacts, cultural knowledge, and language skills (Phillimore and Goodson, 2010).

Research also suggests that additional psychological and social reasons may also account for low employment rates among refugees; for instance, refugees may suffer physical or mental illness (Bloch, 2002), and many women also have childcare responsibility, or they may be isolated from those with the same community of origin which is an invaluable means of finding jobs (Freedman, 2009). Furthermore, research has shown that one of the most significant obstacles to refugee women's entry into the labour market is cultural; for example, in some cultures (e.g., Afghan culture) women are expected to remain at home and not work. Being financially dependent on a partner can make some refugee women vulnerable to exploitation and at further risk of domestic violence (Phillimore, Pertek and Alidu, 2018).

One of the challenges for refugees is social isolation, and research suggests that the development of social networks in a country of destination marks an integral part of the integration process (Ager and Strang, 2008; Phillimore, 2011). However, the pre-existing social networks and connections are less likely for refugees and displaced people due to the flight's involuntary nature (Bloch, 2000). Research suggests that social network with neighbours and other society members can develop informally through works, educational centres, and religious sites (Phillimore, 2011).

Research also suggests that Refugee Community Organisations (RCOs) can play an essential role in refugees' resettlement and integration process, especially in providing refugees with information and advice, which is hard to acquire if more informal networks are deficient (Atfield, Brahmabhatt and O'Toole, 2007). Additionally, Griffiths, Sigona and Zetter (2006) suggested that RCOs that are maintained by

refugees are more likely to effectively encourage participation in activities aimed towards specific cultural, social, and economic need, as well as assisting refugees in accessing mainstream services. Indeed, the authors suggested that the organisation of formal associations by the host society may be less successful because its structure is often unfamiliar to the refugee's culture (Griffiths, Sigona and Zetter, 2006).

While there is no doubt on the positive role of RCOs, debate continues about whether the existence of these organisations, particularly those orientated towards specific ethnic groups, promote integration. For instance, Zetter et al. (2005) have argued that the presence of RCOs should not necessarily indicate that a collective community exists, and we must question the idea that a specific set of refugees, or an ethnic group, can be regarded as a community at all. Fractions often exist between refugee groups (Monsutti, 2005), especially as many refugees come from countries (e.g., Afghanistan) where hostility between different tribes and groups has led to their departure. Furthermore, Zetter et al.'s research (2005) pointed to several other problems facing RCOs (many have developed since the implementation of dispersal policy) and restricting their capabilities to support integration. Their research illustrated that not all refugees could access these organisations; indeed, some women, lone parents, and the elderly may face barriers to access these organisations.

Similarly, Korac's (2003) research highlighted that integration can better foster through informal networks, which, being more spontaneous and familiar in nature, reduce a sense of hierarchy between non-refugees and refugees and encourage openness to difference and a sense of belonging.

5.5 Chapter summary

In this chapter, I examined a brief history of the development of immigration control as a response to mass migrations since 1945. It highlights UK policy initiatives that adapted to maintain the cultural homogeneity and stability of the British society. Although the UK's immigration policy is largely concerned with protecting borders and limiting welfare entry, a separate strand has emerged to promote refugee integration.

The chapter next considered the existing literature in conceptualising different theoretical perspectives on the integration model. I explained that many theorists advocate that integration is a two-way process that both the host society and migrants must adopt. However, effective integration therefore necessitates host communities providing certain resources and ensuring that refugees will take advantage of them, all of which must take place in a non-hostile atmosphere that encourages refugees to integrate.

In the chapter, I moved on to discuss the challenges that female asylum seekers face during the asylum process and beyond. Indeed, reaching a safe country provides initial comforting; I argued that women refugees' successful integration depends on some factors, including pre-migration and post-migration experiences.

Finally, I turned to look at the impact of asylum policy on women and I argued that women have been largely neglected in policy discussions despite an increasing body of evidence that indicates successful integration enables refugees to contribute to the UK society, economy, and local communities, especially women, who often have responsibility for family integration.

5.6 Gap in knowledge

In chapter two, I discussed some of the debates concerning the nation-state's formation and its role in protecting citizens. I outlined how a failed state contributes to the emergence of refugees and displaced people. In chapter three, I examined how Afghanistan as a state had been unable to protect its citizens for decades, resulted in mass refugee migration. The impact of women's situation in Afghan culture was highlighted, as well as some of the issues they faced during internal and cross borders' displacement.

In chapter four, I argued that how nation-states have collectively responded to refugee flows and the measures that states have taken to protect and assist refugees. Some states have faced criticism that they fail to meet their legal obligation towards protecting asylum seekers and refugees, and concerns about a recent anti-refugee discourse and its impact on the distribution of refugees, have been raised. Since this

research is specifically about integrating female refugees into British society, in chapter five, the UK's integration policies have reviewed. However, my literature review indicated that there was especially little study on how gender and ethnicity influence refugee integration in the UK.

This research aims to understand the experiences of female Afghan refugees of integration into British society. Therefore, this study aims to allow these refugee women's voices to be heard to identify what factors inhibit or facilitate their integration into British society.

In the following chapter, I will explore how this context and focus influenced and motivated my analytical approach to the study.

Chapter Six

Methodology

6.1 Introduction

This study aims to identify factors that facilitate or inhibit the integration of female Afghan refugees into British society. In this chapter, I examine the philosophical underpinnings of social research, and I specifically focus my discussion on the interpretivist paradigm of inquiry that frames my study. I then discuss my research methods in relation to sampling, the recruitment of participants, data collection and data analysis. The final two sections address the ethical issues and dilemmas that occur when conducting social research, as well as the specific challenges that I faced during my own research processes.

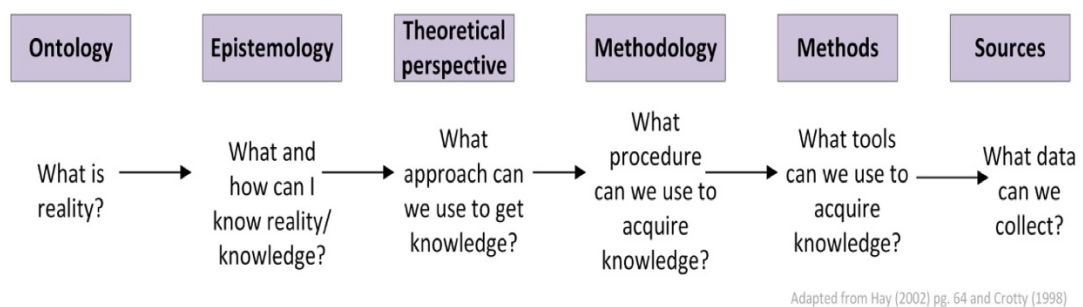
6.2 Definition of philosophical stance

The nature of the research question usually informs both the philosophical stance in the study, as well as the research methods, and clarity about the underpinning methodology helps the researcher to have a clear view about the reasons that they have chosen a specific research design (Trede and Higgs, 2009). Indeed, when researchers choose a philosophical stance, they are required to be clear on their perspective on the nature of ‘reality’ (i.e., if they perceive it to be pre-existing or constructed) and how that knowledge might be disclosed (Saven-Baden and Major, 2013). Therefore, social researchers adopt different research paradigms in an attempt to understand how the social world is conducted (Blaikie, 2007).

According to Creswell (2013), these paradigms provide the philosophical foundations of how a study should be connected with the research questions, approaches, and methods. These paradigms also guide the social researcher’s action and behaviours during the study’s implementation (Saven-Baden and Major, 2013). As Denzin and Lincoln (2011) noted, a research paradigm can be thought of as a net that represents

the epistemological, analytical, and ontological foundations of the researcher. This implies that the researcher's position on the nature of truth (ontology), the existence of understanding (epistemology), and how such knowledge can be discovered and justified (methodology) are expressed by paradigms of inquiry (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). The figure below from Hay (2002, adapted from Crotty, 1998) suggests the relationship between ontology, epistemology, and methodology (see figure 4).

Figure 4: The relationship between ontology, epistemology, and methodology



Source: Hay, 2002, p.64

It is generally considered that there are two main research paradigms or philosophies in research, although there may be a considerable blurring of these boundaries in some research approaches, for example, in studies that use mixed methods (Braun, Clarke and Weate, 2016). Traditionally, these paradigms have been labelled as positivism and interpretivism. Positivists subscribe to the realist ontology (i.e., believing the world has a pre-existing reality) and ‘phenomenologists’ also described as ‘interpretivism, who often subscribe to the relativist ontology (i.e., holding the belief that there is no objective reality) (Creswell, 2013).

In the following, I will look at these philosophical underpinnings with a focus on the interpretive paradigm of inquiry that formed my research.

6.2.1 Interpretivism

Within the interpretivist paradigm, knowledge is understood as situated and contextual, and the goal of this approach is to understand the phenomenon from the

perspective of participants. The research is often conducted in the naturalistic setting (such as a hospital and school), and in terms of epistemology, interpretivists recognise the value of subjectivity and recognise that there is no single reality (Saven-Baden and Major, 2013). According to Blaikie (2007), studying social phenomena from an interpretivist perspective necessitates a knowledge of the social reality that people have created and that they continue to reproduce via their ongoing activities.

Interpretivism emphasises using a qualitative methodology because it is concerned with the idea that knowledge resides in individuals' minds, and people create their knowledge based on their own experience (Creswell, 2013). Researchers who use the interpretivism approach believe that it is their role to find out ways in which individuals construct meaning because they consider that knowledge, truth, and reality are created rather than constructed (Saven-Baden and Major, 2013).

Methodologically, the origins of interpretivism are based on hermeneutics and phenomenology, in which the individuals' constructions are extracted and developed as accurately as possible and compared, with the aim of generating informed and sophisticated constructions (Blaikie, 2007). Robson (2011) explained how phenomenology is focused with understanding how humans experience themselves and the world around them in a research context. Because the researcher is not seen as separate from this process, rather than ignoring or dismissing these biases, an attempt is made to explain and integrate them into the study findings (Robson, 2011).

My initial aim of conducting this exploratory research was to identify the factors that facilitate or inhibit the integrated living of female Afghan refugees in an area of London. Therefore, I found an interpretivist paradigm suitable for the aim of my study because it was essential to understand the subjective experiences, behaviours, and interpretations of Afghan women. Moreover, I considered that it was necessary to use this approach to gain a deeper understanding of their integration experiences. Furthermore, an interpretivist approach fitted my ontological and epistemological stance because it highlights the importance of understanding social phenomena through interactivity between researcher and researched and within natural contexts. Discussing how the interpretivist approach fits my study, in the following section, I

will consider the two main criticisms about this paradigm of inquiry and how I dealt with it during my research process.

6.2.2 Criticisms of an interpretivist paradigm

The common criticism levelled against knowledge created through an interpretivist paradigm of inquiry is that it fails to take into account the influence of larger systemic limitations and conflicts. According to Blaikie (2007), social actors are not always conscious of the significance of institutional structures and power relations, and by putting more emphasis on the subjective experiences, these structures and limitations risk going unrecognised and unexplored. Recognising the value of this criticism, I argue that although this study's concentration is on subjective experiences of Afghan refugee women, the findings will be identified and analysed in connection to the larger literature on women refugees, allowing opportunity to interact with wider social-political aspects.

Another key methodological challenge for many social researchers is recognising the possible links between ideas, social experiences, and social realities. For example, Blaikie (2007) argued that the narratives that research participants use to make sense of their lives, provides the social researcher with a foundation for understanding and explanation. As a result, the social world is constructed by the members perceptions and experiences from the 'inside', and the duty of the social researcher is to investigate and characterise this 'insider' (emic) perspective rather than imposing an outsider's perspective on it (Blaikie, 2007). Therefore, the possible dilemma arises around the challenge of maintaining the phenomenon's integrity and whether it is appropriate to interpret other people's accounts in terms of larger theories and concepts, as doing so risks prioritising expert knowledge over experiential knowledge (May, 2011). Considering this dilemma, I followed Bryman's (2012) suggestion of applying a transparent approach to the research process, so I could provide the means for readers to judge how much the research findings are related to participants' daily experiences of integration into British society.

The philosophical underpinnings of my study have been highlighted in this section; thus, in the following, I will reiterate the research questions and aims. Then I will discuss how this research was undertaken.

6.3 The research questions and aims

As highlighted in the previous section, my study's exploratory nature required me to consider an interpretivist approach to gain more understanding of the experiences of female Afghan refugees of integration into British society. Therefore, this study aimed to allow these refugee women's voices to be heard and understand what factors inhibit or facilitate the integration of female Afghan refugees into British society. To achieve this aim, my study set out to answer the following research questions:

- What were some of the experiences of female Afghan refugees prior to attending a refugee centre in London?
- What factors do the refugee women identify as facilitating their integration into British society?
- What factors do the refugee women identify as inhibiting their integration into British society?

6.4 Research design

In this section I discuss the qualitative case study approach that framed the design of my study. Next, I explain the process of sampling and the participants' recruitment for my research. Finally, the data collection techniques that were selected are addressed.

6.4.1 Qualitative case study

The origins of the 'case study' approach to research dates back to the work of a French sociologist and economist Le Play (1829), and it is also informed by the early work of American pragmatists, as well as the 'Chicago School' in 1900s (Healy, 1947). Scholars such as Yin (1984) and Stake (1985) were pioneers of the use of case studies in educational evaluation (1995). Creswell (1998) and Merriam (1988; 2009) both identified case study as one of the primary research methods in qualitative research, giving credibility to the approach.

There are different interpretations of the meaning of case studies among scholars. For example, Wolcott (1992) described it as a written product of a qualitative study, while

to Stake (2005) it meant the way in which the study bounded. Similarly, Adelman et al. (1980, p.48) defined the case study as “an umbrella term for a family of research method having in common to the decision to focus on enquiry around an instance”. In addition, a case study can encompass qualitative data or quantitative data or both (Scholz and Tietje, 2002), and as Denzin and Lincoln (2008, p.4) stated, “qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them”.

In defining case studies, Yin (2014) suggests that cases might include communities, relationships, decisions, and projects and in an earlier publication, Yin (1993) distinguished three different types of case study, namely, exploratory (to explore any phenomenon in a data which serves as a point of interest to the researcher), descriptive (to describe the natural phenomena which occur within the data in question). Finally, Yin identified explanatory case studies, that allow the researcher to examine the data closely at a surface and deep level. The researcher may then form a theory based on the data. My own study used exploratory approach to case study defined by Yin (2014) because it allows me to examine a pattern of integration amongst Afghan women refugees living in London, to provide insight into factors that facilitate or inhibit the integration living of this group into British society.

There has been some criticism of case study research among scholars. For example, Savin-Baden and Major (2012) suggested concern about the value of case studies , in terms of the ‘dependence on a single case’ and suggest that focus on a particular and the use of intrinsic case study are being too narrow. However, authors such as Stake (2005) have argued that this dependence on a single case is important for theory building.

Other scholars such as Baxter and Jack (2008), suggested that a common drawback within a case study approach is that the research question may be too broad, or it may have too many aims for one study. To prevent this, these authors suggested that limits need to be placed in relation to definition and context of a case and therefore ‘a case’ could be constructed as individuals, groups, and/ or societies. Therefore, from the beginning I restricted my case study to only include Afghan women refugees who are

service users of specific refugee organisation in London, and I have limited the case study in order to gain an in-depth understanding of their issues in regards with their integration process.

In contrast, Flyvbjerg (2006) addressed some of the concerns regarding case study research by identifying and addressing many misunderstandings about it. The author highlighted the value and importance of the ‘power of example’ and argued that case study approach is an essential method of research in the social sciences, as it looks at phenomenon in depth and from multiple perspectives. In addition, he claimed that one can generalise from a single case, and that case studies can be used as a supplement or alternative to other methods in scientific development. A case study, as Flyvbjerg (2006) suggested, is most useful to generate and test hypothesis.

Therefore, this study guided by the interpretivist paradigm, and I have drawn upon exploratory qualitative case study approach because this approach allows the Afghan women’s voices to be heard, which is an important gap in terms of women asylum seekers and refugees’ post-migration experiences in the UK. Moreover, using a detailed qualitative case study approach enabled me to examine individuals’ experiences from a unique population and identify factors that facilitate or inhibit the integration of living into British society from the perspectives of Afghan female refugees’ who were service users of specific refugee organisation in London.

6.4.2 Positionality

Because of my study’s nature, I was interested in how my relationship (as the researcher) impacted the research process and drew me to the literature concerning ‘positionality’ (Hopkins, 2007).

The researcher’s position in positivist research is objective and outside of the research process; however, in interpretivist research, the researcher is often directly involved within the research processes, including data collection and analysis (Bryman, 2008). Denzin and Lincoln (2011) have suggested, as the purpose of qualitative research is to examine social phenomena in detail, it inevitably includes a reflection on the interaction between the researcher and participants, which may have an impact on the whole study. However, Hopkins (2007) argued, researchers can develop a perspective,

referred to as positionality, to identify the positives and negatives that arises from their interaction during the research process. Therefore, qualitative researchers, particularly those who work with the marginalised population, need to recognise, and reflect critically upon their positionality in the research process (Hopkins, 2007).

In this study, as a researcher, I do not have the same ethnic background as the participants but did share the same linguistic background. This linguistic commonality was beneficial in my research. It helped me develop a relationship in the research setting, and it is possible that the participants were willingly revealed information that they would not have disclosed to researchers that do not speak the participants' native tongue.

Considering the researcher's positionality in multilingual and multicultural research, as Temple (2002) argued, the researcher's linguistic background can sometimes be significant for both the relationship developed in the research setting and the transcription and data analysis. Temple (2002, p.15) described her experience as a Polish speaker as follows:

“Research participants often assume a shared knowledge of history and cultural traditions and a certain sympathy with Polish perspectives on these.”

However, although I am a Farsi speaker, I did not share the same cultural background and experiences as the refugee women, so I needed to be mindful of these differences, and I discuss issues related to the challenges in bilingual research settings in more detail in section 6.7 below.

6.4.3 Developing my own reflexivity as a researcher

Qualitative research is often used to explore the experience of marginalised groups and hard to reach populations. Heckathorn (1997) pointed to the value of qualitative research in understanding stigmatised groups of individuals, such as those with mental health or drug-using issues. Through intensive interviewing, qualitative researchers listen to accounts of stressful and painful life events, and it is a critical skill for qualitative researchers to be empathetic with the individuals being studied. However, empathetic engagement may have a long-term negative impact for researchers

engaged in qualitative research with traumatised individuals. Kiyimba and O'Reilly (2016) have discussed potential dangers to researchers who listen to recorded stories of disclosed trauma several times in order to identify patterns and themes. Wies and Coy (2013) argued that trauma-related qualitative researchers are at risk for vicarious trauma; this is defined as experiencing symptoms of Post-traumatic stress disorder, such as anxiety and avoidance of a situation that reminds the person of the event.

Based on this study's theoretical underpinnings and my choice of research method, I anticipated that researching in this sensitive area would be emotionally challenging for me. For instance, during my data analysis, I listened to many hours of women talking about war, death and their experiences of loss, domestic violence and abuse. I found it challenging to eliminate my emotional feelings, and this feeling got worse towards the end of my research analysis, with the start of the Covid-19 pandemics. There were some occasions that I felt exhausted and needed to get distance from my work, as many of my support networks had been lost. Also, I had to balance my research with caring responsibilities. To manage my stress, I used a research diary as a practical research tool to critically reflect emotions, responses, and interpretations made during the research process and help me control my tension. In addition, I used my own prior experiences and knowledge (as a trained psychologist) to reduce the impact that analysing this sensitive topic had on me during the pandemic. Besides, regular supervisions with my supervisors provided emotional and practical support.

6.4.4 Sampling and recruitment of participants

I applied a purposeful sampling strategy in my study to select potential participants since this helped me to select people who are relevant to my study question both logically and empirically (Mason, 2002). This study pursued to collect a rich account of the integration experiences of Afghan women living in London. I found a variety of factors that would be significant during the recruiting of participants to determine a relevant sample for my study. These were:

- Afghan women who themselves, or their husband, had sought asylum in the United Kingdom
- Afghan women who are between the age of 20 to 60

Afghan women are often considered to be amongst the hard-to-reach populations due to the cultural gender roles that often require them to stay at home (Rostami-Povey and Poya, 2007); therefore, it was initially challenging for me to locate them. In order to meet and interview some Afghan refugee women, I found it necessary to identify organisations that provide support to Afghan refugees in London.

My search began in 2018, and I initially decided to look at the national census records (ONS, 2013) for possible areas in London with the majority of Afghan residents. Following that, I search engine Google to identify relevant refugee organisations in these London boroughs, which provide support to Afghan refugees. During this process, I was able to identify six refugee organisations in London. Upon further investigation, two had discontinued their activities due to funding issue, and the other three refused to participate in the study as their clients were involved in other research projects. Finally, one refugee organisation agreed to allow me to recruit participants for my study.

I compiled an information sheet with background information about the research in English (see appendix III) and Farsi language (see appendix IV) before contacting the participants. My supervisors and the refugee organisation manager (who is a member of the British Association of Psychotherapy) reviewed these documents. It was essential for me to have their opinion to make sure that the information sheet was clear and understandable (because they have previous experience working with refugees). These documents were then printed when my supervisors and I agreed on the clarity of the document.

Because I was aware that the effects of refugees' past and present experiences of exile and exclusion could establish trusting relations a lengthy process (Hynes, 2006), I knew I needed to take my time in building relationships within the refugee organisation. With this regard, Temple and Moran (2006) indicated that entering, building, and maintaining relationships is an important research skill when undertaking research with refugee groups.

Although we spoke the same language (Farsi), as an outsider to the Afghan refugee's group, I was not completely familiar with the social context in which potential

participants lived. Thus, in order to familiarise myself with Afghan refugees' experiences and to build trusting relations with potential participants and ensure that the design of my research was sensitive to the needs of participants, I decided to accept the pre-requisite condition of the chief executive of the organisation to work in a volunteer capacity (and I volunteered to be an art teacher running a women's workshop) for a period of six months in order to familiarise myself with their services and the refugees who attended the centre. This involvement was also a necessary step in forming the research's focus and design, and it helped build and develop relations with potential participants. I was aware that there would be ethical consideration about my voluntary work; however, I did not conduct any formal research observations, and I did not speak to any of the Afghan women about my research. However, the experience did help me to develop a deeper understanding of the refugee organisation. In addition, because the gatekeeper was responsible for recruiting the participants, the Afghan women had an opportunity not to take part in the study.

Despite the advantages of having worked in this refugee organisation (in terms of how the women used the service and understanding the services they provided), recruiting potential participants still took some time and remained an ongoing activity during the research process. I was aware that in order to gain access to the Afghan refugee women, it was essential to identify individuals in the refugee organisation who could advise me and act as a gatekeeper to invite the women to take part in the study. This needed an excessive effort in building a relationship of trust with the facilitator of the Afghan women's group, who later acted as a gatekeeper in this study. The reliance on a gatekeeper was an essential part of the recruitment process because it helped me access participants and provided helpful information about the women's group in the refugee organisation. It is well documented that gatekeepers often play an essential role in identifying displaced persons, given the community's hidden nature (Tait, 2006). Therefore, a few weeks after the termination of my volunteer placement at the refugee organisation, some refugee service users agreed to participate in my research.

As this was a qualitative research study, there was no constraint on the number of participants that I aimed to recruit for the study, and Denzin and Lincoln (2011) suggested, sampling in qualitative research depends on small numbers because what is essential is depth and detail about the phenomena being studied. I successfully

recruited 15 participants into the study and achieved data saturation, as no new categories emerged in the final few interviews (although I recognise that each woman's experience was unique to them). Considering the participants' anonymity, the table on the next page presents some general details about the women who participated in this study.

Table 1: Details of the participants

| | Age range | Educational Level | Dependent children | Migration Status | Duration of living in the UK |
|----------|-----------|-------------------|--------------------|------------------|------------------------------|
| Afsoon | 40 to 50 | - | Yes | Asylum seeker | More than 5 years |
| Asal | 30 to 40 | Primary Level | Yes | Reunion visa | More than 5 years |
| Farzaneh | 30 to 40 | Secondary Level | Yes | Asylum seeker | More than 5 years |
| Firozeh | 30 to 40 | - | Yes | Reunion visa | More than 5 years |
| Golnur | 50 to 60 | - | Yes | Asylum seeker | Less than 5 years |
| Hoda | 30 to 40 | - | Yes | Reunion visa | More than 5 years |
| Jasmina | 30 to 40 | - | Yes | Reunion visa | More than 5 years |
| Morsal | 30 to 40 | - | Yes | Asylum seeker | More than 5 years |
| Nahal | 40 to 50 | University Level | Yes | Asylum seeker | Less than 5 years |
| Sama | 30 to 40 | Secondary Level | No | Reunion visa | More than 5 years |
| Shirin | 30 to 40 | - | No | Asylum seeker | More than 5 years |
| Sumbul | 30 to 40 | - | Yes | Reunion visa | More than 5 years |
| Taban | 30 to 40 | Primary Level | Yes | Reunion visa | More than 5 years |
| Zuha | 40 to 50 | University Level | Yes | Asylum seeker | More than 5 years |
| Yasi | 20 to 30 | - | Yes | Reunion visa | More than 5 years |

6.4.5 Data collection methods

I used individual ('one-to-one') semi-structured interviews to collect the data for my study because, given the nature of the refugee experience, it may not have been appropriate or comfortable for the participants to share their experiences in a group setting. Furthermore, this data collection method was suited for my research aims and its ontological and epistemological underpinnings. The initial goal of this study was

to obtain a thorough understanding of the factors that inhibit or facilitate integrated living amongst Afghan women refugees. Therefore, qualitative semi-structured interviews were deemed appropriate for the aims of my study, since Afghan women refugees are able to provide rich data based on their personal knowledge (Robson, 2011).

A semi-structured interview guide was designed explicitly for the study, and it consisted of fourteen open-ended questions with corresponding probes and was divided into five sections; which included demographics, background, arrival to the UK, motivations and expectations, future developments (see appendix V for details). The development of the interview guide was informed by both my initial literature review as well as my personal experience of working as a volunteer at the refugee groups. I tried to ensure that the questions were open-ended, as this allowed a degree of freedom and adaptability to elicit information from the women while still covering the information related to my research questions. Thus, making it more exploratory in nature and cooperative in terms of knowledge production. The benefits of using open-ended questions include allowing respondents the freedom to answer the questions in their own words and the opportunity to elaborate on their thoughts, which may not be possible in other question formats with set answers, such as structured interviews (Creswell, 2013).

I was also sensitive around the nature of my questioning, as participants would have been subject to many official interviews as asylum seekers. Therefore, I consciously decided to exclude questions about persecution and violence in Afghanistan on the ground that it could potentially re-traumatise participants and instead left it up to participants to decide how much they shared with me, as the focus of the study was on integration.

All participants were recruited to the study from the refugee organisation and were introduced to the study by the organisation's gatekeeper, and they were provided information both orally and in written format (information sheet were provided for participants in both Farsi and English language). With written consent (see appendix I for the English version and appendix II for the Farsi version), participants reassured their anonymity, and they agreed to the interviews being recorded. All the interviews

were undertaken in the refugee organisation building, and each interview lasted between one to two hours.

I encountered some challenges during the arrangement and completion of interviews. For example, there were a few times I attended the refugee organisation for an interview, and I found out that the participants were not able to attend, so I had to rearrange the interview for another date. This was problematic with trying to re-book a room at the premise. In addition, initially, I had not anticipated that the interviews would take so long to finish, and soon I realised that gaining access and building trust with this marginalised group needed to take time, and I could not rush this. Therefore, it took nearly ten months to access participants (beginning in March 2018) and complete fifteen semi-structured interviews.

6.5 Data analysis and trustworthiness

In this study, I use an interpretative approach due to this study's exploratory nature and the fact that the subjective experiences of Afghan women refugees have remained largely underexplored area.

Being a trained psychologist was helpful for my data collection; however, I was aware that my clinical training might influence my ontological perspective, and I decided not to use psychology as an analytical framework because I wanted to remain focused on Afghan's lived experiences women. While I set out to understand the women's integration experiences, through the process of collecting the data and during my data analysis, issues of gender power relations came to the foreground. Listening to the women's experiences, I started to read more about feminist theory to develop a deeper understanding of women's oppression. I ended up choosing the theory of intersectionality because it helped to give a framework for understanding the refugee's experiences of multiple oppressions. Therefore, in the following section, I thought it would be helpful to offer a brief overview of the emergence of intersectionality and my analytical process.

A brief overview of feminism:

The first wave of modern Western feminist culture occurred in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and it was characterised by struggles for women's voting rights (Krolokke and Scott Sorensen, 2006). This phase followed by the second wave of feminism in the 1960s and 1970s, although at this time, the movement was focused on debates across Europe, the UK, and the USA (Taylor, 1998). This wave of the feminist movement was predominantly a white and middle-class endeavour focused on the intersection of gender and sexuality with no emphasis on other power dynamics such as the issues of race and class (Hooks, 1984). However, the third-wave feminism that originated in the 1990s shifted toward the experiences of women of colour, and the 'post-colonial' experience explored the intersection of gender, race, class, sexuality, ethnicity, and other forms of oppressive influence on women's lives (Crenshaw, 1994).

Kimberle Crenshaw developed the concept of intersectionality in 1994, followed by Patricia Hill Collins (1998), who worked to challenge the homogenisation of women's experiences and proposed that women face different experiences of oppression and abusive relationships (Crenshaw, 1994; Collins, 2000). They argued that people exist in social contexts or cultural patterns of oppression, which is not only interconnected but also are created through intersectional systems of society, including race, gender, culture, and social class (Crenshaw, 1994; Collins, 2000). As an example, Anitha (2010) suggested that immigrant women may remain victims of intimate partner violence due to being financially dependent on their partners (this could be owing to lack of language skills and unemployment in the host country). At the same time, many women experience discrimination based on their race, religion, or culture (Burman and Chantler, 2005). Therefore, the importance of addressing the intersectionality in theories of domestic violence was highlighted by other scholars. Bograd (2005) stated that not addressing intersections in domestic violence studies may result in "the socially structured invisibility" of a specific group of women (Bograd, 2005, p.27).

It is important to acknowledge intersectionality's origin in the feminist movements of Black women, Chicana and Latina women, and other women of colour, the majority of whom identify as lesbians. However, as Vervliet et al. (2013) suggest, while using

intersectionality as an analytical lens in research highlights the problems that women face over their lifetime, it can also overlook strengths and resilience among groups, and certainly, this was a risk in working with refugee women. For instance, applying an intersectional lens in refugee research, Yacob-Haliso (2016) indicated a gap in durable solutions and pointed to the intersections of age, disability, and residence in terms of availability of durable solutions for refugee women. Moreover, Yacob-Haliso (2016) has highlighted how the location of refugee women refugees -whether in camps, rural or urban areas- influences their ability to access durable solutions. From this perspective, those refugee women who accommodated in camps are more easily identified and assisted; however, those accommodated in urban areas are more vulnerable to abuse. Likewise, some refugee women may be at additional risk of harassment owing to their political and religious views (Yacob-Haliso, 2016).

6.5.1 Analytical process

In approaching my data analysis, I needed to identify an approach that allowed the refugee women's intersecting experiences to come through the data. Thematic analysis offered me a good framework because a thematic methodology is not necessarily linked to a certain analytical perspective (Bryman, 2012), and it can be used in any form of qualitative study, both descriptive and exploratory, to provide rich and informative results (Matthews and Ross, 2010). Thematic analysis is a helpful method for exploring participants' perspectives, understanding similarities and differences while making new and unanticipated insights (Braun and Clarke, 2006). As Robinson (2011) suggested, it is a valuable method of analysis for summarising extensive data, and it helps a researcher take a well-structured approach and organise a clear final report.

Therefore, considering the exploratory nature of my study, which investigates perspectives of Afghan refugee women, as well as confronting large and complex accounts of data, I considered using a thematic analysis, documented by Braun and Clarke (2006). Although the method that they presented is linear and included six phases, I constantly moved back and forward between phases.

Phase one: Familiarising myself with the data

During phase one of the analysis, I tried to familiarise myself with the data's content. This started with a lengthy and time-consuming process of 'free translation' of the interviews, which enabled me to acquire prior knowledge of the data and hopefully some initial codes (see section 6.7.2 below for more discussion of the free translation process). Repeated active reading of the data sources, as Braun and Clarke (2006) suggested, led to possible meanings and patterns to get shaped. Before I started reading the transcriptions, I listened to the recorded interviews, which helped me get ideas for coding.

Phase two: Initial coding

The second phase of analysis was involved generating initial codes. Although the use of a qualitative computer software analysis package was not necessarily emphasised (Braun and Clarke, 2006), I used NVivo 10 to identify important sections in the transcripts and organise the data. Using this software helped me work efficiently with a large data set; as King (2004) suggested, using computer software can help the researcher organise and code effectively. A large number of codes were initially emerged during this phase of analysis, so I moved to the next step of searching for themes.

Phase three: Searching for themes

I began this phase of analysis by using both NVivo and printed copy of coded data in order to find codes that can be framed under the same theme or sub-theme. I found this analysis phase a little complicated because I had a long list of codes that I needed to identify the most relevant ones. However, during the first phase of analysis, I made myself familiarised with data and developed some ideas and thoughts. Therefore, I started my analysis with these predefined codes, and themes slowly began to emerge. During the initiating themes and sub-themes, I found some codes that did not belong anywhere. I found it beneficial to apply Braun and Clarke's (2006) suggestion about making a "miscellaneous" theme and keeping these codes separately to make sure that they were not lost.

Phase four: Reviewing themes

Once the themes have emerged, the researcher should review the dataset to determine whether the coded data extracts framed in a coherent pattern (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Therefore, during this phase of analysis, I reviewed all the coded data extracts in order to make sure that all the themes that emerged are coherent and related to the data set. During this revision, I decided to delete codes on some occasions because I noted that they overlapped with other codes.

Phase five: Defining and naming themes

In this phase of analysis, researchers are involved in defining the themes by identifying what themes are about and why (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Therefore, during this phase, I started to write a detailed analysis for each theme, considering if each theme fits into the overall story and related to the research questions. I also considered reorganising the themes according to the way that best described the data. At the end of this stage, I was able to accurately define each theme's variety, which illustrates that there is no need for further refinement.

Phase six: Producing the report

Once the themes were established, it was the time for final analysis and writing up into a concise and coherent report (Braun and Clarke, 2006). I, therefore, started to write up the findings report into a coherent narrative where the various themes linked together.

6.5.2 The trustworthiness of the findings

Trustworthiness in qualitative research, as Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested, which aids researchers in persuading readers that their research results are significant. Lincoln and Guba (1985) introduced the criteria of credibility, transformability, dependability, and confirmability, which are equivalent to the criteria of validity and reliability in quantitative research. In this study, I have chosen to use the criteria proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) to demonstrate the trustworthiness of my thematic analysis.

Lincoln and Guba (1989) suggested that the credibility of a study is determined when readers or co-researchers are confronted with the experience; they can recognise it.

The authors claimed that the credibility of the research is increased with prolonged engagement and persistent observation. Collecting data in my thesis was a lengthy process that took about ten months to complete, including an additional six months of voluntary work with a women's group at the refugee organisation. Working with the women's group for six months helped me to comprehensively identify and explore the group members' life experiences following their arrival in the UK.

The transferability of the findings in qualitative research can be problematic because the sample size is small; however, applying 'thick descriptive data' allows the reader to make judgements if they can transfer the findings (or some insights from the findings) into their own site (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). In my research, I used purposeful sampling, and this enhanced transferability by ensuring that the sampling is valid and applicable to the study issue. In addition, to have a straightforward means of finding, analysing, and documenting themes through the data collection, I used Braun and Clarke's (2006) structured approach to thematic analysis, which led to the criteria of transferability in my research.

According to Lincoln and Guba (2007), dependability and confirmability are established by using an audit trail. An audit trail, according to the reviewers, gives readers proof of the researcher's decisions on theoretical and analytical topics in the review. Throughout my study, I was open and honest about my choices, and I kept track of them in my supervisory log notes and research diary that my doctoral supervisory team has examined.

6.6 Ethical considerations

There is considerable literature highlighting ethical issues and dilemmas in researching vulnerable populations and marginalised groups (Manson and O'Neill, 2007). Given that a significant number of displaced people and refugees have experienced traumatic events in their home country, during their journey and in the host countries (Amnesty International, 2020), it was clear that my research had the potential to raise a number of ethical concerns. Therefore, prior to the fieldwork, in October 2018, formal ethical approval was obtained from both the Anglia Ruskin

University Faculty's Research Ethics Panel (see appendix VI), as well as seeking approval from the Refugee Organisation.

6.6.1 Ethical issues in the recruitment of participants

In chapter two, the historical background of Afghan women has been discussed, and as I suggested, Afghan women are predominantly uneducated, and as refugees, they are often recognised as a vulnerable group (Amnesty International, 2020) who may not have any prior experience of social research. This was the case in my research, and so this necessitated me to protect the autonomy of my participants by providing their right to make a decision about their participation free from any pressure. Therefore, I decided to spend some hours with the facilitator (who had the first contact with possible participants), explaining the aims of my research and what potential participation involved. I tried to make sure that the facilitator was clearly aware of the significance of providing honest and proper information about the research so that potential participants were allowed to make up their own minds. In addition, I designed a clear and concise information sheet (in both English and Farsi language) with a brief description of myself as a researcher and the aim of the study with myself and my supervisors' contact details, so that participant had the opportunity to make contact if they wanted to ask further questions or raise any concerns. Moreover, the participants were ensured that their participation in the study would have no impact on their ability to receive services or any adverse effects on themselves and their families.

Due to the language barriers and the possible risk of low literacy levels among this community group, the participant information sheet and consent form were offered to the participants both orally (English and Farsi languages) and in a written format. This approach also helped me initially establish some trust with the participants and reassure them of the researcher's independence from government and immigration bodies.

6.6.2 Anonymising the participants and the study location

Research suggests that refugees' past experiences of torture, prison or their present experiences of social and economic exclusion, harassment or multi-dimensional marginalisation requires researchers to take additional steps to maintain confidentiality and privacy (Jacobsen and Landau, 2003). Furthermore, previous

studies with refugees have highlighted the importance of ensuring that research participation does not negatively impact the participants' current situation or cause harm to their family remaining in their home country (Jacobsen and Landau, 2003).

Anonymisation in this research was challenging, since some participants exchanged confidential and personal knowledge, not just about themselves but also about third parties, and since participants were recruited from a specific refugee organisation, there was a high possibility that people might recognise themselves in other people's conversations (Nespor, 2000; Scheper-Hughes, 2000), and Tolich (2004) referred to this as a threat to internal confidentiality. Anonymity was also jeopardised by what Tolich (2004) referred to as external confidentiality. Because London has a small number of refugee organisations, research sites are more easily traceable (Walford, 2005), and participants may be identified by some members of the intended audience for my research findings -which includes the world's top medical, scientific, and legal professionals in the field.

With this in mind, I promised participants that I would do everything I could to conceal her identity by changing their names and the names of anyone else they mentioned (e.g., refugee organisation staff, health professionals, legal workers), as well as disguising place names and substituting general terms. Moreover, no information about the participants past or current life was shared with gatekeepers, the staff at refugee organisation or family members without their prior consent.

6.6.3 Ethical concerns in conducting the interviews

In listening to the refugee women, it quickly became apparent that they faced immense pressures within Afghanistan, as they struggled to maintain their safety for themselves and their families in an unstable society with a longstanding war. However, it was also interesting to note that for some of the women I interviewed, while the memories may have been painful, they preferred to remain silent, as indicated by the statement by one of the women who reflected: "The situation in Afghanistan is obvious to the world, I cannot elaborate on it". This approach of offering 'silence' during interviews is discussed in the literature regarding the negative impact of trauma on the narrative memory of refugees. For example, Herman (2001) suggested that sometimes memories can be suppressed for so long that refugees may not develop the language

to form such narratives. Conversely, other authors have suggested that avoidance to share details of their conflict-related experiences (and remaining silent) can be used as a coping strategy for some refugees, and this may also be considered as a short-term protective device during the initial stages of trauma exposure to enable women refugees to get on with basic survival tasks such as fleeing (Tankink and Richters, 2007).

In my own research, if the women did not offer to share their pre-migration experiences, then we passed over it in silence. In doing so, I tried to limit the participants' potential harm, as they belong to an already traumatised, highly vulnerable population. This required me to be thoughtful during data collection and fully prepared to discontinue any interview when it was not in the participant's interests to continue. For instance, during the interview, I noticed that one of the participants was experiencing mental distress. I have not found a solution to the potential risk of re-traumatising the participant, except for applying my interpersonal skills as a trained psychologist. Therefore, I apologised for any distress the interview had caused her, and I stopped the interview to provide her with some fresh water. In addition, I ensured that professional support was available for her (through specialised counselling in the refugee centre) if she felt distressed and needed support after the interview. However, the participant stated that she wished to continue because she did not have the opportunity to voice her experiences until now, and she suggested that she had found that the interview had brought healing for her.

Apart from the above, a population-specific ethical challenge was present during the interview. One participant discussed active suicidal ideation that she had not shared with anyone else. I found the situation very stressful but being a trained psychologist was useful and helped me to respond to the situation wisely, and I included steps to ensure maximum confidentiality and fast referral to professional support. This was reported to my supervisors, who raised the issue with the CEO of the refugee organisation, and she agreed to ensure that the participant had professional support. Also, I personally discussed it with the CEO and support was put in place for this participant.

Through intensive interviewing, qualitative researchers listen to accounts of stressful and painful life events, and it is demanding for qualitative researchers to be empathetic with the individuals being studied (Branson and Bixby, 2018). However, research suggests that empathetic engagement may have a long-term negative impact for researchers engaged in qualitative research with traumatised individuals (Wies and Coy, 2013; Fenge et al., 2019), and other authors have discussed the potential dangers to researchers of listening to recorded stories of disclosed trauma several times in order to identify patterns and themes (Kiyimba and O'Reilly, 2016).

As part of this process, it also became clear that I needed to be aware of my own vulnerability because of working with emotionally challenging topics (Johnson and Clarke, 2003). For instance, during my data collection, I was listening to many hours of women talking about their experiences of violence, including war, forced migration, and gender abuse, and I also had to listen again, as I transcribed the interviews and coded the data and at times this was very challenging. During the interviews, some participants' distress was evident, as they recounted sensitive issues relating to their experiences of loss and domestic violence, illness, and even death. To manage my personal stress, I decided to limit myself to undertake only one interview per day, and I also was in regular contact with my supervisors to have a chance to share any stressful feelings with them. Following one of the participants' suicide attempts, formal and informal supervision was increased. This was a difficult time for me because I was at a crossroads in my life, I had to make sure that I followed the safeguarding protocol I had learnt as a trained psychologist.

6.7 Challenges in a bilingual research setting

As the research interviews were conducted in Farsi and English, this raised some unique challenges around undertaking research in multilingual research settings.

6.7.1 Interviewing in Farsi language

When research is conducted with participants who speak a different language from the researcher, ethical and methodological issues are raised. For example, Jacobsen and Landau (2003, p.9) have written about the difficulties of integrating interpreters into migrant and refugee communities and suggested that they may "incur the risk of

transgressing political, social or economic fault-line of which the researcher may not be aware”. Also, research indicates that interpreters are not always politically neutral (Temple, 2002).

Considering the risks of working with an interpreter, I decided to interview with the use of a common language between the participants and myself (Farsi language). Therefore, it was agreed with the refugee group and the participants that the interviews would take place in the Farsi language, which was spoken by the researcher and by the participants.

As I do not originate from Afghanistan, this also held difficulties and risks; for instance, the risk of using incorrect or inappropriate expressions. Afghanistan is a multilingual country, in which Dari and Pashto are the official languages. Dari language is spoken with many Afghans and is the official name of this is Farsi language. Although both participants and I spoke the same language (Farsi Language), there were some minor differences in understanding of particular words and meanings in Dari. Therefore, I found it necessary to explain to participants that although we both speak the same language, if they did not understand me, then they should feel free to ask me to re-phrase or explain any questions further. I had also been exposed to Dari vocabulary during my placement in a refugee organisation, so this was seemingly less of a problem.

Moreover, when I sensed a misunderstanding, I tried to expand the question to prevent participants from having to ask for clarification and consequently feeling embarrassed. This technique also helped me to maintain the flow of the interview and prevent interruptions. Therefore, I often needed more than an hour to complete interviews because, on some occasions, I had to re-frame questions according to participants’ personal and community views.

6.7.2 Transcription in bilingual research

Researchers who undertake studies with participants who do not speak the same language are often faced challenges during the translation of data (Temple, 2002). Translation, as defined by Gau et al. (2008), is converting the source language’s text into the target language; however, Temple (2002, p.4) suggests that it is more than just

changing the words, and he points out that: “communication across languages involves more than just a literal transfer of information”. Research also suggests that translators are active producers in the research, and their personal opinion may reflect an analysis of the data (Lee et al., 2014).

Another issue with collecting bilingual data is the consideration as to whether the researcher should translate the text literally (word by word) or decide if the translation needs to be overly summarising in nature (free translation) (Birbili, 2000). In this regard, Honig (1997, p.17) highlights that “a literal translation could perhaps be seen as doing more justice to what participants have said and make one’s readers understand the foreign mentality better”. Nonetheless, the literal translation could reduce the readability of the text. However, by changing the structure and adding missing fragments to a readable quotation, those unfamiliar with the context will be able to understand it more easily. I decided to translate the interviews for ‘inexact equivalence’ -this included noting pauses in speech, laughter and crying-, in such a way that the basic requirements of making sense, and I tried to ensure that the forms of expression were clear to an English-speaking reader. Although I needed to take into consideration the fact that sentences could not always be adequately translated from Farsi to English once the English structure rule was applied, so a free translation seems more appropriate in my research.

In conducting bilingual research, I have found that this takes time and energy because of the need to prepare all documentations -such as the informed consent agreement and participant information sheet- bilingually, and this required at least double the preparation time, however, by facilitating the refugee women to speak in their home language, I gave them an opportunity to express themselves in a way that was culturally familiar to them.

6.8 Chapter summary

In summary, I used an interpretivist study approach in order to gain a detailed understanding of the factors that facilitate and inhibit the integration of women refugees into British society. In this study, a qualitative study research design was used, which allowed for a more in-depth understanding of the integration process from

the perspective of the Afghan refugee women who attend a refugee organisation in London. The data was gathered through face-to-face, semi-structured interviews, and the data was analysed using a thematic analytical approach. This chapter ends with a discussion of the ethical issues I have encountered while conducting this research.

The research findings that resulted from the adaptation of this methodological approach are presented in the following three chapters.

Chapter Seven

Findings

Afghan Women's Pre-Migration Experiences

7.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and describes the findings of the study that explored the factors that inhibit or facilitate the integration of refugees into British society from the perspective of Afghan women who are service users of a specific refugee organisation in London. For clarity, I have discussed my study findings in three separate chapters; pre-migration experiences are discussed in this chapter (chapter seven), and the post-migration challenges that the Afghan women experienced are examined in chapters eight and nine. However, before starting the findings chapters, I thought it would be helpful to provide a brief descriptive background of the participants; however, due to the sensitivity around ensuring that participants are not identifiable, I decided to provide a broad overview of participants' biographies.

7.2 Participants descriptive background

Participants age range:

The 15 participants had a mean average age of 36 years, with the youngest being 27 years and the oldest 60 years. All the participants had been married in Afghanistan and came to the UK on the basis of asylum seeker or refugee family reunion. The participants were all service users of a specific refugee organisation in a London borough. In order to ensure the confidentiality of the research participants, pseudonyms have been used, and the duration of the women's engagement in the refugee organisation has not been indicated, and the name of the refugee organisation has not been identified.

Educational and occupational background:

Out of the 15 women I interviewed, nine had no formal educational background in Afghanistan. Four women had either completed primary or secondary education. However, one participant (Zuha) reported that she had started university education and had the opportunity to study the English language for two years, but later dropped out of university to leave Afghanistan. In spite of this, she reported that she was not fluent in English. The final participant (Nahal) had graduated from university and had secured a high-ranking position in government in Afghanistan.

Although the participants had been living in the UK on average for ten years, when I met them at the refugee organisation, it was notable that they reported that they had only recently started to attend English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses. Amongst the participants, I interviewed only one woman, Nahal, had a professional job in Afghanistan. The rest of the women were housewives, without any job training prior to coming to the UK. At the time of interviews only one participant, Taban, had a part-time job in catering.

Travelling history:

Three of the women I interviewed -Morsal, Farzaneh, Zuha- had left Afghanistan with their entire families, including husbands and children, and one of them had undertaken the journey while pregnant. Four women -Shirin, Nahal, Afsoon, Gulnoor- were not accompanied by a male family member. All of these participants had initially travelled to a neighbouring country (such as Iran and Pakistan) and then on to a European country, from where 'an agent' (i.e., human traffickers) had arranged their journey to the UK by ferry or by air.

The eight remaining participants were able to reunite with their husband in the UK after a period of separation, ranging from two to eight years (family reunion is allowed for refugees and those with humanitarian protection under the UK policy). While waiting for reunification, some women had to stay in Afghanistan independently, and some had to live with their spousal family until they had received their reunion visa.

7.3 Findings related to Afghan women's pre-migration experiences

This chapter is principally concerned with the challenges the Afghan women faced prior to their arrival into the UK. It also explores the context of their lives in Afghanistan since the Taliban rule and their experiences during their migration journeys to the UK. In addition, this chapter highlights how the different migration journeys affected women's mental and physical health. At the time of writing, Afghanistan had already faced an eighteen-year war, and the impact has been devastating on the population, resulting in high mortality rates and exceptionally high levels of conflict-induced displacement (UNAMA, 2018). These national experiences are echoed in the narratives of the women I interviewed, and the findings in this chapter illustrate specifically the challenges Afghan women face in their home country. My findings indicate that there were three themes within the category of women's pre-migration challenges. The first theme is linked to Afghan society and its impact on women, and it involves three subthemes: gender-based violence, marriage practices, internalisation of patriarchy. The second theme represents the challenges that the women faced in the broader context of the Taliban rule and related to oppression and lack of women's rights and the Afghan women's pre-migration mental health. The third theme reflects the Afghan women's migration journey and is examined in relation to the agent-arranged journey and pre-planned journey through the family reunion.

7.4 Context of the life in Afghanistan and how it impacted the women

As discussed in Chapter Three, the Afghan civil wars (1992-1996 and 1996-2001) resulted in a culture of violence (Brodsky, 2003). While the invasion of the country by the USA (2001) did have an impact on the power of the Taliban, violence, and especially violence against women, remains widespread (Jewkes, Corboz and Gibbs, 2019). While my research highlights some of the external risks that the women faced, it also became apparent that they faced risks from inside the family as well. The internal challenges that the Afghan women were facing are thematically framed concerning issues around gender-based violence, marriage practices, internalisation of patriarchy, and the impact of all these features on the women's mental and physical health.

7.4.1 Gender-Based Violence

While the external dangers that female refugees face by the Taliban rule are well reported (UNAMA, 2018), most women in Afghanistan also face extremes of internal/familial violence (especially among Pashtuns), and for many, this is an essential factor in forcing them to leave their home country (Parish, 2017). In my study, many of the participants talked about the challenges of their previous lives as a woman in Afghanistan. For instance, Zuha described the violations of women's rights in Afghanistan and how she had restricted to wear Chador when she was in public places:

*Women are not allowed to dress freely, we have to wear Chador.
(Zuha)*

During the interview, one of the participants (Sama) willingly wanted to talk about Afghanistan's life experiences in more details. Sama explained how she was restricted to access to a life outside the home:

In Afghanistan women are never allowed to go anywhere by themselves. Even now. Not only girls but also elderly women are not allowed to go out on their own. There has been always discrimination against kids based on their gender, against women, saying 'do dress like this, don't dress like that'. They said, "you can't because you are a girl". (Sama)

Sama continued:

In Afghanistan everything is forced on you. There [Afghanistan], if you have a father or husband, everyone must obey them even if it is unpleasant, you have to obey. I was hoping that one day I will get married and I can do whatever I want. However, I came here [UK] when I was 21 years old and still, I was not allowed to leave the house on my own. (Sama)

The accounts by Sama also suggest that some women found marriage as a way of freedom from intra-familial violence, although in the case of Sama, the situation remained the same after marriage and her migration to the UK. During the interview, she elaborated further on her personal experience as a victim of violence following her marriage. She explained how she was nearly beaten to death by her husband and was forced to remain quiet when the health care providers attempted to intervene. She explained:

I was beaten too hard, that if you touched back of my head, it would totally sink in. When a doctor came to visit me, my ears were bleeding, the doctor who examined me said that I have to be taken to the hospital or I will die. When a doctor asked me about the reason, my husband forced me to tell him that I had fallen over. The doctor didn't believe me and insisted to tell him the truth. But I said that I had fallen over. Police didn't come, nobody came. The doctor said it is not possible, tell me the truth and again, I said 'I fell over'. (Sama)

The violence against women often remained underreported due to cultural attitudes, and these insights were echoed in the experiences of Sama, who explained that due to cultural constraints, Afghan women's access to healthcare services is restricted to emergencies such as childbirth:

In my country every woman, in any situation she is, police should not be informed, or it would be a scandal, even an ambulance should not be requested unless someone is near to dead or for unexpected childbirth. (Sama)

Sama's account illustrates how women's rights in Afghanistan were repressed and denied, but it also demonstrates how women have little political power and receive little or no support from the police. These findings are in line with the report by the United Nations (2019), which highlighted that violence against women remains widespread throughout Afghanistan, and most international strategies to protect women against gender-based violence are not implemented.

During the interview, Sama compared her experiences of the British with Afghan cultures, and she indicated how she had found her real value and identity as a woman in British society and how she valued the fact that she was heard by professionals, regardless of her gender. She stated:

In fact, when anyone comes here, she/he understands, I mean, here every single person is respected. In Afghanistan no-one has a value, especially women. In Afghanistan, I believed that I am useless. (Sama)

7.4.2 Marriage practices in Afghanistan

Another cultural form of violence that is common for many women in Afghanistan is forced marriage (see chapter three for more detail, about women's rights in Afghanistan), and some women interviewed in my research also described how this was enforced by men. For example, Jasmina stated:

My father said that he is a good young man, he is a good guy, so because of that my dad accepted with our marriage. Then, it was 8 months after engagement that my dad shown me the picture of my husband, that was the first time that I saw him. During our engagement I hadn't seen him, then I saw him for the first time at our wedding. (Jasmina)

Zuha explained that the majority of marriages in Afghanistan are arranged, often with limited or no consent of spouses:

In Afghanistan, the most marriages are arranged marriage, it is not like that a person have a right to choose her partner and I think approximately 80 percent of families migrate to the UK face family problems because of arranged marriage. (Zuha)

Such forms of experiences where women find that they have a lack of the voice and being forced into marriage are not uncommon in Afghanistan, and Gulnoor elaborated further on her personal experience as a victim of polygamous marriage:

I didn't have a good life. My husband has four wives. I was the first wife. He used to beat me every day, throw me out of the house. I had really tough days, I had to go to my brother's house and stay with them until my husband come for me. (Gulnoor)

She explained that as a victim of polygamous and arranged marriage, she needed to protect and prevent her daughter from being forced into an arranged marriage. However, the consequences of her refusal and disobedience were whippings from her husband that were inflicted on her for days and nights, along with death threats:

He whipped me day and nights. There were no police to help me. He threatened to kill me because I prevented my daughter to marry with a man as a second wife. He said, "I will kill you because you disobeyed me". I left Afghanistan because of my husband. (Gulnoor)

Similarly, Zuha described how women in Afghanistan have severely limited rights when entering into or trying to get out of a marriage:

In Afghanistan, when a woman got married, a man will marry again, get a second wife, but when a woman got married, she cannot marry again, in fact, no one will marry her after divorce, and when a woman got divorced, the higher chance for her is old men who wants to have a child with them. (Zuha)

These accounts indicated that girls and women in Afghanistan have severely limited rights when entering into or attempting to dissolve a marriage, and the police and other law enforcement bodies do not provide protection for those women fleeing forced marriage. These experiences are also echoed in a recent report, which stated that although the 2008 National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan included provisions for criminalising forced and underage marriage, tradition and customary laws still tend to frame marriage practices in Afghanistan (The Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, 2018). Therefore, the patriarchal cultural norm and practices (more common in Pashtuns) rooted in unequal power relations between men and women determine the form of decision-making processes in individual marriages,

although this may change over time. For example, a woman who found it difficult to influence decisions regarding her marriage at an earlier stage in her life may gain more authority as she became old, and in this case, she may become the decision-maker for the marriage of her children and grandchildren. Moreover, as discussed below, my findings indicate that many of the older women use their minimal power to control younger female relatives' lives.

7.4.3 Internalisation of patriarchy

Two participants described how they were emotionally abused and were often isolated from others by their spousal family when they were waiting to reunite with their husbands in the UK. Jasmina described her experiences, saying:

My spousal family were not behaving well, there were many difficulties during the time I was living with them. For example, after marriage my in-laws put all my clothes into a bin and gave me long sleeves shirts. When they wanted to go for shopping, my in-laws didn't let me to go with them. They brought some fabrics and made clothes for me, and I had to wear that. I wasn't treated like that in my father's house. (Jasmina)

Sama echoed these sentiments, saying:

When I got married and waiting for my reunion visa, I had a difficult time. I had to get permission from all my spousal family, five people, so I could go to visit my parents, yeah, five people. They all had to be agreed, if only one of them disagree, then it would be cancelled. (Sama)

In this study, two of the participants reported multiple types of abuse and control committed not only by the men of the household, but also by the female spousal family members, including restricted access to life outside the home (and always requiring male supervision). Jasmina reflected:

When my father or sister came to visit me, my mother in-law told me off that why your family came here. They cut my relationship with my

aunts and uncles, [they] never let me to visit them. (Jasmina)

Indeed, any indication of disobedience or attempts to leave the abusive family environment usually resulted in severe consequences. For example, Sama stated:

When my husband called, my mother in-law sat next to me and forced me to speak in front of her, so I wasn't able to talk freely and couldn't explain to him what problems I faced there, it was really difficult. (Sama)

Significantly, my research illustrates that some women's control and regulation continued in the absence of their husbands by the spousal family. While the concept of patriarchy is not homogenous and not all Afghan men are patriarchal, my findings demonstrated that within Afghan culture, patriarchy appears to reproduce itself endlessly through the internalisation of patriarchal values amongst many of the women, which in turn appears to lead to the repression and subjugation of newly married women at the hands of senior women (i.e., mother and sister-in-law) in the spousal family. This finding is supported by a qualitative research study conducted by Habiba, Ali, and Ashfagh (2016) on women in Pakistan, in which the findings highlighted that patriarchy normalised within women from childhood and re-socialised by their mothers in law and sisters in law. In the same line, my study shows that the collusion of women to repress the rights of other women could be the result of the internalisation of patriarchy in Afghan society, and this was apparent in the comments below:

I was full of pain, but my mother came and said to me "you are a woman, you have to accept and bear this". (Sama)

I had 5 sisters in laws, and they done whatever they wanted to me, my stepmother kept saying that's fine that's fine, get along with it. (Jasmina)

Significantly, my findings highlight that most of the women experienced gender-based violence at home even in the absence of their husbands and that this continued and

was often reinforced by women within the extended family. It, therefore, would not seem unreasonable to assume that a significant proportion of Afghan women refugees living in the UK will have experienced psychological distress, not only over a period of war but also due to experiences of violence from both men and women within the home, which may have a negative impact on their integration into British society.

7.5 The challenges that women face during the Taliban rule

There were also many external challenges that the Afghan women faced during the Taliban rule, first, in relation to oppression and lack of women's rights, and second the impact of these challenges on participants' mental health.

7.5.1 Oppression and lack of women's rights

In my research, most of the women wanted to talk about the conflict in Afghanistan in detail, and they seemed to want their experiences of the war to be heard (apart from two participants Hoda and Yasi, who did not want to talk about the war). Nahal offered me a brief history regarding women's status in Afghanistan during the Dr Najib government (1987-1992). She described how there was no obligation on the veiling of the women during this time. However, during the Taliban regime, women were stripped of the opportunity of education and had to stay at home and were controlled by their husbands and fathers, and this situation continues in many areas of Afghanistan. she stated:

It used to be freedom, women were free in Dr Najib's time, at that time Afghanistan was like Europe, there was no 'Chador', no one forced to have 'Hejab', we used to dress the same as the European. When the Taliban came, the Taliban caused many problems, they searched for women in malls and shops, lashing women, for example, when women's feet were uncovered, or without socks, they lashed it. They whipped women in malls, kicked their children with guns, and hit people, even men with their wife got disrespected. Even they hang some old boots, some stinky things over men's neck and forced them to walk through the streets, so people can hit them by stones, just because these men accompanied their wives in the street. (Nahal)

Nahal's words were echoed by other women, who talked about insecurity for women entering public space during the time of the Taliban. Farzaneh stated that she had to leave Afghanistan because she was not feeling safe:

Because the life in Afghanistan was not good, we were not safe, not free, we had to stay at home, if we went out, we got whipped. Music was not allowed, and we had to wear Hejab, "chador", we could not go out or go to school. We could do nothing, and there was not a place for living for our children...then I become migrant. (Farzaneh)

A recurring feature heard in the accounts of the women was the fear of life-threatening violence. They talked of their experiences of living through years of insecurity and unpredictable violence, the situation that deprived them of their civil rights, such as denial of education. Zuha talked about her experiences:

I grew up in Afghanistan during war and we never lived in peace, we grew up in conflict, we couldn't study well, our mothers had to stay at home.... In Afghanistan the situation was difficult for those who wanted to study, especially for girls. Well, either there was no school or parents prevents their daughters to go to school. I was a medical student, if the Taliban hadn't come, I could have been a doctor in Afghanistan. (Zuha)

While these findings illustrate some of my participants' experiences, other reports have suggested that the high levels of illiteracy among the whole Afghan population also perpetuates the problem of human rights abuses (Amnesty International, 2020).

Listening to the women in my own study, it was clear that their everyday lives, including their rights to attend school, were severely constrained by the Taliban, and a report by Amnesty International (2020) suggests that their experiences were not unique. This report documents how girls are often deprived of education due to girls and women's restricted mobility and the burning of girls' schools. Nevertheless, my own research indicates that educated women also took the risk of being targeted explicitly by the Taliban, knowing that other family members could be interrogated

and humiliated if they were found. Nahal (who was a member of the Hazaras minority ethnic groups in Afghanistan) was the only participant in this study who shared all details of her experience in Afghanistan during the three governments, including Dr Najib, Mujahedin and Taliban. She spoke in-depth about how she had feared when the Taliban came to capture her sister:

When the Taliban again took over some areas, I can't forget it, it is one of my saddening events, because my sister was a teacher in university, she had some photos with important people from our tribe. When the Taliban found my sister photo, they brought it to my father and asked him 'who is this in this picture?' My father said, 'she is my daughter'. Taliban said, 'why your daughter has taken a picture while standing with men?'. My father said, 'she wears Hejab', but the Taliban said to my father, "no, you are not a Muslim, when your daughter standing with other men, it means you are not a Muslim." So, they had tried to humiliate my father in the city and started to talk about my father all over the city. So, this is the way they use to make people hopeless and annoyed. (Nahal)

This account by Nahal suggests that gender and belonging to a specific ethnic group were amongst the factors that resulted in the persecution of many Afghan people during the Taliban era, and this had a fundamental impact on women, especially for those who struggled to access healthcare services during pregnancy, and again Nahal was willing to share her experiences:

Taliban stopped motors and vehicles in villages even when the people were in need to take essential food and medicine supplies. The Taliban didn't let people travel to cities, even pregnant women in labour, because they believed people living in specific areas are not Muslim, so we shouldn't travel there. (Nahal)

The narrative by Nahal provides some insights into how women's rights had rolled back during the Taliban era, and the high levels of violence and oppression impacted upon the lives of those women and girls who feared that if they left their homes, they

would be captured or harmed. Nevertheless, women and girls' resistance and desire to study was not diminished by the situation, and some of the participants explained how they tried to continue to learn, even during such extreme circumstances. For example, Sumbul explained:

I tried to learn a little by borrowing books from those who attend schools. I mean, I had to self-study. (Sumbul)

This finding concurs with previous research conducted by the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) in 2015, which reported that 71 per cent of internally displaced women in Afghanistan had never attended schools.

Alongside the oppression of female Afghans during the Taliban rule, some of the participants reported the vulnerability of women during the airstrikes and suicidal bombings. For instance, Shirin and Nahal explained how the situation was unsafe during the armed conflict and that no one felt safe anywhere and people had to move from one place to another, seeking a refuge:

Many people die in my country every day, it's just bombs, bombs. It's all war, nothing left in my country, when you go out you are not sure if you get back home safe. Always something happens to the crowd and busy places. I did not study at school because the condition in Afghanistan was not alright, we had to move from one place to another place. (Shirin)

They dropped rockets many times over my house, one rocket hit my house. God blessed us that no one was at home, the rocket destroyed the house and we had to move to another city. (Nahal)

The above comments illustrated that internal displacement put families at further risk by preventing access to education, health, and employment opportunities.

7.5.2 Afghan women's pre-migration mental health

The accounts from participants in my research revealed the trauma that the Afghan women faced due to the war and repression by the Taliban and their experiences of violence and humiliation within their family, which placed a burden on their health both mentally and physically. For instance, Jasmina shared her experience of the consequences of being abused by her spousal family:

I had tough days, 8 years. I couldn't breastfeed my children, it dried suddenly due to the period of depression [that] I went into. (Jasmina)

Sama linked her mental health concerns to her experiences of intimate partner violence. She reflected:

I got depressed because I got beaten without reason, just because of going to see my mother. (Sama)

Apart from the experience of physical/mental risks within inter-familial violence, some of the participants in this study reported their distress at witnessing the suffering of others during the war, with civilians being raped, tortured, injured or killed, and some of the women talked about the traumatic impact of witnessing these horrific sights on their life:

There is, like suicidal bombing, but it happens in some places, which you don't know, it suddenly happens, it is the fate of people living in that area. (Sama)

Similarly, Shirin talked about the time she witnessed a rocket attack and bomb falling on people:

I was so scared during the war that prevented me to go to sleep. The impacts of those days of war and bombing is obvious now, I have still a vivid memory of it, I still cry. (Shirin)

Nahal, the participant who had held a high-ranking position in government, talked about her experience on a day when the Taliban was about to collapse, and the conflict was at the highest:

It was the day that the conflict was at the highest, so I went to the frontline of the war. Many people got killed by Taliban while they skinned off, their eyes had taken out with knife, their arms and legs cut to pieces. Taliban killed many of these men and sent their coffins to their parents. They got our women and raped them, they raped young girls. I couldn't bear that situation. It was painful to see your people in that situation (Nahal)

Nahal's detailed accounts represented her vivid memory about the war scene:

I did my effort by making some phone calls to help us to transfer the corpse, from village, in an area down the hill, a plane landed, collected and transferred them. They brought them, that day I recognized 24 corpses. You can't believe! One of them was newly married, his wife was a young and beautiful mother with a child, another wife who had three children. Four, four young and beautiful kids, I even, I couldn't. I didn't know that day why I remained alive, very much, very much I worked, I tried, I took trouble. (Nahal)

Nahal continued and described her personal tragedy associated with being threatened with death by the Taliban forces due to her government's sensitive position. She reported how the memories of traumatic events were still fresh in her mind, and she described how she could not stop thinking about her son's death, not even a day. These memories are what she says has affected her mental health, even during the time she has been living in a safe country. She stated:

I received a report from Taliban that now we want to destroy you, and we will kill you more cruelly than what we did with the soldiers. Taliban kidnapped my son and killed him. We were frightened, we cried a lot. Taliban forces were following me, attacked my vehicle with guns,

my driver got wounded. (Nahal)

The accounts by Nahal revealed that she was a target of threat and attack by the Taliban forces prior to her migration, and understandably, these traumatic experiences have negatively affected her mental health, resulted in her suffering from depression and anxiety. My findings echo a number of previous studies that have also highlighted the high prevalence of mental health problems among Afghan women as a result of the trauma caused by war, abuse and violence by the Taliban forces (Martin, 2011; Haldane and Nickerson, 2016). My findings concerning women's violence within the home appear to have not been reported in other research studies.

7.6 Women's experiences during their displacement

Due to the consequences of war and unsafe conditions, many of the women in this study found themselves alone because their men were forced to leave the country. The absence of a male member of the family had far-reaching and sometimes devastating implications for the women. Living in a traditionally patriarchal culture, and being left without protection, the women in this study reported that they were forced to abandon their homes while taking additional responsibilities for meeting the need and security of their children alone. For instance, Jasmina spoke about the challenges she faced following her husband's absence:

My husband fled to London at that time, he stayed there for 8 years and then he got his visa. So, for 8 years I was living with my children somewhere in Afghanistan. So, I was 30 years old when my husband left me, and after 2 months I got my first child (i.e., she gave birth). At that time there was no telephone because of Taliban, no mobile phones. I had a difficult life. Just one of our neighbours had telephone, we did not have it. So, my husband called me every 4 or 5 months and I could speak to him a little. (Jasmina)

In such a patriarchal society in which women have to obey their husbands, the options for them were to remain in Afghanistan on their own in the hope of joining their husbands in a safe country in the future, or leave the country together with their

husband. For instance, some participants explained that their husband took the decision to leave Afghanistan and they had no choice but to accept and follow it:

Many women left alone while their husband left the country, it was really bad. Well, people just ran away, and I thought with myself that I have no choice but to go after my husband. It was not just me, many people left the same way, my husband fled too. I did the same. Our friends, Afghan people, they all did the same. (Shirin)

The same comment was echoed by Hoda:

My husband first started to plan to leave and I had to follow him. (Hoda)

However, there was no choice for some women but to leave the country without being accompanied by their men. For example, Afsoon stated that she had to take the lead and left the country with her children in the hope of her husband to join her in future, and she stated that having her family already settled in the UK was the main reason for her to take the lead of journey:

I came first. We did vice-versa, usually men come first, but it was different for us, I have many families here in the UK -my brothers, uncles, my sister-in-law, brother-in-law. My husband said, “you go with kids first, get settled and then I will come. If you go first, I feel more relieved but If you stay in Afghanistan, I will be worry about you”. So, I came first with my children. (Afsoon)

This approach of women and children fleeing and later seeking asylum is often used as a family strategy, and it is recognised by international agencies. For example, according to a report by UNHCR, the number of women refugees travelling alone, or just with their children, has been increasing since 2015, and it is argued that this is a strategy of men, who believe that they can get protection from EU states when sending women and children ahead (UNHCR, 2015). However, many families had become separated when forcibly displaced from Afghanistan. Nahal shared her experience of

being separated from her children and husband during the journey to the neighbouring country:

Since I separated from my family, I was a woman who cried every day, because I did not have any address from them, I did not know where my children were, I did not know where my husband was. (Nahal)

The loss of close family members had a devastating impact on Nahal's mental health, and despite her best efforts, to date, she has not managed to locate any of her family members. These findings illustrate that being forcibly separated from intimate family can cause the prevalence of long-lasting anxiety and depression in women, and this finding is consistent with previous studies on the mental health of newly arrived refugees (Bogic, Njoku, and Priebe, 2015; Silove, Ventevogel and Rees, 2017).

7.6.1 Agent-arranged journey

For the women in this study who were not accompanied by a male member of the family, such a journey meant they had to put their lives at risk and deal with human traffickers/ smugglers, who were often described as 'agents', with no means of protection. Some women refugees in this study described how a smuggler had been involved in helping them cross the borders:

I found a smuggler who fled me with my three children to Pakistan (Jasmina).

We had a big house in Afghanistan. There was a friend of my husband, who we gave our house to him in return of taking our children to the Europe. We said to him, any way you can, making a fake passport, or whatever you do, just do it for us. (Nahal)

The use of 'agents' had significant implications for the unaccompanied women, in regards to lack of control over the route, safety, and financial issues, as Gulnoor explained:

There were around 40 people in one small room, we had to wait for day and nights until a smuggler come to take us, during this period they[smugglers] took our money, mobiles, watches. (Gulnoor)

However, Gulnoor, whose brother-in-law arranged for her to be smuggled out of Afghanistan, described how her husband had nearly beaten her to death prior to her migration, and due to her ill health and the severity of the torture inflicted on her by her husband, she was physically unable to continue her journey for a few months:

My journey took three months. I stayed in Iran for a few months, due to the illness, all my body was bruised because my husband had beaten me badly before I leave Afghanistan. In Iran, the smuggler told me that he is unable to help me because my face was not in normal shape and the police would definitely suspect of me. I wasn't able to leave the house that smuggler provided for us for a while until I felt better and continue my journey to the Turkey and after three months, I finally entered the UK. (Gulnoor)

Gulnoor narrated that because her journey to the European country took a few months and costs much money, she was not able to pay the agent, and therefore she had to leave her children behind in Pakistan until she had raised enough money for their travel:

I run out of money for our journey, so I had no choice but to leave my children in Pakistan until I get money for them. (Gulnoor)

Other women faced different challenges, and for some, being pregnant and breastfeeding posed additional challenges. For instance, Zuha talked about her own experience as a pregnant woman during the journey towards Europe:

There were problems on your way to the UK. I was 6 months pregnant, Well, to be honest, there was no place to sit, not enough food to eat, it [the journey to the Europe] has its own problems for pregnant women like me. (Zuha)

These findings concur with other research on refugees' flight to safety; for example, Del Valle, Ben Ali, and Turner (2016) suggest that refugee women often face additional challenges, especially when pregnant and breastfeeding women making perilous journeys on their own. Other reports on women's irregular border crossings illustrate that pregnancy is often a feature of the many women who die by drowning while attempting to cross borders (Pickering, 2013). In addition, health problems during pregnancy and breastfeeding, such as malnutrition and infections, are often experienced due to a lack of availability of health services or being denied access to them by smugglers (Martin, 2011).

Besides, the dangers of the Mediterranean crossing were reported by those participants who had undertaken overland migration journeys from Afghanistan to Europe, which Sumbul describes:

There are some people who face many problems during their journey, for example, some of my family had to pass through many countries, I mean, via boats, and many people died because of that. And thank God that my mother and my brother were arrived in France safely, they passed through Turkey, Greece, and then Italy. After they arrived in Italy, within half an hour the second boat drawn. Oh, God saved them, they stayed there for a month and then went to France and sought asylum there. This happened 6 months ago. (Sumbul)

Although risks from drowning are well reported (World Health Organization, 2018), my own research also highlighted the lack of concern that smugglers have for the lives of the people, especially the position refugee women are placed in, with no choice but to keep going forward and risking their lives in the hope of arriving in a place of safety.

7.6.2 Pre-planned journey through the family reunion

For those eight women who came to the UK to be reunited with their husbands (through the UK family reunification process), the journey tended to be a lot smoother:

The journey was ok, I went to Dubai and then to London. (Firouzeh)

I came here easily with plane. (Hoda)

However, amongst them, Sama was the only participant who explained that although she had gained her reunion visa, she was not allowed to board a flight as her face was not recognisable, she stated:

Before the fight, I was beaten by my husband severely, so my ticket got cancelled because my face was no recognizable. One week later he booked another ticket, but I was all in pain, my body was completely bruised. (Sama)

My findings have highlighted the vulnerability of Afghan women refugees to traumatic events during their journeys to the UK and the impacts of these challenges on their mental and physical health. Furthermore, as I discuss in the next chapter, my study's findings indicate that the violence and repression of the women did not end when they left their home country and reached a supposedly safe and secure country.

7.7 Chapter summary

One of the significant findings from my research was the pre-migration experiences of the Afghan women refugees prior to arriving in the UK. Although this thesis has focused upon the integration of Afghan women in the UK, my findings suggest that understanding their pre-migration experiences will enable the reader to better understand the challenges women faced during their lives in Afghanistan and how this impacted their integration into British society. These findings support the Stenmark et al. (2013) study, which suggests that pre-migration experiences, including exposure to armed conflicts, insecurity and gender-based violence, can profoundly affect refugees' integration into the host society.

Furthermore, my findings have illustrated that the context of the women's lives prior to arrival into the UK was associated with living in a conflict situation, which revealed that women faced a host of intersecting and severe challenges as they struggled to keep safe. The stories of women revealed the tremendous loss and deep loneliness that they had endured as the war took their homes, livelihoods, security and family members.

Finally, the findings from this study also indicate that the experiences of violence and repression both within the domestic setting and the wider patriarchal culture had become part of the everyday lives of some Afghan women and seem to be more common in Pashtuns in Afghanistan, and without any effective governance to protect them, the women were often placed in a desperate situation. This situation was compounded by the violence experienced during the turmoil of the war (see chapter three) and the broader political oppression of Hazaras by the Taliban. It was these conditions that the women cited in this research as the main reasons for leaving Afghanistan to find a place of safety and security.

Furthermore, the participants' experiences during their migration journey to the UK highlighted not only the differences in travelling arrangements and companions but also the levels of risk that the women were exposed to and the levels of abuse and violence that can occur at any point of the migration journey. Indeed, the participants who made an agent-arranged journey indicated multiple forms of insecurity and abuse by the hands of smugglers, and as discussed in the following chapter, this had a profound and lasting impact on their mental and physical health.

In the next chapter, I draw on my findings to examine the Afghan women's post-migration experiences during their settlement in the UK and the impact of this on the integration process into British society.

Chapter Eight

Findings

Afghan Women's Post-Migration Experiences in the UK: Inhibitors of Integration

8.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the discussion of my findings is framed around Afghan women's post-migration experiences, with a particular focus on the inhibitors and facilitators to integration. For the clarity of reading, I have divided Afghan women's post-migration experiences into two separate parts. This chapter examines factors that inhibited Afghan women's successful resettlement following their arrival into the UK, and my research identified two main themes in terms of this category around Post-migration stressors and language barrier.

Lack of social integration has been shown to prevent the formation of trusting bonds and a sense of belonging, both of which are essential components of successful communities (Putnam, 2007). In my research, therefore, I attempt to gain an understanding of factors that might inhibit Afghan women refugee's integration into British society. Recognising these barriers has the potential to enable policymakers at a national and local level to provide effective and adequate services, assisting refugees to develop their full potential, prevent their marginalisation, and foster social cohesion and the chances of successful integration.

8.2 Post-migration stressors

As noted in chapter seven of the findings, the Afghan women refugees faced considerable challenges and traumas prior to and during their migration journey into the UK, which put them at risk of physical and mental health difficulties. While understanding pre-migration trauma experiences are essential in comprehending women refugees' psychological well-being in the host country, post-migration

stressors also need to be considered. Participants in this study gave a wealth of information about such experiences and the impact on their mental health that could potentially inhibit their successful integration into British society. In the following section, I go over these factors in more details to show how they affect Afghan women's mental health and their resettlement experience in the UK.

8.2.1 Forced separation from family

The first factor that contributed to the prevalence of women's mental health concerns upon their arrival into the UK was their experiences of forced separation from their immediate family. Nahal was in the minority amongst participants in this study, as she felt comfortable and willing to speak about the difficulties that she faced in seeking asylum, particularly in relation to separation from her family and corresponding isolation. She explained that after entering the UK, an agent helped her get to her niece's house, and she managed to stay there until she claimed asylum to the Home Office. The separation from her son, family, and loss of all that was familiar to her culminated in Nahal (see 5.4) one-night attempting suicide, which was prevented by her niece's actions:

One night, I got out of my niece's house in the midnight and tried to throw myself in front of a train or bus. They prevented me said don't do this for the God sake. I always thinking overdosing, or killing myself by knife, because I lost my child, I don't have my family, no one left, my job is finished, I lost whatever I had, there is no point in living, I have to die. (Nahal)

Nahal talked about her experience of depression, anxiety, and panic attacks during the time that she lodged her asylum claim and was accommodated in a hostel. She linked the prevalence of her mental ill-health to being separated from her immediate family during forced migration and the fact that she did not know if they were safe since they had been separated from each other:

I was living in hostel, I was ill, depressed, and sometimes, one or two times a week, I got panic attack, asking for ambulance. I was a woman who cried every day, because of my children as I didn't have any

address from them, I didn't know where my children are, I didn't know where my husband is, he didn't know about me either. I wasn't even sure if they are alive. (Nahal)

She further talked about psychosomatic symptoms linked with her stress and anxiety that occurred during her first week of arrival into the UK, which resulted in her poor sleep:

It was the first week of moving into the hostel when I had a weird feeling, I couldn't breathe properly, got palpitations, felt dizzy, and my face turned blue., I was crying and scared during the night, I couldn't go to sleep. (Nahal)

During the interview, Nahal expressed that in spite of being in a safe country, she was unable to control her fear and the memory of her son being abducted by the Taliban forces kept returning to her mind:

What scared me was the memory of Taliban and I thought Taliban will come and kill me with a knife. Whenever someone passed me, all these thoughts had come to my mind and I had the feeling that Taliban was here following me. I saw myself in that situation when my son was kidnapped all those dead bodies in village that had been killed cruelly. Since then, the fear doesn't leave me, I am not able to control myself. (Nahal)

While Nahal's experiences are unique to her, unfortunately, the loss of loved ones during war and the refugee journey has also been experienced by many people fleeing Afghanistan (Agllias and Gray, 2012) and their concerns for those family members back home (Miller et al., 2018) are well reported along with their fears about not being able to reunite with their loved ones (Beaton, Musgrave, Liebl, 2018). Gulnoor, another participant who was a victim of intimate partner violence and polygamous marriage, also talked about her experience of forced separation from her family. She explained that she had to be separated from her children during their journey into the

UK as she could not afford to pay the agent (smuggler) for all her five children, and this resulted in her children being forced to return to Afghanistan by her partner:

I fled with my children into Pakistan but there I ran out of money for our journey, so I had no choice but leaving my children in Pakistan until I get money for them. My husband came after me to Pakistan and took my children back to Afghanistan. I have five children, the oldest has a mental health issue and they all left behind in Afghanistan. When I came here [UK], I was like a mad person, thinking about my children all the time. I didn't talk to anybody, crying the whole day. (Gulnoor)

My findings demonstrate that the familial fragmentation upon the migration journey is an important factor that impacted the Afghan women's health and well-being during their resettlement in the UK. These findings are consistent with other research that found that forced migration can affect refugee women's well-being, leading to depression, anxiety, stress-related psychosomatic illness, and suicidal ideation (Phillimore, 2016). Research suggests that these types of psychological issues are common among Afghan women refugees, particularly those separated from their families and are left with no information on their families' well-being at home (Slewa-Younan et al., 2017; Alemi et al., 2016). In addition, the long-term effect of poor health care and chronic stress experienced by some refugees can continue to impair refugee's functioning even after the initial resettlement (Vrana, Campbell, and Clay, 2012).

8.2.2 Asylum claim refusal

Research suggests that stress of waiting for asylum-application decision is one of the structural barriers which has a profound impact on the quality of refugees' life (Jakobsen, 2017; Canning, 2017). Throughout my research, this was clearly indicated as a risk factor for the development of mental health distress/illness amongst Afghan women refugees. For instance, Shirin described her experience as a traumatised woman who sought asylum in the UK to enjoy safety and security; however, the refusal of her asylum claim on her arrival and delays in processing her new application had caused a long-lasting episode of depression and anxiety:

Since I came here, I got depression. This depression started when I heard my case was refused. Four years passed and my case had not been accepted, I didn't have any valid visa. Whenever the doorbell rang, I thought it was the police, started to cry, got palpitations, I couldn't even walk because my muscles were stiffed. I kept thinking about my case all the time. I was scared if they send me back to Afghanistan. I came here in the hope of safety, but my health condition got worse, depression made me who I am right now. (Shirin)

My findings indicate that some of the Afghan women experienced symptoms of depression and anxiety, and this could have been associated with the fear of the refusal of their asylum claim and being sent back to the home country. Furthermore, my findings concur with previous studies conducted in the UK that have found refused asylum seekers may feel more anxious and distressed over being deported (Morgan, Melliush, and Welham, 2017), and reminders of the asylum application process may prove to be a cause of frustration years after being given refugee status (Djuretic et al., 2007; Sherwood and Liebling-Kalifani, 2012). My research also illustrates that refused asylum claims acts as a structural barrier, which can negatively impact women refugees' mental health and their integration.

8.2.3 Housing-related issues

Having a suitable accommodation is a fundamental human right and is essential for individuals mental and physical health (Macintyre et al., 2003; Marmot et al., 2010; WHO, 2011; Bentley et al., 2011), and in relation to refugees and asylum seekers, access to appropriate housing in a host country is an important marker of successful integration (Ager and Strang, 2004, 2008; Phillimore and Goodson, 2008). Indeed, while participants noted that other significant factors had a negative impact on their health (e.g., separation from immediate family and asylum claim refusal), my research findings identified that the women face other types of structural barriers including different accommodation pressures depending on where they were in the refugee journey (i.e., prior or after granting refugee status), and this contributed to the emergence of physical and mental health distress/illness for some participants. These structural barriers included the UK dispersal policy, housing affordability, and suitability of accommodation concerning physical aspects such as poor condition and

a problem with the layout, issues around social aspects of housing linked to social bonding capital (refugees contact with a co-ethnic group) (Ryan, 2011). Interestingly, these factors did not exist in isolation, and participants were experiencing issues in more than one element of their housing.

Dispersal accommodation:

As discussed in chapter five, by instituting a compulsory dispersal policy, the UK government has removed an asylum seeker's freedom in choosing the place of settlement until the asylum claim has been entirely determined (McKnight, Goodwin, Kenyon, 2019). In my study, the women's experiences of being offered accommodation in dispersal areas were highlighted as a factor that negatively impacted Afghan women's wellbeing. The women talked about feeling depressed and lonely and linked this to the impact of dispersal policy, which caused them to be separated from their close relatives and their Afghan community during the initial settlement. For instance, Gulnoor explained that one of the reasons that she had chosen the UK as a destination country to claim asylum was to be near her niece; however, on her arrival, she was sent to a dispersal area. She reported on her experience of being lonely and depressed during the year that she was accommodated in a hostel, and she also linked this to her poor English language skills, as well as being far from the support of her niece and the rejection, by the Home Office, of her relocation request:

When I came here to the UK, I was accommodated in a house in Cardiff for a year. My niece was living in London at that time and it was far from where I was accommodated. I was alone in Cardiff, I didn't know English, I was depressed while sitting on a corner all the time, doing nothing. I was an absolute mad. My niece asked to relocate me to London, but the Home Office said it is not possible and I had to live there. (Gulnoor)

Gulnoor further commented that after the acceptance of her asylum claim and moving to London, her wellbeing improved as she had a chance to meet her niece and other Afghan people:

When my asylum claim accepted and I moved to London, I have been happier because I met my niece and other Afghans, chatting with them. (Gulnoor)

Likewise, Zuha explained that sending her away to the area far from the place that her brother had been living escalated her depression. She reported that after being granted refugee status, they decided to move to London, and she linked this to being able to live near an Afghan community:

When I was in Newcastle, I got ill, because we were alone there. My brother was living in London and we were all accommodated in Newcastle. I was very ill, I got depression, but after we got our refugee status, we moved to London to be with my brother. (Zuha)

Although many of the participants reported their dissatisfaction about being accommodated in dispersal areas, NASS provided housing (National Asylum Support Service) was described as clean and in a good condition. Nahal expressed her appreciation for being accommodated in a female-only hostel upon her arrival into the UK, which had a positive impact on her sense of safety and security:

They gave me a room in a hostel for six months, a shared dining room and shared TV room and a big mosque, a big mosque, there was a big mosque, very good, it was a female hostel, there were women only not men, and I was happy there. (Nahal)

The findings that emerged from my study also show that being on a temporary visa and having financial hardships are another structural harms, which constrains women asylum seekers to have limited control over their accommodation area during their initial period of settlement. For many of the women, this resulted in further relocations to other cities once their refugee status had been granted in order to be resettled close to their family and ethnic group. Indeed, the research by Cheung and Phillimore (2016) on gender analysis of refugee integration in the UK highlighted that at baseline (during the first months), both genders who lived in NASS housing were less likely to have regular personal encounters. Men, on the other hand, are more likely to join a formal

network. This raises questions that since women have less access to traditional networks than men, they could be unaware of how to obtain resources (Cheung and Phillimore, 2016).

Furthermore, my study's findings demonstrated many of the women's concerns during their initial settlement about being separated from their own community and being dispersed from potential local networks of family support, which they cited had a negative impact on their mental well-being. Feelings of loneliness were highlighted by some participants as a factor that contributed to their depression and stress, and this has been confirmed by previous studies, which revealed that loneliness and lack of social relationships are critical post-migration issues that can both predict depression and somatic symptoms among refugee women (Bartolomei, Eckert and Pittaway, 2014; Home Office, 2019).

Moving on to a permanent accommodation:

Once an asylum claim has been decided, individuals are no longer entitled to Home Office support, and they are forced to leave dispersal accommodation within 28 days and look for alternative accommodation (although they may be eligible to claim mainstream benefits) (Home Office, 2019). In my study, many Afghan women reported that they choose the city of London as a place for their permanent accommodation following granting refugee status to reside in an area close to their co-ethnic group. However, for some of the participants who were qualified to be offered council housing, concerns were raised in terms of the lack of control over accommodation provided to them. For instance, Farzaneh commented:

They [the Council] told us that we have to relocate to another house in one day. We didn't see the new house, if it is clean or not, we had to move out before 12 midnight. (Farzaneh)

Zuha similarly reported:

You do not have a control over the housing preferences, for example, they offer you a house and you can say if you want it or not. If you

reject the offers for three times, since then you have to accept any houses they offer. It was really difficult to accept the offers because the houses were old, with no carpet, I mean, the life that a person desired, we didn't have. (Zuha)

Housing suitability (physical elements):

The importance of physical elements of housing, in terms of cleanness, space and layout, which all contribute to the suitability of a house, has been highlighted by previous authors (for example, Mallett et al., 2011; Ziersch et al., 2017). Reflecting on these factors, many of the participants in my study reported that permanent accommodation offered through the local authority council housing was not well maintained, and the poor housing condition put them and their families' physical health at risk. Nahal commented:

When I moved into the home that provided for me, there was a second-hand mattress, a second-hand bed. when I woke up in the next morning, I noticed all my body was bitten by insects. (Nahal)

Farzaneh also raised the same concern of the permanent accommodation provided through council housing, and she described how it was damp, leading to her children suffering from a range of physical health issues, such as asthma and other respiratory difficulties:

We had to move to another house recently. Two of my sons got asthma because of the damp in the house. There's a smell inside the house. We complained to the council, but they just came and sprayed around the house. But still there is the same problem. (Farzaneh)

In addition, pest infestation, such as mice, along with cold, damp, and mouldy housing conditions, were all factors that were highlighted across the interviews. For Morsal, this resulted in changing council housing several times in her first years of initial settlement in London. In her interview, Morsal noted that all of the houses that she moved in had issues related to poor conditions:

The council gave us a house and we moved in, but the house was damp, and all the woods damaged by moisture, so we had to leave the house. The second house had lots of mice. We reported and someone came from council and I showed him that the mice tear off the fabric under the sofa. So again, we had to get back looking for another house. We had to go to a temporary flat for a week with my 4 children until we could find a house. (Morsal)

An unsuitable layout, including size and number of rooms, was another aspect of housing's physical features as having an impact on the participants' health and well-being. These problems are evidenced in Zuha and Jasmina's accounts, who experienced overcrowded housing and inadequate space for their large families. Zuha explained:

My children slept in one bedroom, and when one of the babies woke up and cried, the other ones woke up. I wanted to get a better house, but we couldn't because we didn't have enough money for that (Zuha)

Jasmina talked about the impact of poor housing on her children's education. She stated:

I have 6 children and the house has 3 rooms. Very crowded, and children do not have privacy to study. (Jasmina)

This problem was further compounded by the cost of housing that made it difficult for them to improve their living circumstances:

The problem is about the high rent of the house. My husband is a cab driver, and his English is not good. So, he cannot rent a bigger house. (Jasmina)

The participants' accounts show that finding good-quality accommodation was among the top priorities for many of the Afghan women, and this finding is echoed in the literature on refugee housing that reports the critical role good-quality accommodation

plays on refugees' wellbeing and their integration into the British society (Bentley et al., 2011; Refugee Council, 2019). Housing conditions are repeatedly shown to be insufficient among those people who have been housed by councils (Phillip, 2006; Phillimore and Goodson, 2010; Pettitt, 2013).

My own findings confirmed that the physical elements of housing, such as dampness, mould, worn-out furniture, and the inappropriate size of the houses (particularly for larger families), are still an unresolved issue for many refugees and these physical conditions have a negative impact on their physical and mental health and wellbeing. Unfortunately, earlier studies of refugees living in the UK have also suggested that poor housing condition -such as dampness and mould- lead to high rates of mobility amongst this cohort and elevated the risk of mental/physical health illness (Warfa et al., 2006) and even though many of these studies are in excess of fourteen years old, refugees today are still facing many of the same housing issues. Moreover, it has been suggested that the reduced welfare support and increased hostility towards asylum seekers and refugees is a part of an effort to create a 'hostile environment' for asylum seekers and refugees in the UK (Berry, Garcia-Blanco, and Moore, 2016). Other scholars have claimed that these structural harms may be a planned outcome of the UK policy to deter future arrivals (Bloch, 2000) or aimed to disincentivise these people to remain in the UK (Crawley et al., 2011; Canning, 2017). Other data on new immigrants' living paths in the UK suggests that after a brief time of adjustment, it is normal for migrants to seek out better housing options, such as exclusive neighbourhoods and avoiding sharing housing with other families (Robinson et al., 2007).

Housing affordability:

The cost of rent in London was considered a fundamental issue for many participants of my study, with the vast majority finding rents too high and expensive. Shirin reported that she could barely afford to pay the high private rent, and this resulted in the family becoming financially reliant on other people for a few months:

I was so sad and worried, because the rent was too expensive, and it took me a lot of time to get housing benefit. My husband also didn't

have money and the landlord needed the rent, so we had to borrow money from different people. (Shirin)

Similarly, concerns around the affordability of suitable housing are seen in the following quotes from Zuha and Morsal:

We didn't have enough money to rent bigger house, because the rent was more than what we received from the Housing Benefit Department and we couldn't afford for the top-up of the rent. (Zuha)

Morsal has pointed to the link between not having a well-paid job to secure a suitable and affordable house in London for her large families:

I had to top up the housing benefit for around £500 to be able to pay the rent to the landlord, it's really difficult for me to cover this amount of money. I tried to find a small affordable house but because I have 4 children, the landlord didn't give a small house to my large family. He [landlord] also asked about personal earnings, but we don't have many earnings, my husband is a taxi driver. (Morsal)

My findings revealed that the affordability of housing in London was a concern, particularly for those participants with large families and affected participants' health and wellbeing. The health impacts described by participants were often noted as being upset, worried, feeling sad, and absence of peace of mind. The women's quote in my study illustrated the interconnectedness of integration indicators (housing affordability, language skills, and well-paid job) and that the absence of critical facilitators of integration (language) acts as a barrier to the ability to access the key means of integration (housing). Moreover, my research suggests that poor English language skills also resulted in problems securing employment, and a low income also made it difficult for participants to improve their living conditions. A range of previous research studies (Phillips, 2006; Ziersch, 2017) has highlighted the issue of affordability in accommodation for refugees, and my findings also highlight the negative health impacts associated with this issue for Afghan women refugees in the UK. Other findings also support the gender disparities in access to decent

accommodation, with a smaller percentage of women living in problem-free housing, and even after several years living in the UK, refugees continue to face challenges to find reasonable quality accommodation (Cheung and Phillimore, 2016).

Summary of housing-related issues:

The findings from my study show that for some participants in this study, displacement did not stop upon arrival into the UK, and contrary to what was intended by policymakers, dispersed refugees continued with internal movements following granted refugee status. This onward Afghan women's internal movements illustrated the vital role of social networks and existing community support in refugee flows and settlement. These experiences are consistent with existing literature on migration, which argues that ethnic and refugee groups' development and existence are elements that have contributed to individuals deciding to remain in or leave their initial dispersal location (Stewart, 2012). The importance of refugees' initial settlement location has also been cited in another study that compared the integration process of Iraqi refugees in two different cities in the UK (Phillips and Robinson, 2015). The authors recognised that variations in this cohort of refugees' integration experiences were linked to the house and neighbourhood location into which they were settled. My research finding, therefore, demonstrated that securing appropriate housing is a concern for many Afghan refugee women, and this was particularly apparent in relation to the issue of a social environment (proximity to co-ethnic group, family and friends), as well as the physical elements (e.g., space and layout, dampness) of accommodation. It, therefore, comes as little surprise that refugees' initial settlement in dispersal areas has often followed by secondary movement back to London because of feeling isolated from the community.

In my research, while many of the participants talked about the housing-related issues as a factor that had a negative impact on their mental health wellbeing, some women talked about the lack of personal safety in their home, and this was linked to intimate partner violence they experienced, and this is discussed in the following section.

8.2.4 Intimate partner violence

One of my most distressing findings was the high level of intimate partner violence (IPV) experienced by Afghan women. IPV is a serious public health concern comprised of physical, sexual, and emotional violence, as well as controlling behaviours linked to a range of adverse health consequences (World Health Organisation, 2013). Women who live in countries with political instabilities and armed conflict -such as Afghanistan- face higher rates of IPV (Ward, 2002; Clark et al., 2010); and yet commonly, there are fewer IPV-related support services in these settings (World Bank and Afghanistan Ministry of the Economy, 2017).

As suggested earlier in chapter seven, some participants in my study experienced violence prior to and during their flight from Afghanistan, and my research suggests that IPV was also being seen by some of the women in the UK. For example, Sama, who reunited with her husband in the UK, described her experiences:

Since I came here [UK], my husband didn't treat me well, I hadn't done anything wrong, but I beat, got assaulted, I had to clean his boots, massaged his feet, ironed his clothes, but still I [got] slapped for nothing. (Sama)

While some participants were victims of violence in their home country (see 7.4.1), my research findings also revealed that some women experienced IPV during their resettlement in the UK, particularly those who had received less formal education. Previous studies supported this finding, which points to the correlation between exposure to war and intimate partner violence in war countries (Gupta, 2014; Goessmann, Ibrahim and Neuner, 2020). Other authors (UNHCR, 2003; Roy, 2012) have argued that many refugee men, following the trauma of violence in their home country and the stress of resettlement in a different country, often use violence as a way of regaining control and reclaiming authority.

An immediate and long-term impact of intimate partner violence was highlighted by one of the women I interviewed. For example, Sama explained that remaining in the abusive relationship after her migration to the UK had a fundamentally negative impact on her psychological wellbeing:

I just sat in the bushes and kept crying, until I had lost my mind. Because I hadn't done anything wrong, the reason that I got depression was because I got beaten without any reason. I remember, I remember all, and this happened to me, very hard days. I lost all my feelings, I mean for six or seven days I didn't get out of the house and I was just screaming, I had a feeling like my body flesh tearing off. Crisis team came to my house and visited me, they had to give me strong medication because I was really ill and hadn't slept for 3 or 4 nights. (Sama)

Sama's comment highlighted her experience of being a victim of violence and psychological issues such as depression, which is consistent with previous studies. For example, according to Pease and Rees (2008), violence against women is one of the world's most troubling and pervasive public health problems, and it is the leading cause of disability and mental health distress/illness for women and children. Sama also talked about the consequences of suffering from depression on her reproductive health:

It's for a long time, since 2011, that I have been using anti-depressant medications and because of that I can't get pregnant. (Sama)

She continued to explain that after many years of conceiving, she finally got pregnant; however, she found out that she had lost the baby during the second trimester of her pregnancy. The following comments by Sama were indicative of her hopelessness as she expressed her suicidal ideations after what happened to her:

I had attempted to suicide two to three times a week. One night, I was ironing, and I had a lot in my mind, I had a headache, so I hit my head with the iron, blood was everywhere in the house, then I fainted. When I got conscious, I noticed that I am in an ambulance. That much I felt mad. Once, I drank some bleach liquid, another day I decided to jump over the window and my husband caught me. (Sama)

Sama continued:

I am not satisfied with anything, the whole world, death, life, all mean the same to me. Sometimes I say to myself I want to be dead, I just repeat this in my mind to jump in front of the train so no one can find my dead body, sometimes I hate myself that much, so why I came to live.¹(Sama)

The fundamental negative impact of persistent violence from her husband on Sama's physical, psychological, and reproductive health (and possibly mental health distress/illness such as depression) was apparent. This narrative is consistent with findings in previous studies that have also highlighted the correlation between IPV and female refugees' mental health illness (Campbell, Dworkin, and Cabral, 2009; Phillimore, Pertek and Alidu, 2018). From Sama's narrative, it appears that pervasive intimate partner violence could be a risk factor for suicidal ideation after arrival into the UK, and another research has also found this in the broader refugee population. For example, Ao et al. (2016) conducted a cross-sectional survey with Bhutanese refugees resettled in the United States between 2009 and 2012. The authors found that experiencing family conflicts after resettlement is one of the factors associated with the prevalence of suicidal ideation. Thus, my findings illustrated that everyday stressors associated with life in a new country, including intimate partner violence, may have a compounding effect on the psychological well-being of Afghan women refugees and as Kubiak (2005) argued, people's resilience to deal with potentially stressful life experiences may be harmed by the everyday stressors. My findings concur with previous research findings that suggest such daily stressors are stronger predictors of people's mental wellbeing than adverse experiences that change people's lives, such as exposure to political violence (Al-Krenawi et al., 2006).

Therefore, the women refugees' exposure to IPV prior to and following their migration can be considered one of the factors influencing the women's health and can shape their ability to integrate into British society. These findings from my study are supported by recent research (Phillimore, Pertek, and Alidou, 2018) in which the authors examined the impacts of gender-based violence on refugees' ability to integrate by using the Ager and Strang (2008) integration framework. These authors

¹ Specific safeguarding issue was dealt with see 6.7.3.

concluded that via a variety of distal effects (such as physical, psychological, reproductive problems), and proximal impacts (such as being unable to access treatment for a psychological health problem, poverty, inadequate housing and uncertain legal status) survivors of gender-based abuse can find it difficult to resettle and integrate into the host community (Phillimore, Pertek and Alidou, 2018). While the value of receiving support and psychological treatment is well reported (Miller and Rasmussen, 2010; Keygnaert et al., 2012; Phillimore, Pertek and Alidou, 2018), research in the UK revealed that many women refugees are not willing to disclose domestic violence (Baillot and Connelly, 2018), and in my study, several factors were highlighted by the participants as a hindrance to disclosing IPV and seeking help, which is discussed below.

Barriers to the disclosure of violence:

After periods of war and displacement, IPV often remains unreported, and throughout my research, it was evident from the comment by Sama that she remained a victim of violence for years after her migration into the UK. During the interview, she reflected on factors that prevented her from reporting this abusive behaviour to the authorities. For instance, Sama reflected on how being unfamiliar with her new environment, and lack of knowledge about the legal systems, and her rights in the UK, all prevented her getting help and left her more vulnerable to further emotional abuse:

He locked me out of a house every day and I didn't know how to get help. One day my husband took me to the police station, I thought I would be imprisoned, I kept crying and begging my husband that sorry, sorry, it was my bad, I won't do it again, please don't put me in prison. I was like a kid and did not know anything about my rights in the UK. I thought anyone who brought to the police station would be captured and imprisoned, same situation as Afghanistan. (Sama)

Sama, furthermore, raised concerns as to how her experience of depression might be used against her by the authorities, and she was worried that the custody of her child might be given to her husband if her mental health was to deteriorate:

Even if I bring a baby because I have depression, if I face any problem with my husband, they get the child from me and give it to him because I have a history of depression. Sometimes I think about it and I find it that would be more difficult than not having a baby. (Sama)

The comments by Sama highlighted her distrust of the UK authorities, and it is possible that Sama also felt anxiety because of her previous negative experience of Afghan authorities in relation to protecting her against her husband's violence during her years living in Afghanistan (see 5.2.1). Another reason that made Sama worried could be due to the Afghan cultural norms that make a father the guardian of children (UNAMA, 2015). Sama's comments suggest that a woman's decisions to remain silent about their abusive situation may stem from the failed past attempts to address their abusive relationships and the lack of legal protections in Afghanistan, as well their limited understanding of their legal rights in the UK.

In addition to the lack of prior knowledge of applicable women rights and laws in the UK, being financially dependent on her partner and the fear of experiencing homelessness and destitution is another reason that hindered Sama to report the abuse:

I have been told to get divorce and leave my husband, but, because I am alone here, the support that I receive is just from my husband, I can't find it anywhere else. (Sama)

The accounts revealed the persistence of violence and abusive behaviour against some of the Afghan women in the UK, and my findings highlight that the women felt that they were unable to leave their abusive relationship.

Research suggests that even though, under the principle of international human rights (UNHCR, 2011), the defence of refugee women is the responsibility of all states in the Global North, they face many barriers to integration, including the fears of losing children custody, being dependant on the partner for money or immigration status discouraged refugee survivors of domestic violence from either officially reporting abuse or seeking separation (Burnett and Fassir, 2012; Parish, 2017). Similarly, my research findings illustrated that some refugee women face additional barriers,

including the language barrier, lack of information about the UK justice system, and fear of sending back to their home country, that prevented them from seeking assistance and early intervention in the host country. It could suggest that these barriers could lead perpetrators to use this fear as a mechanism to isolate and dominate women and potentially make them more vulnerable to remaining or returning to an abusive situation.

Sama also reflected on the importance of society's intervention in domestic violence situations. She recalled that, although her voice was loud enough to be heard by the neighbours, no one got involved until the situation escalated to suicidal action and someone witnessed this and called the police. Moreover, she reported that since the day the police intervened, her husband's behaviour had changed, and the violence lessened (but not stopped):

Then, police came and asked about the problem. I cried a lot, I was awful, and that was a day that my husband changed, and his behaviour got better. (Sama)

Sama's account indicated the importance of early intervention, and this finding is consistent with a report by Parker (2015), who emphasised the role of civil society, particularly friends, colleagues, or neighbours, in more formal support, both to recognise abuse earlier and to act as a bridge to specialist services. In his report, Parker (2015) suggested that victims can struggle to tell anyone about the abuse without others engagement, which is more apparent among specific ethnic groups and immigrants for whom domestic abuse is considered a 'normal' feature of relationships (Parker, 2015).

The data from the interview with Sama revealed the influence of some post-migration factors that increased intra-familial conflict. These factors included the lack of English language proficiency, inadequate knowledge of the UK criminal justice, and financial dependency on the partner following the arrival into the UK. Many theorists have looked at the various ways in which the absence of host-country language skills may impact life for women refugees. For example, according to Bui and Morash (1999), many immigrant women's lack of language skills is an obstacle to reaching and

addressing their needs to community service agencies, as well as finding defence from their attackers by criminal justice.

However, in the absence of host-country language skills, some women become adept at networking informally in their communities; they manage to access information and services, often independent from their male partners (Menjivar, 2000). These women began to realise a greater understanding of their rights as they spend more time in the host country. Furthermore, as Menjivar (2002) argued, language can break barriers for immigrant women in domestic violence situations since women's language proficiency can reduce the perpetrator's ability to reinforce his power to control.

Moreover, a study conducted among Hindu Asian Indian women in the United States demonstrated the ability to speak the host country's language does not always lead to an improvement in IPV situations (Mehrotra, 1999). This study by Mehrotra revealed that language proficiency might exacerbate the abusive behaviour since male control and orthodox gender roles are contested. While the evidence on language remains unclear, my research indicates that language skills exert greater influence when combined with other limiting conditions, such as isolation, economic dependency on a partner, and lack of legal status awareness. The findings from my study further show that many Afghan women suffer from social isolation and when it is compounded with a feeling of powerless, and clearly, this has the potential to have grave (and possibly fatal) results.

Moreover, a number of studies documented situations where men have used the women's immigrant status to reinforce their control and have abusive strategies (Mama 1993; Nayaran, 1995; Menjivar and Salcido, 2002). Clearly, the issues of isolation can become more acute in cases when some of the men coerce a woman to remain in a subordinated role, even when they are living in Western countries and have more rights. In these situations, the woman is often on her own in a foreign country without any family support, which increases her vulnerability and isolation. Women's IPV experiences are often exacerbated by their specific position as immigrants, such as limited host-language skills, lack of contact with family and community, uncertain legal statuses, and previous experiences with authorities in their origin countries (Menjivar and Salcido, 2002).

Shifts in gender role identity are another well-documented facet of refugee life and have been identified as critical to understanding the experiences of refugees in societies (Camino and Krulfeld, 1994). These shifts typically occur as a result of environmental pressures in the host country to adapt gender roles in order to survive economically or socially. On a positive note, some studies have observed that employment can increase women's bargaining power and control over resources, which can be a basis for more personal freedom and egalitarian relationships within the home (Safa, 1995). However, other studies have demonstrated that participation in the labour force does not always result in women's high status or a decrease in domestic violence (Menjivar, 1999). Although sometimes, the new financial power that a woman can experience may lead her to seek alternatives to the expected strict submission to her husband's authority (Kudat, 1982). The authority of the husband is further threatened when he remains at home, or his job is unstable (Menjivar, 1999). Thus, conflict may be the result of a women's greater independence and may lead to an increase in rates of violence. Therefore, as Menjivar stated (2002), employment does not necessarily lead to an advantage in domestic violence situations because women's employment does not happen in isolation from sociocultural and gender ideologies and structural constraints in the contexts where the women live.

My research findings provide insights into the fact that some refugee women can be in vulnerable situations because UK family reunification laws tend to make refugee women rely on their partners as they are sponsors for obtaining legal status. From the interview with Sama, it is evident that failure to report abuse could stem from her fear of their partner's finding out and her own legal status being jeopardised. This situation becomes acute among refugee women because, as Morrison, Guruge and Snarr (1999) pointed out, a husband who has sponsored his wife from a war-torn country can hold untold power over that woman. Additionally, my study indicates a strong tendency on the part of women to accept some degree of conflict (potentially involving physical violence) within their family and marital relationships due to economic hardship and dependency on the partner. For example, when Sama spoke of persistence conflicts, she prefaced the story with comments such as "I am alone here, the support that I receive is just from my husband, I can't find it anywhere else". Such comment raises essential questions about the kind of conflict that is viewed as acceptable as the abuser

is the primary source of income. This situation exacerbated when women either do not speak the language or do not know their legal rights.

The finding from my study also points to several areas in which the civil society's response to evidence of conflict could be improved. Sama's comment indicated that, while the conflict was loud enough to be heard by the close neighbours, many felt helpless and unwilling to ask Sama about the conflict in her home or report the violence to the authorities. Taken together with the findings from my study and these theoretical perspectives, I believe that refugee women's acceptance of day-to-day conflict should be the starting premise of further work, especially intervention activities and educational programs that can respond sensitively to this kind of acceptance.

8.2.5 Pervasiveness of patriarchy

My findings indicate that the pervasiveness of Afghan patriarchal culture imposes social and cultural norms that contribute to some Afghan women's marginalisation in the host country. In regard to this, Jasmina explained that in spite of taking responsibility for the security of her children in Afghanistan for eight years in the absence of her partner and the hope of moving into a safe country, she encountered the pervasiveness of patriarchal Afghan culture following her arrival into the UK:

Whatever his father says he accepts, now that his dad died last year, my husband is much better than before. Because I even had to cover my face when I go out, since his dad died, I was able to remove this off my face, I got free. (Jasmina)

The persistent structure of gender inequality and the concept of patriarchy was apparent in the above quote and illustrated that male members of the family often controlled some Afghan women's agency and movement, and my findings suggest that this was more pertinent among Pashtuns. Jasmina, a woman who had been a victim of forced and polygamous marriage, explained how she had experienced the sense of freedom after the death of her father-in-law, who forced her to wear a veil, 'borgha', in public places in the UK against her will. For many women, like Jasmina, wearing borgha is a symbol of patriarchy and as a symbolic garment of the Taliban

repression of women. However, wearing the veil is often more complex, as, for some Afghan women, it relates to their religious custom and remaining in traditional value of purdah in the Middle East and South Asia, where it is predated Islam and set gender boundaries for men and women (Murray, 2012). While some Afghan women are often oppressed by patriarchy in their home country (e.g., forced marriage, deprivation of education, restricted mobility) (Rostami-Pavey, 2003), the interviews with the women in this study illustrated that it is not usual for some women to occupy dual roles of oppressed and oppressor following their migration. For instance, Sama shared the experience of how her friend had betrayed her trust by recording her voice and sharing the contents of it with her husband. In this conversation, Sama spoke about the abuse she was being subjected to by her husband:

I had a friend whose husband was a friend of my husband. One day I talked with her about the problem that I had with my husband, she recorded my voice and reported it to my husband. (Sama)

In her comments, Sama explained this led to further conflict and problems at home, and that was the time she decided not to disclose the abuse:

It caused me more problems, and since then I never told anyone about what I was suffering from, what problems I had faced with my abusive husband. (Sama)

My findings show that despite the fact that the women had more legal rights in the UK, some of the participants in this study had similar experiences of repressions, abuse and control as they did in Afghanistan and significantly, this oppression originated from the men and the women in the family, and as the quote by Sama indicates, even women outside of the family could not always be trusted. This suggests that patriarchal values seem to have been internalised by many Afghan women in the family.

It may be challenging to account for this female-to-female abuse, but as Kandiyoti (1988) argues, it appears that some women have learnt to use patriarchal power to secure a privileged position for themselves, and this may make room to escape their own oppression by becoming an oppressor. My research indicates that some Afghan

women have become the oppressor as well as the oppressed in their home country (see chapter 5.2.3), and in some cases, this continues into the host nation. As Sama's commented:

It is still difficult for me to trust Afghan women here, in Afghanistan ethnic groups cannot get along well and even women are not nice to each other, they have feeling of hatred and try to take revenge on others. (Sama)

Her words illustrated a lack of trust in their networks of a friend with the co-ethnic group. Hynes (2003) suggests the consequences of mistrust can be severe and prevent the establishment and maintenance of social support network and a critical factor in refugee women's social isolation.

Similarly, another participant in this study talked about her experience as a victim of polygamous marriage and female-to-female violence. During the interview, Jasmina pointed out that the problem was not sorted out thoroughly by her migration to the UK, as the first wife attempted to provoke her husband on abusive behaviour against her:

There is a rival wife in my life, she intervenes a lot. Before I married, my husband married this woman, then she kept saying my husband that now that your new wife came to London, you have to treat her as you treated me. For example, my husband didn't take her children to school, so she told my husband not to take my children to school. She was forced by my husband to cover her face, so she told my husband that you should force your new wife to cover her face too. (Jasmina)

Polygamous marriage, as Jasmina explained, has the potential to put new wives and their children into abusive situations that earlier wives could instigate. The collusion of women with patriarchal culture has been seen in other contexts; for example, Hassouneh-Phillips (2001) interviewed American Muslim women and found that there was unequal treatment of wives and that the co-wives were often perpetrators of abuse (as well as witnessing abuse).

Furthermore, my study's findings highlight the fact that oppression of some women or the concept of patriarchy is multi-layered and as it operates at the level of the state, but it has also bloomed and enacted at an individual level and reproduces itself by spreading through relationships. Some gender and migration's theorists, such as Pessar and Mahler (2003), argue that gender and power relation spreads globally; however, they are not distributed evenly. Similarly, Parrenas (2008) suggests that many women move between patriarchal cultures, and although it may pose some barriers to their autonomy in the host country, it may also bring them possible new chances to get additional power.

In the following section, I will look into the language barriers that the women faced and their further impact on women refugees' integration.

8.3 Language barriers

Language and cultural knowledge are important factors that facilitate women refugees' access to services and engagement with the host community (Home Office, 2019). In spite of a lack of background education amongst Afghan women, there was a strong consensus amongst participants about the importance of understanding English in providing support to their children in the host country. During the interview, Sumbul and Tabaan commented that improving their English language and educational level would enable them to be a more effective parent in regards to helping their children with their schoolwork:

Lack of understanding English language is one of the problems amongst Afghan people, but we need to learn for the sake of ourselves and our children. Sometimes my children needed some help with their homework, all these related to English language and it's really important for me as a mother to know English. (Sumbul)

I wanted to learn English to help my kids with their homework. (Tabaan)

The women expressed difficulty in engaging in their children's education and supporting them with their homework. The language barrier was also an issue as interpreters were not available in the school, and this meant that it was difficult for mothers who had no ways of communicating with their children's teachers. For instance, Jasmina reported that she had not been able to communicate effectively with a teacher, and she did not understand what the teacher requested from her about her child; thus, she had to wait until her husband contacted the school:

I faced many problems. I took children to school and the teacher said they need a 'PE' kit, or a word like that, and I didn't understand what she was talking about. (Jasmina)

Sumbul and Afsoon also shared their concerns about their children's security and safety during the time they access the internet and social media. They explained that not being able to understand the English language prevented them from protecting and disciplining their children effectively:

Because when our children attend school, we have to understand many things, like online homework, games and other ways of socializing with people through internet. It is really dangerous because kids need to be supervised by parents. (Sumbul)

I had language problem a lot, my youngest child came here when he was 16, the age that she needed more supervising. My daughters, too. There were many problems, I had to look after and supervise my children until my husband come to the UK and join us. (Afsoon)

Furthermore, the accounts from the participants show the same concerns amongst all Afghan women about their lack of knowledge in the English language upon their arrival into the UK, which resulted in inhibited effectiveness in their communication with health professionals. For instance, Nahal narrated that the communicational barrier with her healthcare providers had led to miss follow-up appointment that functioned to worsen her mental health situation:

I was referred to a psychologist. I received a letter and voicemail, but because I couldn't understand English, I missed my appointments. (Nahal)

Follow on from the point raised above, Sumbul commented on the importance of being able to communicate with professionals during an emergency situation:

When we go to a doctor, I mean, when emergency happens, we should know English, then we are able to deal with it. (Sumbul)

The comment by Sumbul illustrated the importance of direct and effective communication with healthcare providers, and language barriers, therefore, could be an inhibitor factor for women refugees to access support and treatment for a psychological health problem. Owing to the language barrier, Morsal and Firouzeh explained that they had to rely on their husbands for clinical interpreting:

I never go anywhere without my husband. For example, he comes with me for appointment with doctor. (Morsal)

I had to ask my husband to book me an appointment with GP. (Firouzeh)

The women's narratives clearly illustrated that they value education; however, the poor English language, evident in the majority of participants' accounts, caused women to remain dependent on their husband or other people in many areas, including communication with health professionals and clearly, if they are experiencing IPV they would not be able to disclose this to health professionals.

In seeking a resolution to language barriers, many health care professionals seek the use of an interpreter, although clearly, there are risks of using family members as interpreters, and it is argued that being dependent on others for translation in healthcare services could be disempowering and pose a barrier to privacy and trust between the doctor and the patient, and this may result in negative emotional impacts such as anxiety, discomfort and embarrassment for the patients (Patel, 2003). In

addition to that, family members may impart their own attitudes, judgements and feelings within the interpretation and negatively impact the communication between the clinician and the patient (Dias and O'Neill, 1998; Flores, 2003; Nies, 2016).

Moreover, research suggests that a reliance on family members as an interpreter is clinically unsafe and may harm patients since some medical information may be of a sensitive nature, particularly about mental or sexual health, and family interpreters may misinterpret or distort some concepts (Blake, 2003). While there are important ethical reasons to ensure adequate access to professional interpreters for limited English proficient patients is available, some have argued that using family members to serve as interpreters can be preferable to professional interpreters in some context. For example, a previous study reported that while physicians are concerned about using family interpreter, most patients are satisfied with and find comfort in their families' assistance (Kue and Fagan, 1999). Research by Flores et al. (2003) revealed that untrained interpreters, such as family members, make fewer fluency errors (such as using the incorrect word) than trained interpreters. Others pointed out that depending on intimates, interpretation does not necessarily violate patients' rights and wellbeing since familial relationships are often integral in preserving patients' identity and promoting their agency in the clinical setting (Ho, 2008).

While some women may prefer to have family members rather than professional interpreter, it is worth noting that family interpreters' involvement may negatively affect the family dynamic and the patient's wellbeing. Findings from my study demonstrate that some Afghan women were victims of IVP at home, and this is especially concerning in cases where partners accompany the women to medical appointments as there is the possibility that men could exert more power if they are in a position of being the interpreter for their wife in a given setting. Thus, there is reason to challenge the assumption of using family members as interpreters in clinical settings since this violates the women's confidentiality and autonomy and may prevent women to report abusive behaviour to the health professionals and seek further help. Furthermore, the ability to communicate effectively is considered a critical factor in employment (Baird, 2012), and several women in my study emphasised their willingness to learn the language in order to access employment. For instance, Jasmina reported:

If I knew English a little bit, I could work during the time that my children were at nursery. (Jasmina)

Zuha stated:

I didn't know English. I wanted to join for a course to learn English language and continue my education to be able to find a job which is beneficial for British society, for myself and for my children. (Zuha)

Tabaan also explained that she looked to find English speakers to socialise with them in order to improve her language skills:

There was a language problem, but I was trying to learn to be able to help my husband at work, I tried to go to the park with my aunt to find an English speaker person who can talk to me I can learn English by chatting with them. (Tabaan)

The findings from my study show that poor language skills have been recognised as an obstacle that keeps women from using their full potential as successful participants in the workforce -especially during their initial resettlement period- and leaves them, dependant on the male members of a family. As previous research has shown, skill training in employment or the new language is crucial to long-term integration, and could empower women refugees if it makes women more self-sufficient (Van Raemdonck, 2019). Other studies have also highlighted how the absence of language skills restricts access to health and increases material insecurities, such as housing and employment (Casimiro et al., 2007) and social isolation (Deacon and Sullivan, 2009). Similar concerns were also discussed in the research by Chung, Hong and Newbold (2013), in which they highlighted that access to the language of the host community, and being able to obtain employment, can strengthen women refugees' sense of belonging to the community and their independence from the family background.

Furthermore, the participants' comments in my study demonstrated that the lack of language skills led many Afghan women to live in isolation from the rest of their local communities. For example, Sumbul commented:

I didn't know English language, so I was unable to socialise with neighbours and other people. (Sumbul)

Similar concerns raised by Asal:

I didn't know English, so I always stayed at home, being alone. (Asal)

There was evidence that some participants in this study were unable to establish a social relationship with people living in the same neighbourhood due to the language barrier, which resulted in a feeling of loneliness and isolation, and these experiences are not unique, as a report by World Health Organisation (2018) has highlighted that the risk of social isolation intensifies feelings of depression and hopelessness amongst refugees and migrants.

My research findings showed that while Afghan women refugees were concerned with how their lack of English abilities limited their employment prospects, they did not express that as their primary concern. One of the main problems for the women was their lack of access to essential information like how to schedule doctor's appointment and communicate with doctors if they become sick, or their inability to speak with service providers for gaining access to necessary information or for expressing their own needs to get help. Linguistically isolated refugee women develop weak ties to bilingual co-nationals who had been settled in the UK for a longer time to assist them with additional resources and social support. When the women could not communicate with organisations tasked with assisting them, they could not effectively communicate their needs. Bourdieu (1991) points out that the power of language consists not only of the ability to communicate but also of the ability to advocate for oneself through verbal interaction. Giving voice to refugees is an act of power, and the Afghan women felt upset by the absence of power to speak and be heard.

The findings from my study show that a lack of linguistic skills inhibits the possibility of building social capital within British society, which can introduce uncertainty in Afghan refugee women's lives and that this may also be a source of anxiety. From the interviews with the participants, it is evident that even speaking English could help the women to access information that could be important for their settlement and might

help some of the women to recognise that they have rights in the UK, and this might facilitate the women to seek help for IPV and other forms of abuse by family members. Thus, my study reveals some of the barriers that the women refugees experienced are interconnected and often negatively reinforce each other, thus hindering their progress of integration. Indeed, my findings show that all participants were aware of the importance of being able to speak English. However, not all of them were able to access sufficient English language lessons, and women in this study provided a wealth of information concerning a number of hindrances to accessing English language courses upon their arrival into the UK. In the following, I discuss some of the other obstacles that the women faced in accessing education in the UK and examining how cultural demands and certain gender roles have influenced women access to education services. I also discuss how the problems associate with the current UK integration policy impacted Afghan women in their pursuit of education.

8.3.1 The main obstacles to access to education

Structural/Policy Barriers:

During the interview, I found out that some of the women had been unable to attend language courses after their arrival to the UK. When I asked whether they ever attempted to improve their English language, some of them reported that they did not know about these services, and no one had given them information or advice on language training centres available for refugees. For example, Asal commented:

I didn't know about any available language courses for refugees. When my children born, the midwife came, and we talked but they didn't say about any community centres. It would be great and helpful to learn language if they would have told me. (Asal)

Firouzeh raised the same concern:

I didn't know about any language courses until one of my friends introduced this refugee organisation to me. I came here and talk with

Mrs F. She helped me a lot, and now it is about a year and half that I study here. (Firouzeh)

These findings illustrate the lack of knowledge about the possible support and advice around educational services available for women refugees. This account is consistent with findings from a previous study by Sim and Gow (2008), which highlighted the importance of providing sufficient information and education in other areas of refugees' life in the UK, including the educational system, that needs to be continually revisited.

My findings are also supported by previous studies, such as Cheung and Phillimore (2017), who conducted a longitudinal survey on refugees in the UK to examine the factors associated with integration outcomes. The authors found significant gender differences in language fluency and literacy, with women generally faring worse than men upon their arrival in the UK. The authors also found significant gender differences in participation in language training course following obtaining refugee status. Despite having poorer English language competency than men, women were less likely to attend English courses upon their arrival, particularly among women refugees with dependant's children. However, their research indicated that fluency and literacy improved over time, and a higher proportion of women (with women's rate 8 per cent higher than men) were in education or training after 21 months of their initial settlement.

Explanations emerging from an earlier study by Dumper (2002) pointed to the factors including an unaffordable provision, problem fitting classes around school hours, the absence of single-sex classes and lack of confidence about enrolling into formal education. While the importance of accessing education upon the arrival of refugee women is documented with previous research, my research shows that many refugee women face barriers in access to education and language training, and this could result in the fall of government funding for ESOL classes during the last decade (Refugee Action, 2019), which has left many refugees unable to improve their language skills.

Resource Barriers:

Lack of childcare support was identified as another reason that inhibited the Afghan women from attending English courses. For example, Zuha was a medical student in Afghanistan who wished to continue her education further in the UK, explained how having responsibility for looking after her two children prevented her from doing so:

I wanted to join for the course, but I had to look after my children at home, as there was no one to help us, until the time my children grew up and went to school. Again, I was unable to attend college, because I had to drop my youngest child to the nursery and drop the other children to another schools, in short, I had to travel 6 times during a day, so, it was difficult for me to get to college on time. (Zuha)

Zuha complained that she was unable to attend English classes on time as she had to pick up her children from different schools, which prevented her from learning English and educating herself as she desired. As a result, she dropped out of her studies until the age of 45, when she willingly started to learn from the beginning:

I had to start learning at this age. If I had the chance at that time, it was good for me because I would be a doctor now and I could have a job which was beneficial for British society and for myself and for my children. This is really hard for me and for my children and now at the age of 45, I came to study. (Zuha)

Zuha referred to her poor language skills and the importance that this could play in achieving her aspiration as being a doctor. She terminated her quote with a powerful statement of “now at the age of 45, I come to study”, which is indicative of the strength and resilience; despite the incredibly awful experiences she had faced in all stages of her migration, she is still fighting for positive change.

Cultural Barriers:

Apart from the difficulty some participants encountered in accessing information about available language courses for refugees and lack of childcare support, women refugees may face additional cultural barriers to accessing educational program. For example, a few women raised the issue of Afghan cultural norms and gender roles, which leaves women with the responsibility of domestic work, childcare, and food provision, and this can act as a hindrance to their desire to learn. Asal and Zuha respectively reported:

I couldn't go to the college because of the kids. My husband went to work, and I had to stay at home and look after kids. (Asal)

I was interested to learn English language and I wanted to join for a course, but I was the person responsible for the kids. (Zuha)

Asal reported that when she found out about a free English course on TV, she did not have enough courage to talk about it with her husband because Afghan women are expected to remain on their assigned gender roles of domesticity and childcare, which limits what they can and cannot do:

One day, by chance, I saw an advertisement on TV about a free English language course. I was thinking to talk about it with my husband, but I didn't have enough courage. I believed that this is a subject that should be offered to me by my husband. It's a kind of habit. (Asal)

The statements by some of the women in my study indicate that often an Afghan women's decision to pursue their education was limited by their cultural/ethnic demand and gender positioning, and this finding is supported by previous research that shows that refugee women often do not have time to spend to re-educate themselves because of the time spent for family care duties (Karlsson and Mansory, 2007). In some rural areas of Afghanistan and within different ethnic groups, attitudes toward education are not the same, and as a result, some families may prevent their daughters to access education, and this is because they fear that the girls may become alienated

from their traditional lifestyles and values of good wives and mother (UNESCO, 2002), and this study illustrated that some partners might use this in the UK as a way of maintaining control.

Furthermore, as early marriage is a social norm in Afghanistan, women's participation in education decreases because of their domestic responsibilities and motherhood (Shayan 2015). In a traditional Afghan culture, a woman is not considered free, and most women do not live independent but are seen in relation to their position within the family, as the wife and a daughter of her father. Moreover, as I suggested in chapter three, fathers and husbands are, in many cases, the first person with the power to decide whether to allow girls to have access to education (Haqmal, 2012).

Discussions in the literature review (chapter three) have shown that patriarchal Afghan society confined women and girls to a subordinated position with no agency (Sultana, 2010). This was reinforced by traditional Afghan norms that restricted women and girls' access to education and thought women to submit to men's authority (Reddy, 2014). This finding was echoed by one of the participants, Sumbul, who reported that her husband forced her to take responsibility for looking after her elderly in-laws and prevented her from attending an English language course for five years since her arrival in the UK:

I wanted to learn English from the first year I came here, at that time I was too young, like 17 or 18. I could go to university and continue my study, but I didn't because I wasn't allowed by my husband. There were some problems at home that I had to deal with, my in-laws were old, and I was responsible looking after them. I didn't have children for 4 years, well, I could have attended English course during those years, but because of my in-laws I couldn't. (Sumbul)

The women's stories in my research demonstrate the factors that constrained women's access to education during their settlement in the host country and reveal how Afghan patriarchal culture and traditional gender role often affect their ability to improve their language skills and integrate effectively. For these participants, going out of their traditionally assigned domesticity may be considered a breach of obligation.

Moreover, as Kalunta-Crumpton (2018) argues, in some cases, it is the strategy of abusive partners to prevent the women from attending language courses in order to retain them isolated and unable to interact with the host community to seek help. Therefore, my findings suggest that the settlement experiences of Afghan women in the host country are often embedded in women's cultural background that required them to prioritise familial obligations.

The interviews with Afghan women who participated in my study revealed the challenges they faced with education in their home country (see 7.4.1), and their accounts show that these challenges did not ease once they arrived in the UK. This finding is consistent with previous studies that pointed to barriers, such as poor English language, as one of the main challenges that newcomers experience during their resettlement (Yoon and Langrehr, 2010; Bemak and Chung, 2017; Refugee Action, 2019).

The UK government has developed a strategy for refugee integration, and this identifies language as one of the facilitators that enhance refugee's chances of gaining access to employment and contributes to their integration into British society (Home Office, 2019). However, the analysis of the participants' accounts revealed that there are additional factors -including limited knowledge of available educational services in the UK, traditional Afghan culture that restricts women to stay at home bearing children and doing house chores, alongside the lack of childcare support- that keep Afghan women uneducated against their desire to learn English language. This finding concurs with a Refugee Action (2019) research, which has identified that the government cuts in funding for ESOL classes as a most important barrier to provide high-quality English language lessons that effectively meet women refugees' specific needs.

8.4 Chapter summary

In this chapter, I have presented some of the Afghan refugee women's challenges following their arrival in the UK and the impact of these experiences on their mental health and their integration into British society.

Although they were glad to be away from the physical insecurity that had been a feature of their home country's lives for many years, the women found their integration into the UK a stressful experience. The finding from my study illustrated that the women had experienced a number of post-migration stressors, including forced separation from family members, IPV, and pervasiveness of patriarchy. The women reported sadness and an overwhelming sense of loneliness since they had left their families behind without information on their wellbeing and the realisation that they might never see either their family or country again. In addition, some women faced the barriers to integration which were structurally imposed and this link directly to their asylum process, including insecurity, stress and the fear of involuntary repatriation, housing-related issues, and difficulty in improving language skills.

Most of the women shared similar concerns about housing-related issues, which ultimately affected their health and subsequently impacted their ability to integrate. Except for those women who came to the UK as a family reunion, nearly all the women talked about feeling isolated and depressed, and they linked this to their experiences of being dispersed into the areas far away from their family and co-ethnic community in the UK, which resulted in later movements to other cities. Furthermore, my findings revealed the influence of structural barriers to integration, including the lack of provision of English language training, and adequate financial support in asylum system, seemed to increase women's dependency on their male partner and leave them more vulnerable to the experience of IPV.

One of the significant findings from my research was that these post-migration stressors were compounded by the pervasiveness of patriarchal Afghan culture that had a lasting impact on Afghan women's mental and physical health. The stories of women revealed that the experiences of oppression, violence, and abuse were most evident among many of the Pashtuns, and this originated not only from the men but also from the women in the family, which continues following arrival into the UK. Whilst every Afghan woman told a story that was unique to them, they all stressed the challenges they faced because of language barriers. Problems of communication were the main difficulty that most of them experienced in their day-to-day lives. The women admitted that not being able to speak English made it difficult for them to integrate, and they found it hard to do things without support from family members or friends.

For those women who arrived without their husbands, lack of family connections or other networks of support in the UK left them struggling to rear their children and cope with the demands of being solely responsible for running their homes. In addition to the lack of childcare facilities, the Afghan cultural norm, which requires women to adhere to their domestic responsibilities and motherhood, prevents many women from accessing education in the UK.

In the next chapter, I draw on my findings to examine some of the factors that facilitate Afghan women's integration into British society.

Chapter Nine

Findings

Afghan Women's Post-Migration Experiences in the UK: Enablers to Integration

9.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the 'Enablers to Integration', namely factors that facilitated Afghan women's successful integration into British society. In this chapter, I discuss the development of social relationships and a journey of resilience as the main themes that emerged from my data.

As discussed in chapter eight, many Afghan women refugees indicated that they had experienced unprecedented post-migration challenges, including housing-related issues, lack of fluency in the English language and pervasiveness of Afghan patriarchal culture, which all contributed to the prevalence of mental distress/illness and these intersecting factors hindered their successful integration into the British society. During the interview, however, some participants talked about how they employed various strategies to cope with their new ways of life in the face of extreme vulnerability in situations of forced displacement. Therefore, this chapter focuses on the enablers contributing to Afghan women's positive integration in the UK.

9.2 Development of social relationship

Despite the many challenges that the Afghan women experienced, many of them suggested that the development of social relationships was commonly used as strategies that helped them maintain equilibrium and fostered the adaptation into British society.

9.2.1 Support from family

Other authors have argued that the strongest ties are formed between people who identify most closely with each other, such as family relationships (DeLamater, 2006). From some of the women's testimonies in my research, I found that much of their social interaction had been with their immediate family, and although this was often restrictive (see chapter eight) although for some of the women, there were also benefits. For example, Farzaneh and Taban talked about Afghan culture and the importance of family:

Afghans prefer to hang around with their family members more than friends. (Farzaneh)

We don't have many friends. There is our family that we are in touch with them most of the time. (Tabaan)

In my study, some participants reflected on the benefit of having family members living in the UK from whom they were able to interact and sometimes receive support and help. For instance, Nahal talked about the financial support that was offered to her by her niece to secure appropriate housing in London:

My niece is a very nice and compassionate girl, God bless her, she found me a house in London and said to me; 'dear aunt, I will pay the deposit for you and you can return the money whenever you got your benefit, there is no problem'. (Nahal)

Appreciation for emotional support from close family members was further highlighted in the comment by Hoda:

Thank God, three of my brothers and my mother live here. So, I have a big family here. I have many relatives here and I get many emotional supports and help from them. (Hoda)

Sumbul also reported having had a positive experience in receiving support from her in-laws, particularly in relation to providing her information about organisations for women refugees:

My husband family was living here, so they sometimes invited us or came to our house, my sister-in-law also introduced this refugee centre to me. (Sumbul)

During the interview, Farzaneh also talked about the support she received from her husband:

I study alongside my children and my husband support and encourage me to go and study and get a university degree, so my husband stays at home and look after our daughter, so I am able to come here [the refugee organisation]. (Farzaneh)

Some women refugees came to the UK with other family members. In contrast, others had relatives who already lived in the UK, and these women reported that accessing family members immediately after their arrival were important during their early integration process. Through the comments above, it is evident that family was considered a major social network and a link to their Afghan culture, and it is not surprising that many participants in my study described receiving emotional and practical support primarily from their family members. This highlighted that some of the women refugees benefited from having strong ties such as family members and Putnam, (2000) describes relationships such as bonding social capital. Bonding social capital refers to the strong relationships that develop between people of similar background and interest, usually include family and friends (Putnam, 2000). For some of the women, this offered them access to social activities and knowledge on British culture, and it also allowed them to navigate the new life in the host country. This kinds of connection with family and friends, may contribute to the well-being of some Afghan refugee women through receiving the emotional as well as practical support, which may be conducive to their successful integration. These findings are consistent with findings resulting from a study by Gericke et al. (2018), in which they found that different types of social capital, including bonding and bridging, may provide further

support for the development of successful integration. In the study, the authors suggested that refugees who have access to bonding social capital can provide different forms of support during the integration process.

While other research has been conducted on social capital and its positive impact on the integration process (see, for example, Cheung and Phillimore, 2014), my research generated inconsistent findings and suggested that it is too simplistic to consider that all family relationships (bonding social capital) are supportive and facilitates successful integration. Listening to the account by some participants create a complex reading of the women's relationships with their families, and it also indicated that not all of the Afghan women were fortunate enough to receive support from their intimate family members following their migration to the UK (see 8.2.4 and 8.2.5).

9.2.2 Support from friends

The development of trust and supportive relationships amongst some Afghan women with their co-ethnic group was also identified as a positive feature in this study. Building social relationships reduced Afghan refugee women's isolation as Asal reported:

Women when they come from Afghanistan, they are away from their families, like me, they have many problems that prevented them from integration, therefore, they need more support from friends, and this prevents women from loneliness. (Asal)

Those participants who did not experience IPV reported that they benefited from developing a network of friends over time whom they could rely on in different aspects. Morsal, for instance, explained how she had been offered financial support from her Afghan friends:

One time we had problem with paying the rent, so some of our friends lent us some money and we were able to rent this house. (Morsal)

Morsal also talked about receiving support from other Afghan women to overcome her barriers to health and language:

When I have problems at school and I can't understand English, there is dear R., God bless her, she helps me a lot. She is from Afghanistan. When I have an appointment with doctor, she comes with me and helps me. (Morsal)

Follow on the comment raised above, Jasmina talked about the support she received at her son's school:

At first, I didn't know anything, but when I met other Afghan women, they helped me in translating what teacher said to me. (Jasmina)

While Shirin reflected on the stress caused by the refusal of her asylum claim, she also reported the significance of friendships during this time, she reflected:

There were some of my husband's friend who came to our house to visit us, they were Afghan, they kept saying to me don't worry, everything is going to be ok. They supported me emotionally, God bless them, they gave me hope, saying it will be okay. (Shirin)

The above accounts clearly illustrate the role of social networks amongst Afghan women, and some of the women experienced a wealth of support from friends. My findings, therefore, suggested that the Afghan community could be seen as a form of cultural capital, as they often provided emotional support and empowered the newly arrived refugee women to cope effectively with their post-migration concerns and contribute to their integration into a new society. This finding is in line with previous research that illustrated the role of co-nationals in alleviating the burden of distress amongst women refugee by providing opportunities for them to share their experiences with their counterparts (see, for example, Keygnaert, Vettenburg and Temmerman, 2012; Cheung and Phillimore, 2014) and reduce social isolation and mental health issues (Sherwood and Kalifani, 2012; Cheung and Phillimore, 2016).

However, contrary to the previous literature on social capital (i.e., Putnam, 2007), in which the authors argue that social relationship with the co-ethnic group (bonding social capital) could be harmful to integration and lead to social fragmentation, my

analysis suggests that women refugees can benefit from contacts with their co-ethnic groups since this enables them to seek emotional, financial, and informational support from friends who already established in Britain. Thus, my research finding is consistent with some of the findings by Phillimore et al. (2017), in which the authors illustrated that bonding social capital can play a crucial role in migrant integration. However, the findings from my research also revealed that all individuals with the same ethnicity and national background will not always benefit from co-ethnic social relationships. For example, as suggested in the previous chapter, Sama was betrayed by her Afghan friend, owing to the women's collusion with the patriarchal Afghan culture.

Moreover, there may also be conflicts between different minorities from Afghanistan and Fischer (2017) has highlighted a decline of trust amongst many Afghan people due to various markers, including subsequent phases of the war, ethnic descent, political affiliations, and family ties among the Afghan population. Therefore, it is too simplistic to assume that having social ties based on ethnic similarity facilitates successful integration.

9.2.3 Support from a refugee organisation

The participants in this study were introduced to the refugee organisation through their children's schoolteacher, friends, relatives, and staff at local job centres. Listening to the women, it was clear that they faced incredible challenges (including domestic violence, health-related issues, language barriers, lack of financial resources, and unemployment) during their resettlement, and the forced migration difficulties affected their sense of self-esteem and confidence. During the interview, almost all participants agreed that joining the refugee organisation, particularly the women's group, had aided them to improve their self-esteem and confidence. For instance, Sama reported:

I couldn't talk with anyone about my problems but joining to this centre helped me to raise my confidence. Now, I feel I am stronger, at least I am able to tell what problems I have. (Sama)

From the above comment, it is evident that Sama's low self-esteem had a negative impact on her ability to interact with other people, particularly during the time that she needed to speak out about her problems. However, developing social networks through joining the refugee organisation was instrumental in improving her confidence.

Some of the Afghan women in my study reported that they benefited from engagement with the women-specific programme in the refugee organisation. For example, Gulnoor spoke of joining refugee organisation helped her to find her potential and build self-esteem:

I was like a blind person, since I came to this centre, it seems I found myself. (Gulnoor)

Likewise, Firouzeh and Asal reported that their confidence improved since joining the women's group, and this enabled them to contact other people:

Since I came here, I am able to book appointment with my doctor, because before that, I had to ask my husband but now I am able to do it on my own. Now, I am also confident to go out alone for shopping. (Firouzeh)

Joining refugee organisation helped me a lot, I had the same feelings as I am living in Afghanistan. Since joining the group, I got the courage to go out, speak and interact with other people. (Asal)

For Asal, the uniqueness of participating in the refugee organisation was the sense of familiarity and community to her home country. The comments by these participants highlighted the critical role of refugee organisation, especially women's group, in helping Afghan women to adjust to life in the UK through enhancing their confidence, making them feel empowered and part of the society, which helped them to expand and develop a social link with their co-ethnic group.

Zuha commented that joining the refugee organisation had benefited them from interacting with other Afghan women and provided them with the opportunity to meet people from other ethnic groups. She also reflected on the positive impact of this, as it helped her to participate in society, exchange information and reduce her social isolation:

Joining refuge centre stopped me sitting at home, I met many Afghans there, and people from Iran and from other countries. You see people from different cultures, and you are able to talk with them and get information about different things. (Zuha)

The comment by Zuha show that she had minimal contact with people and joining a refugee organisation resulted in her meeting other people both from her own community and the wider population. She stated that this form of relationship helped her overcome and reduce her loneliness and exchange information with other people. Zaha's comment further suggests that participation in the refugee organisation will provide her with more opportunities to engage in social and cultural activities and offer people health-related support as well as access to resources. This finding is consistent with the research by Kirmayar et al. (2011), in which they suggest that the presence of ethnic communities can buffer the effect of migration losses and isolation.

Asal also spoke about her longing to visit others from Afghan communities:

I didn't know English, I couldn't go anywhere, so I was a lone and I always stayed at home, kept thinking if I could find a place with Afghan people to join them. After joining refugee centre, I found many Afghan and Iranian friends. (Asal)

The comment from Asal shows that, far from being a passive victim, she had actively sought opportunities to build networks of connection with Afghan and the wider community.

Since many Afghan women refugees would have lost most of their previous familial and social networks following their migration into the UK, participation in the refugee

organisation created the opportunities for them to meet with other members of their co-ethnic groups, and this was beneficial for some women in terms of reducing social isolation. Furthermore, my findings show that since refugee organisation includes different nationalities gathering with common aims and interests, this has helped promote feelings of belonging for many refugee women. This comes in line with the argument how bridging social capital also plays a role in the wellbeing of the members of the community, as it creates a sense of belonging and engagement that reduce the prevalence of psychological problems (Putnam, 2000), and it contributes to successful integration (Ager and Strang, 2008; Daley, 2009; Elliott and Yusuf, 2014). Therefore, my research findings suggested that joining the refugee organisation was conducive to integration since it could be a link from bonding capital to bridging capital. In other words, ‘bonding social capital leads to the establishment of spaces of encounter, which are essential for the formation of bridging social capital’ (Kindler, Ratcheva and Piechowska, 2015, p.18).

Some participants also described the refugee organisation as a source of emotional support and motivation for life, and this was obvious in the comments by Gulnoor, who recognised that her wellbeing had been positively affected since joining the refugee centre:

Since I introduced to the refugee organisation, there is no more tears, I feel less depressed. (Gulnoor)

This support is important because, as suggested earlier, when women arrive in the UK, some struggle with the trauma they have experienced prior to settlement. Similar to Gulnnor, Nahal shows her appreciation for the emotional and psychological support offered to them by the refugee organisation. Nahal referred to the organisation as ‘her family’, saying that how it helped her to regain her hope and strength:

This organisation was my family, my friend, my mother, my father, and everything to me. God bless all the staff there [at the refugee centre]. The psychologist, she’s a nice person and helped me a lot, told me that I am a strong woman, I have to remain strong to be able to protect my

children. So, they gave me lots of hope and I am really grateful of their kindness. (Nahal)

The comments by Nahal and Gulnoor illustrated that the refugee organisation offered both crucial support and an opportunity to build new networks, and this appeared to help many of the Afghan women refugees overcome some of the emotional and psychological challenges that may prevent them from having successful integration. This finding concurs with previous studies that have highlighted the importance of the role of NGOs (non-governmental organisations) in supporting women refugees who struggle with pre/post-migration trauma upon the arrival into the destination country (Chung, Hong and Newbold, 2013). Joining the refugee centre had helped some of the women in other aspects of their life as well. For instance, Zuha reported:

Joining Refugee Centre helped me to improve my English language and being able to speak with my children school's teacher. (Zuha)

Sama described how joining the refugee organisation for English course had helped her improve her language skills, which had lowered her levels of depression. She also reported other benefits, she explained:

This refugee centre helped me with different things, with learning English language which was really important for me and helped me to reduce my depression. It also helped me to pass 'Life in UK' exam. (Sama)

Likewise, Jasmina explained that her lack of understanding about the UK educational system meant it was difficult for her to support her children when they were doing their homework, however since joining the refugee centre, she was able to receive educational support for her children:

My children have problems doing their homework, for example, maths. There is a homework club for children, so my children come here a lot to get support. (Jasmina)

The account by Jasmina showed how the support networks acted as a buffer to the demands of parents and children with a low level of language skills. As a single woman and asylum seeker, Nahal reported that she was also relying on refugee organisation for financial support:

I was financially in a terrible situation. But I kept receiving help from charities related to this refugee organisation, they always gave me daily expenses. When I was homeless, they booked me a room in a hotel for two nights and then after that they accommodated me in a house for a week, and finally they helped me to get a house. (Nahal)

The experience of Nahal is not uncommon and supports existing research, which suggests that asylum seekers have increasingly been restricted from accessing mainstream welfare benefits in the UK, and more people are relying on friends, family, and community organisations for support, and this is in spite of government assurance that they are adequately supported via the National Asylum Support Service (Myblin and James, 2018).

Nahal explained that the refugee organisation provided other services, including legal advice and rights-based advocacy:

They got me a solicitor. She started the process of reunion to my children. (Nahal)

My findings indicate that refugee organisations can have a significant role in promoting resilience by providing refugee women not only with the resources that they need to resettle in the British society (including English language training, access to psychological services, housing provision, legal and welfare advice, financial and other types of subsistence support), but also with the development of social connections between the women refugees, their co-ethnic community and the wider community. This finding is supported by previous research on the significant role of refugee organisations in enhancing resilience through social networks, education, and encouragement (see, for example, the work of Chung, Hong and Newbold, 2013; Almohamed and Vyas, 2019).

9.3 A journey of resilience

Alongside the dominant rhetoric of the female displaced people as passive victims, there is an alternative discourse of strong, resilient female migrants within the literature (Chung, Hong and Newbold, 2013). Interestingly, in my study, the women show incredible courage and strength in their decision to move on with their lives and deal with difficulties in their new country. During the interviews, most women showed an incredible drive to participate within British society, even prior to the acquisition of legal status, which was reflected in their efforts to learn the English language, gain an education, and obtain employment. For instance, Shirin reported:

Anyone comes to this country, has to try to learn language, no matter if her asylum case is refused. Education is the only way that can help you to stay in a right way. (Shirin)

Shirin believed that education is important and should not be delayed until the asylum claim accepted. Afsoon also emphasised that women need to develop skills to promote independence, she commented:

It is good to work, isn't it? What else can we do? It's better than sitting and waiting to get money from government. It's better for a woman to stand on her feet by working somewhere. (Afsoon)

Notably, the finding from my research suggests that the refugee women did not wait until they had obtained refugee status before starting to participate in civil society. This finding concurs with previous research (see, for example, Losi and Strang, 2008), who have emphasised the process of integration for refugees begins upon their arrival in the host country.

For all participants in my study, as refugee women living in a new social, cultural, linguistic, economic and political environment, there were numerous unfamiliar situations to contend with. Listening to the refugee women, it was clear that despite their past traumatic experiences, many of them were very resilient and worked to

overcome challenges. Women adopted positive thinking as a way of managing their stress by thinking of a positive future. Sama, for instance, reported:

When I went out, I always got lost, wandering for hours and hours until I found the correct bus. Sometimes, I couldn't read the signs, so I took pictures one by one and sent a message to my husband to help me to find my way back home. (Sama)

Another participant similarly shared her enthusiasm to improve her education:

I stay at English class until the end. when I want to book an appointment with my doctor, I try to book days except the days that I have English class, because I am so interested into this course, and I don't want to miss a second of it. (Shirin)

The above quotes illustrate the women resilience, sense of empowerment, optimism, and hope. This finding is consistent with the previous research that pointed to the refugees' resilience characteristics (e.g., personal agency, goal direction, a sense of purpose, and motivation) as protective factors that can support their social integration (Rivera et al., 2016; Kuschminder, 2017) as well as recovering from traumatic and stressful conditions (Ziaian et al., 2012). As Pulvirenti and Mason (2013) suggest, resilience is often said to be about bending, not breaking when facing stress, trauma, and adversity. The authors suggest that the refugee community's support and protection have an important role in enhancing refugees' coping mechanism and smoothing their resettlement process.

The findings of my research have highlighted many of the Afghan women's strengths in the undertaking of their roles and responsibilities as mothers and homemakers, their ability to manage and move on from adversity and sadness in their lives, and their committed and determined pursuit to lead a normal and meaningful life in the UK, particularly for their children sake. Reflecting on my research, I feel that despite learning about the experiences of trauma and repression of these Afghan women, it has also been important to listen to their achievements (as demonstrated below) that might help to contribute towards a reframing of refugee women, not simply as victims

but also as strong, resourceful, and capable women, of managing the challenges of family life in exile. Indeed, the dynamic nature of resilience is demonstrated through the Afghan women's constant re-evaluation of life's daily challenges and opportunities.

Another significant finding was a sense of independence expressed among many of the Afghan refugee women interviewed, especially the women who migrated to the UK without their husbands but came from a culture where guidance and direction in many aspects of their lives had come from the partners. For instance, Zuha reported:

I believe, every person, men and women, have to stand on their own feet and try to educate themselves. We need to be independent now.
(Zuha)

This interview with Zuha revealed that some Afghan women had to live as a single mother and independent from their partner following their migration into the UK, and this was in the context of loss of Afghan traditional extended family support. For some of the women in my study, living in the UK has helped them develop new competencies and confidence in managing family life independently from men. Being independent, therefore, can be seen to underpin the redefining of gender relations, and for Jasmina, life in the UK has meant that independence has given her a new sense of freedom which further reconstructed her identity:

Thank God, here, I am on my own, doing everything I want, praying, raising my children. (Jasmina)

Describing differences in child-rearing practices in Afghanistan, Sumbul could not be more pleased to be in the UK, and she explained how she was enjoying the educational opportunities that she said would never have been available for children in Afghanistan. Sumbul's comment (below) shows how she clearly had to contend with ever-changing circumstances, including managing family support roles, as well as a myriad of other daily life challenges. Her willingness to respond quickly to rapidly changing life circumstances, roles and expectations is a powerful insight into the dynamic nature of resilience as an ongoing process. Sumbul valued her identity as a

mother reporting that it helped her to be strong and staying resilient for the sake of her children:

Now I know what to do, I mean, I decide for myself and my children. I take them to sports club, some things that children are prevented by families in Afghanistan, but children have a right to learn, it is necessary for them to improve their abilities. (Sumbul)

The comments above suggest that many of the women are able to incorporate new possibilities for exercising their strengths and independence in daily life in the UK. Thus, the women had to take a positive approach, make difficult judgements about their parenting in the context of retaining their cultural norms, but also allowing their children to adapt to a new situation in the host country, and respond to their children's needs and contributing towards a better life in the future for them. Goodman (2004) similarly highlights adaptive cognitive processing in refugee youths from Sudan, such as giving new meaning to difficulties and talking about experiences, as well as emerging from hopelessness to hope and having an aspiration for the future as a way of overcoming psychological problems. Thus, my analysis suggests that some women in my study were striving to reconstruct new identities, which certainly appeared to strengthen their resilience to take action to access support if required to rebuild their lives. These findings support the existing literature; for example, Sherwood and Liebling-Kalifani (2012) found similar links between identity and resilience in African women refugees in post-migration periods in the UK and its importance in recovery from traumatic experiences.

Summary:

Some women reported that living in the UK meant that their lives were radically changed, as they adjusted to the differences in their role and status and had autonomy over their lives. The women reported that they were initially faced with many challenges, but they had been determined to improve their language skills to support themselves and their families. Although for some women, access to education was not available, they did not give up their aspiration to pursue education and they actively seeking opportunities to study.

It is apparent from the accounts by participants in my study that, more than just aiding the refugee women to connect to a larger community and access the resources, the refugee organization delivers programmes that specifically address the needs of women as well as language and employment skills.

However, some research suggests that changes in gender roles can be disempowering, especially when women become breadwinner, as well as responsible for domestic responsibilities and childcare (Dorling, Girma and Walter, 2012). This is exacerbated since women refugees need to devote more time to improve their language skills (Goodkind and Deacon, 2007). Other authors, such as Deacon and Sullivan (2009), have also suggested that forced migration often results in gender role negotiations, and when combined with the stressors experienced by refugee men, this may also give rise to increased rates of domestic violence within refugee households.

The analysis of my data revealed that many of the Afghan women refugees were able to show adaptive and coping strategies in the situations of forced displacement in which there is a breakdown of systems of social order. Although for many of the women, this was more difficult when traditional patriarchal values were enforced within the home. Daniely and Lederman (2019) have argued that the situation of forced displacement might be considered more threatening for men as they may lose the power relation and their identities. However, the authors suggest that because the oppressive order is disrupted in the situation of displacement, women may suffer less in terms of disruption of identity, and they may find themselves on a path towards empowerment. Therefore, as Daniely and Lederman (2019) suggested, the chaotic situation of displacement is not always considered terrifying for many refugee women, as some women may be able to respond to a healthy coping mechanism. However, my research suggests that this is more complex than initially considered by Daniely and Lederman (2019), since some of the Afghan women in my study identified how they felt trapped in a situation of powerful husbands and in-laws, which hindered them from flourishing, and my research shows that coping ability may be dependent on the individual context of the women's lives.

My study findings illustrated the vital role of social support from family, friends, and ethnic community in enhancing resilience among those Afghan women who had IPV

experiences. Individual women need community support in the short term to secure their personal safety and in the long term to challenge the practices and values of men who resort to violence. Similarly, the literature on domestic violence and former refugees also emphasizes the importance of involving the wider community in responding to such violence (Sossou et al., 2008; Spitzer, 2007). Therefore, in my study, providing social support emerged as an important factor in building on women's sense of empowerment and resilience that may serve to reconstruct women's identity and allow smooth integration into life in the UK.

9.4 Expressing gratitude

During the interview, all participants spoke about life in the UK as good. These women showed that despite the practical difficulties (e.g., language, resettlement, and financial difficulties) they encountered during pre/post migration journey, nonetheless, they maintained a positive attitude towards life in the UK. Most of the women being given refugee status held out hope and was the goal of their forced migration. As illustrated in the following quote, Zuha wanted a better life:

I am happy that we came, because we come from a country which was in war, we were not in peace, every day people got killed, therefore I am very happy that we came, my children have the opportunity to study better here, there is a better condition here for them, and they won't be distressed like us. (Zuha)

Other participants in this study reported similar stories, talking about feelings of happiness and thankfulness about the security of living in the UK:

I am happy and thankful with my life here. I have a calm and quite life. (Firouzeh)

Jasmina's happiness was so deep that she almost forgot those difficult days of living in Afghanistan:

When I came here, I was that much happy that I completely forgot all those days. Yeah, I am happy, thank God. (Jasmina)

Through reflecting on the statement above, it is apparent that for many of the women, the sense of satisfaction with migration helped to mitigate against many of the difficulties and the experiences voiced by the women. Many of them illustrated their ability to hold onto a sense of hope and agency in their experiences of life within the context of forced migration.

The findings from my study show that women need to feel they have a sense of purpose and hope to be able to adjust better into the host society. This also reflects a need for women to be helped in terms of access to opportunities such as employment and education so that they can provide for their families and gain a sense of empowerment. However, my findings show that not all supports were equally strong. Government support, for example, appeared limited to programmes such as ESOL classes and access to some services, including formal interpreters, financial support, accommodation, and services for children, meaning that refugee organisation may have been forced to pick up area of support to promote integration that is not covered by the government (see 9.2.3).

Likewise, support through a social network, including peer and family support, has emerged as an influential factor for emotional and mental health well-being. However, not all social networks were supportive or well established; for example, one of the participants commented how she had been betrayed by her friend, while some noted the difficult time during their initial settlement in dispersal areas, where they have limited support and no extended networks. Without a sense of community and belonging, feelings of depression and social isolation can often persist (Thoits, 2011). Establishing good supporting networks will help promote mental health well-being among refugee women and ultimately contribute to successful integration into the host society. Furthermore, my research found that social capital cannot, on its own, substitute for more formal resources unless accompanied by supporting assets from the governmental organisations, which covering sufficient resources and funding for programmes that address the specific needs of refugee women.

9.5 Chapter summary

This chapter has given an overview of the difficulties encountered by the Afghan refugee women as they moved on to the host country. The findings in this chapter revealed that integration into the British society seems to be challenging for some Afghan women owing to the post-migration factors, including asylum claim refusal, forced separation from intimate family, dispersed in unfamiliar areas apart from their community, and pervasiveness of patriarchal Afghan culture in the host country. The chapter has also presented that these issues were compounded by the poor English language for all Afghan women, contributing to women's isolation and prevalence of long-lasting psychological disorders amongst this cohort. This proved to be very difficult for the women who struggled to rear their children and cope with being solely responsible for running their homes.

The women's situation in a dispersed area away from their ethnic groups and close family seemed to add distress and a sense of loneliness. For this reason, those who were housed in dispersal areas decided to move on to London in the hope of gaining support from their families, expanding their networks, and linking with civic organisations. Furthermore, supporting refugee women to obtain affordable and good quality accommodation was seen as a critical factor that could hinder their successful resettlement and integration process among this population.

This chapter also illustrated that the women recognised the value of social networks - such as peer and family support- in preventing isolation, and they consistently saw friends or families as their primary source of help. However, not all social networks were supportive or well established as some of the Afghan women were not willing to participate in a social relationship as of lack of trust in their co-ethnic group, and other women reported the highest trust of family members and affirmed that they would normally only share concerns and seek emotional support from close family members. Indeed, the establishment of good support networks helped promote resilience among refugee women and ultimately allowed them to contribute and thrive in their adopted communities.

The chapter, furthermore, reflected on the contribution of the refugee organisation in fostering social relationships alongside providing practical and emotional support to Afghan women refugees. Likewise, encompassing support from refugee organisation was crucial in creating and reinforcing resilience among refugee women who had lost their identity, self-esteem, and self-respect and trying to regain it once again.

Chapter Ten

Conclusion

10.1 Introduction

This final chapter offers a summary of the study's contribution to knowledge and then considers the limitations of the research. This is followed by recommendations for policy and practice and future research.

This study set out to explore the factors that inhibit and facilitate the integration of female Afghan refugees into British society. The research was framed within an interpretive paradigm of inquiry and guided by a qualitative approach, which allowed the Afghan women's voices and experiences to be heard. Fifteen participants were recruited to the study from a refugee organisation in a London borough, and their individual experiences were explored in semi-structured interviews.

10.2 Original contributions to the research

The interpretivist paradigm of inquiry that informed this thesis enabled a rich and detailed understanding of the intersecting inhibitors and facilitators for refugees' integration into British society, which was grounded in the lived experiences of Afghan female refugees. Additionally, applying a feminist-informed intersectionality lens enabled me to analyse the data offering the opportunity to develop a deeper conceptual understanding of how gender and ethnicity intersected at different points in Afghan women's lives and how these factors impacted women's integration in the UK. My study findings identified both structural and cultural barriers for Afghan refugee women's integration.

Cultural barriers to integration:

My review of the literature indicated that patriarchal power in Afghanistan operates both at the state level (especially under the Taliban rule) and in the family setting. However, my research suggests that Afghan patriarchal culture's pervasiveness imposes social and cultural norms on gender inequality, and this appears to have contributed to the continuation of the marginalisation and subordination for some of the Afghan women in the UK. Moreover, my findings reveal that not all the Afghan women refugees were able to show adaptive coping strategies in situations of forced displacement where traditional patriarchal values were enforced within the home by their spouses and in-laws.

Whilst this study did not set out to measure or explore domestic violence among Afghan female refugees, this research provides new insights around how many of the women continued to face oppression and violence within the family upon resettlement in the UK. The abuse the women experienced was found to be perpetrated by the women's spouses, but also from other women inside and outside of the family when some women enacted the role of the oppressor as well as oppressed in their home country (see 5.2.3).

One of the unique insights that emerged from my research was that the women's experiences of domestic and state violence were not homogenous, as the tribal/ethnic identity appeared to influence the women's experience in both Afghanistan and the UK. Although tribal/ethnic differences were not part of the original focus of my research, the narratives of the women indicate that the ethnic origins of refugees may impact their integration in the UK. My review of the literature (see 3.2) and data from my research participants indicated that the Pashtun refugee women seemed to experience strict familial (family) control both in Afghanistan (see 7.4.1 and 7.4.2 for more detail) and in the UK (8.2.4 and 8.2.5). However, the women from the Hazara community seemed to experience harsher persecution from the Taliban (see 7.5) but seemed to integrate into UK society with a little more ease. This may be due to more liberal family values within the Hazara families that encouraged the women into education, although this education was seen to be in direct opposition to the Taliban values. Although I did not set out to research ethnicity and education, my findings

indicate that the relationship between these factors may impact Afghan women's integration in the UK. Certainly, this issue concerning tribal/ ethnic origins and integration requires further research.

Moreover, this thesis provides new insights into the cultural barriers that constrained the Afghan women's access to education during their settlement in the UK and reveal how Afghan patriarchal culture and traditional gender roles often seemed to affect their ability to access training and improve their language skills. Other studies (e.g., Home Office, 2019) have also demonstrated that poor language skills inhibit refugees' access to support and especially in relation to accessing treatment for their physical and mental health.

Structural barriers to integration:

This study demonstrated that the British asylum policy was one of the direct barriers to women refugee's integration. My findings highlighted that although women arrive at a safe country, the length of the asylum application process, in addition to their uncertainty about their asylum claim result, and the potential threat of detention/ deportation had a negative impact on women's psychological wellbeing. This uncertainty about future life, which was structurally imposed on women asylum seekers can act as an inhibitor to successful integration. Moreover, this study reiterates the previous research findings (Canning, 2019) about a direct negative impact of the policy of dispersal -deprived areas with limited access to support services- on women's psychological wellbeing.

My study and the research of others (Nies, 2016) has also indicated the consequences of limited access to language classes and the risks of using family members as interpreters when communicating with health professional and this can be understood as another structural harm imposed upon refugee women. Clearly, this can inhibit the women from gaining help and support in relation to IPV and other forms of abuse by family members, as well as limiting their access to public sector services and support. In addition, this study illustrates the lack of dissemination of information about women's rights to claim asylum kept the women dependant on their male partners for

spousal visa, or financial income, all increased the risk of IPV and directly affected the women's ability to integrate.

Apart from the new insights into the findings related to cultural and structural barriers to integration, my findings also demonstrate the strengths of the Afghan women in the undertaking of their roles and responsibilities as mothers and homemakers, their courage in leaving Afghanistan often undertaking difficult journeys and their ability to manage and move on from their stressful lives prior to their migration, and their commitment to lead meaningful lives following their migration into the UK. Therefore, this thesis contributes to the broader refugee literature by providing insights into the reframing of refugee women not simply as victims but also as strong, resourceful, and capable women in managing the challenges of family life in exile.

10.3 Policy and practise recommendation

Many of the refugee women talked about the lack of personal safety in their home, and this was linked to the experience of IPV prior to leaving Afghanistan (see 7.4.1) and following their migration (see 8.2.4). My study's findings illustrate the impact of IPV on Afghan women's mental /physical health and, consequently, could be a risk factor for suicidal ideation.

Furthermore, insights from the study indicate that the influence of the structural barriers (including the lack of provision for access to English language training and lack of financial support in asylum system, moving asylum seekers to areas where they are isolated) seemed to be interconnected and often negatively reinforce each other, increasing the experience of IPV.

Moreover, my study illustrated areas of systematic failure in the UK migration governance, linked to the lack of knowledge on recognising the signs of IPV among women refugees and asylum seekers. My study highlighted that although many of the women came into contact with public support services in the UK (such as the police and health services), their abuse was not usually recognised and so it continued. These missed opportunities by support services to adequately support and meet the needs of these women, are of particular note and concern.

My research findings also highlighted the critical role of refugee organisations in considering issues related to domestic violence through paying attention to the related cultural needs of refugee women and providing a safe environment for them to build up trust with health professionals and authorities, as well as providing information about their legal rights in the UK. The findings from this study demonstrate the importance of early intervention of healthcare professionals and refugee organisations in response to evidence of violence and abuse within the family, through establishing safe reporting mechanisms to ensure that victims of violence can report the abuse to the authorities without fear of being deported.

Moreover, my research has highlighted the significance of using professional interpreters, as using family members can create a barrier to the women in reporting IPV. This finding is significant not only for refugee organisations but also for other agencies who may not recognise the pervasiveness of traditional patriarchal values in some refugee families, and therefore they may miss the opportunity for refugee women to access help and support. Moreover, one of my participants described how a woman from her own ethnic community had broken her trust, and consequently, she was subject to domestic abuse. Therefore, one of the lessons from this research is that refugee organisations should not assume that people from the same ethnic group should always support each other. Moreover, my research reiterates the message from a social policy report by the Refugee Council (2019), which recommended a provision to ensure that all refugees who are victims of domestic violence should have access to support, safe accommodation, and public funds.

Therefore, such agencies (e.g., refugee organisations, health, and social care services) must work with Afghan women and men to enhance their understanding of women's rights in the UK. This change should start from the family, which has a root in normalising the subjugation and dominance of females from childhood, and this can be achieved by providing guidance and education about the rights of women in the UK. Therefore, the findings from this research reiterate the findings from the report by the Refugee Council (2019) that recommended the government needs to provide greater protection for refugee women in order to decrease the risk that women coerced into abusive relationships.

The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Social Integration (2018) requested policymakers to develop a new strategy to remove cultural barriers in English language learning and establishing more language learning centres. However, this thesis provides new insights about some of the cultural barriers that might constrain female Afghan refugees' access to education during their settlement in the UK. My findings revealed how Afghan patriarchal culture often intersects with cultural/ethnic ideas concerning traditional gender roles, which often facilitates or limits women's access to education and their ability to improve their language skills and integrate effectively.

My study demonstrated the harms that inflicted by the British asylum policy through the asylum claim refusal, the policy of dispersal, and lack of strategies to provide funding for language programmes. All of which have been implemented as deterrence policy (Canning, 2017) and this study has shown its negative impact on women's psychological wellbeing and their integration in future.

10.4 Limitations of the study

This research utilised qualitative research methods with a small sample of participants; thus, the findings cannot represent all Afghan women refugees living in the UK. However, whilst the study involves a small number of participants, the detailed data generated provides unique insights into a population group whose experiences remain largely unexamined in the research literature.

A recognised methodological limitation in my study, which was framed within an interpretivist paradigm of inquiry, was that the findings were interpreted by myself as the researcher rather than the Afghan women who participated in the study. By not involving research participants in the data analysis, Cotterell (2008) argues that participants' experiences and concerns may not be fully reflective of their personal interpretations. I understand this as a potential limitation of my study, and in response, I have endeavoured to be transparent in my analysis and interpretation of the findings in order to allow the readers to make their own judgements.

Another acknowledged limitation of my research is related to the recruitment design of participants. In this study, only Afghan refugee women who were service users of a specific refugee organisation were recruited to participate in this research. Involving those Afghan women who are not participating with refugee organisations would provide further insights into the integration process amongst these women.

10.5 Future research

Considering the limitation of this thesis, my study has highlighted the usefulness of taking an intersectional approach to the analysis of forced migrants experiences of integration into British society. Future research on women refugees should consider this intersectional approach to extend understandings of how ethnicity and gender impact displaced people's integration experience. In addition, developing the scope of this study to gather evidence from more women as well as men in a broader spread of geographical locations has the potential to deepen our understanding of the integration experiences of female refugees. Furthermore, future research should explore in greater detail the potential tribal/ethnic differences of refugees prior to migration to see how this affects integration.

10.6 Closing summary

This study has addressed the factors that inhibit and facilitate Afghan women refugees' integration in the UK. This thesis contributes to the refugee literature on the intersection of gender and ethnicity and its impact on the integration of refugee women into British society. For me, as a researcher, listening to the challenges that the women experienced in their home country, as well as their journey towards seeking asylum in the UK, was heart breaking, while at the same time, their power and resilience in overcoming these difficulties were inspiring. I want to extend my gratitude to the women who not only gave their time to take part in my study but were also brave enough to speak out about their experiences, and I hope that whatever journeys they are on, they have a sense of safety and security.

I want to close this thesis with a quote from Nadia Hashimi's book, *When the Moon is Low* (2015);

“Refugees didn’t just escape a place. They had to escape a thousand memories until they’d put enough time and distance between them and their misery to wake to a better day.”

Nadia Hashimi, 2015

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APPENDIX I

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM



NAME OF PARTICIPANT:

Title of the project: A study of female Afghan refugees and their integration into British society

Main investigator: Fatemeh Azizi; Email

1. I agree to take part in the above research. I have read the Participant Information Sheet for the study. I understand what my role will be in this research, and all my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.
2. I understand that I am free to withdraw from the research at any time, without giving a reason. However, after the study has finished it will not be possible to exclude data from the analysis process.
3. I am free to ask any questions at any time before and during the study.
4. I understand what will happen to the data collected from me for the research.
5. I have been provided with a copy of this form and the Participant Information Sheet.
6. I understand that quotes from me will be used in the dissemination of the research.
7. I understand that the interview will be audio- recorded.

Data Protection: I agree to the University¹ processing personal data which I have supplied. I agree to the processing of such data for any purposes connected with the Research Project as outlined to me*

Name of participant (print).....Signed.....Date.....

Name of person

witnessing consent (print).....Signed..... Date.....

PARTICIPANTS MUST BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS FORM TO KEEP
ADD DATE AND VERSION NUMBER OF CONSENT FORM.

I WISH TO WITHDRAW FROM THIS STUDY.

If you wish to withdraw from the research, please speak to the researcher or email them at Fatemeh.azizi@pgr.anglia.ac.uk stating the title of the research.

You do not have to give a reason for why you would like to withdraw.

Please let the researcher know whether you are/are not happy for them to use any data from you collected to date in the write up and dissemination of the research.

Date 19.02.18

V1.0

¹ "The University" includes Anglia Ruskin University and its Associate Colleges.

APPENDIX II PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM IN FARSI (DARI) LANGUAGE

نام شرکت کننده
عنوان پروژه: مطالعه زنان پناهنده افغان و ادغام آنها در جامعه انگلیس

حمق: فاطیما عزیزی

1. من موافقت می کنم که در تحقیق فوق شرکت کنم. من اطلاعات مربوط به شرکت کنندگان را مطالعه کرده ام. می فهمم که نقش من در این تحقیق چه خواهد بود، و همه سوالاتم با رضایت من پاسخ داده شدند.
2. من درک می کنم که کاملاً آزاد هستم که در هر زمان و بدون ذکر دلیل از تحقیق کناره گیری کنم. با این حال، پس از اتمام مطالعه، امکان حذف داده ها از روند تجزیه و تحلیل وجود ندارد.
3. من آزاد هستم که در هر زمان و قبل از مطالعه هر گونه سوال را بپرسم.
4. من می فهمم که داده های جمع آوری شده برای تحقیق برای من چه اتفاقی خواهد افتاد.
- 5- نسخه ای از این فرم و برگه اطلاعات شرکت کنندگان به من ارائه شده است.
6. من می دانم که از نقل قول های من در انتشار تحقیق استفاده خواهد شد.
7. می فهمم که مصاحبه به صورت صوتی ضبط می شود.

حفاظت از داده ها: من موافقم که دانشگاه داده های شخصی شما را ارائه داده است. من موافق پردازش این داده ها برای هر منظور مربوط به پروژه تحقیقاتی هستم که برای من شرح داده شده است.*
نام شرکت کننده (تایپ شده) امضا تاریخ

.....

نام شخص

تأیید گواهینامه (چاپ)..... امضا تاریخ

برای نگهداری باید نسخه ای از این فرم به شرکت کنندگان داده شود
تاریخ و شماره یک نسخه از فرم رضایت را اضافه کنید.

من مایلم این مطالعه را واگرد کنم.

اگر می خواهید از تحقیق انصراف دهید، لطفاً با محقق صحبت کنید یا با ذکر عنوان تحقیق از طریق ایمیل با وی

تماس بگیرید. Fatemeh.azizi@pgr.anglia.ac.uk

نیازی نیست برای اینکه بخواهید انصراف دهید دلیل بیاورید.

لطفاً اگر از استفاده از هرگونه داده ای که تاکنون جمع آوری کرده اید برای نوشتن و انتشار تحقیق، به محقق اطلاع

دهید.

تاریخ 19.02.18

نسخه 1.0

APPENDIX III

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Participant Information Sheet



A Study of Female Afghan Refugees and their Integration into British Society

We invite you to take part in a research study

- Before you decide whether to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research study is being done and what it will involve.
- Please take time to read the following information carefully. Discuss it with friends and family if you wish.
- You are free to decide whether or not to take part in this study. If you choose not to take part, this will not affect the support you receive from this refugee service.
- Ask us if there is anything that is not clear, or if you would like more information.

Important things that you need to know

- We are interested to find out more about the factors that influenced your social integration into British society.
- We have developed some interview questions that are designed to help you talk to us about any challenges you have experienced during your settlement in British society.
- The interview will take about one hour.
- If you find that you become distressed, either during or after the interview, you will have access to confidential supportive counselling.
- At any time you can refuse to answer questions, discuss certain topics or even end the interview and this will not affect your membership or activities in this specific refugee centre.

Contents

1. Why is the study needed?
2. What does taking part in the study involve?
3. When and where will the semi-structured interview take place?
4. What happens next?
5. Why have I been invited to take part in the study?
6. Do I have to take part?
7. What should I do if I want to take part?

8. Are there any benefits for me in joining the study?
9. Are there any risks for me in joining the study?
10. How will the information about me be kept confidential?
11. How do I withdraw from the study if I change my mind?
12. Who has organised the study?
13. Who has approved the study?
14. Who do I contact if I have any concerns?

How to contact us

If you have any questions about the study my contact details are:
Fatemeh Azizi
Email:

Tel:

Or alternatively my supervisor's contact details are:
Dr Lyndsay Baines

Email:

Why is the study needed?

Over the last few years, there has been an increase in a flow of refugees into Europe, with many women traveling alone, or with small children. As suggested above, many governments and non-government agencies that have been working with this cohort suggest that women, particularly women traveling alone face multiple and complex challenges, however, there has been considerably less research on the experiences of these women settling into their host culture and learning how to integrate into their 'host' culture and the inter and intra cultural challenges face by female refugees.

Consequently, this research aims to narrow this research gap by conducting empirical research to gain an understanding of the factors that facilitate or inhibit the integrated living of Afghan female refugees into the British society. Indeed by exploring the experiences of this cohort it would be expected that important issues and insights would have the opportunity to emerge. The findings may also help refugees' agencies in the UK to improve their support of female Afghan refugees. Moreover, the result may also be beneficial for female refugees from other ethnic groups.

Initially we aim to recruit twenty female Afghan refugees who are the service users of this refugee organisation. If you choose to join this study, you will be required to take part in a semi-structured interview (**see box below**) lasting approximately one hour. During this time you will be asked questions that are designed to help you talk to us about any experiences and challenges that you faced during your social integration into British society.

At the end of the study we will analyse the results to see what factors inhibit or facilitate the integrated living of participants into British society.

A semi-structured interview is a where the interviewer asks you a set of questions that you are able to answer in your own words. The interviewer may then ask you to explore or think about your answers in greater depth. In turn, the semi-structured interview gives you an opportunity to discuss or raise issues of your own that are not contained within the set questions

What does taking part in the study involve?

Completing a face to face semi-structured interview designed to help you talk to us about your experience and any specific challenges that faced during your integration into British society.

When and where will the semi-structured interview take place?

All interviews will take place in a private room during your next visit to the Refugee Service. If, due to transport or other reasons, this is not convenient, an alternate time can be arranged.

What happens next?

You will be contacted by Dr Nazee Akbari one of the study supervisors via phone or e mail to schedule the interview.

Why have I been invited to take part in the study?

We are inviting all female Afghan refugees, aged between 20 to 60 who have entered the United Kingdom in the last calendar year and are service users of this Refugee Service.

Do I have to take part?

No, it is completely up to you. If you decide to take part you will be asked to sign a consent form at your next visit (see sample consent form at the end of this leaflet). You are free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason. Your decision has no influence on your membership or activities at this specific refugee service.

What should I do if I want to take part?

If you would like to join the study, then all you need to do is to take this information leaflet to your next visit to refugee service. Here you will be asked if you wish to take part and you will have the opportunity to ask any further questions.

Are there any benefits for me in joining the study?

There will be no immediate direct benefit to you should you participate. However, there should be benefits to future female refugees because the results of the study are likely to develop recommendations for refugee agencies so that they can better meet the needs of female Afghan refugees in integrating into British society.

Are there any risks for me in joining the study?

There is a possibility that you may become emotional as you think about your past, present and future experiences as a refugee. Many refugees actually find it very helpful to speak of their experiences, especially if they feel that it may help future refugees. However, supportive counselling is available for participants who feel that they need it.

How will the information about me be kept confidential?

At the semi-structured interview session, your consent to take part in the study will be recorded on a form that will contain identifiers including your name, email address or phone number. These forms will be stored in a secure location at refugee service and kept separately from the semi-structured interview data.

Your semi-structured interview data will not include any personal identifying details. Your data will be stored using a unique, anonymous study identification number and the recording will be destroyed after.

How do I withdraw from the study if I change my mind?

The study will be most valuable if few people withdraw from it, so it is important to discuss any concerns that you may have with the study team before you agree to participate. However, you can withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason and without it having any impact upon your membership and activities at this specific refugee organisation.

If you withdraw, then the information collected up until that time cannot be erased but you can request for it to be excluded from the study. You can let us know by telephoning the supervisors of the study: Dr Nazee Akbari or Dr Lyndsay Baines. This will allow us to discuss your concerns with you. After the study has finished it will not be possible to exclude data from the analysis process.

Who is organising the study?

The study has been set up by collaboration between this specific refugee service and Anglia Ruskin University. Your involvement in the study will be a one-time interview.

Who has approved the study?

All research in the Anglia Ruskin University is reviewed by an independent group of people, called a Research Ethics Committee, which is there to protect your safety, rights, wellbeing and dignity. This project has been reviewed favourably by the Anglia Ruskin Research Ethics Committee.

Who do I contact if I have any concerns?

If you have any concerns or complaints about anything to do with the study then you can telephone us on:

Dr Lyndsay Baines
Telephone:
Email us at:

Date 19.02.18
V1.2

APPENDIX IV

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET IN FARSI (DARI) LANGUAGE

مطالعه زنان پناهنده افغان و ادغام آنها در جامعه انگلیس

ما از شما دعوت می کنیم در یک تحقیق شرکت کنید. قبل از تصمیم گیری در مورد شرکت کردن ، مهم است که شما درک کنید که چرا این تحقیق انجام شده است و شامل چه مواردی می شود. لطفاً وقت بگذارید و اطلاعات زیر را با دقت بخوانید. در صورت تمایل با دوستان و خانواده در مورد آن بحث کنید. • شما آزاد هستید که تصمیم بگیرید که در این مطالعه شرکت کنید یا نکنید. اگر تصمیم بگیرید که شرکت نکنید ، تاثیری در پشتیبانی شما در این سازمان پناهندگان نخواهد داشت. • اگر چیزی نامشخص است یا می خواهید اطلاعات بیشتری کسب کنید از ما سوال کنید.

موارد مهمی که باید بدانید

ما علاقه مندیم درباره عواملی که در ادغام اجتماعی شما در جامعه انگلیس تأثیرگذار بوده است بیشتر بدانیم. • ما برخی از سوالات مصاحبه را طراحی کرده ایم که به شما کمک می کنند در مورد هر چالشی که هنگام استقرار در جامعه انگلیس با آن روبرو هستید با ما صحبت کنید. مصاحبه تقریباً یک ساعت طول خواهد کشید. • اگر هنگام مصاحبه با پس از آن ناراحت باشید ، به مشاوره های محرمانه حمایتی دسترسی خواهید داشت. • شما می توانید در هر زمان از پاسخ دادن به سوالات ، بحث در مورد موضوعات خاص و یا حتی پایان مصاحبه خودداری کنید ، و این بر عضویت یا فعالیت های شما در این سازمان خاص پناهندگان تأثیری نخواهد داشت.

فهرست

1. چرا مطالعه لازم است؟
2. شرکت در مطالعه شامل چه مواردی است؟
3. مصاحبه نیمه ساختار یافته چه زمانی و در کجا برگزار می شود؟
4. بعد چه اتفاقی می افتد؟
5. چرا از من برای شرکت در مطالعه دعوت شدند؟
6. آیا باید شرکت کنم؟
7. اگر می خواهم شرکت کنم چه کاری انجام می دهم؟
8. آیا حضور در مطالعه برای من فواید دارد؟
9. آیا برای پیوستن به مطالعه خطری برای من وجود دارد؟
10. چگونه اطلاعات من محرمانه نگه داشته می شوند؟
11. اگر تصمیم خود را تغییر دهم چگونه می توانم از مطالعه انصراف دهم؟
12. چه کسی مطالعه را سازماندهی کرد؟
13. چه کسی مطالعه را تأیید کرده است؟
14. در صورت نگرانی با چه کسی تماس بگیرم؟

چرا مطالعه مورد نیاز است؟

در طی چند سال گذشته ، افزایش جریان پناهندگان به اروپا وجود دارد ، بسیاری از زنان به تنهایی یا با کودکان خردسال سفر می کنند. بسیاری از دولت ها و آژانس های غیر دولتی که با این گروه کار کرده اند نشان می دهند که زنان ، به ویژه زنانی که به تنهایی سفر می کنند ، با چالش های پیچیده ای روبرو هستند ،

با این حال ، تحقیقات بسیار کمتری در مورد تجارب اقامت این زنان در میزبان آنها و چالش های درون فرهنگی که زنان پناهنده با آن روبرو هستند انجام شده است.

بنابراین ، هدف این تحقیق این است که با انجام تحقیقات تجربی برای درک عواملی که زندگی پناهندگان افغان را در جامعه انگلیس تسهیل یا جلوگیری می کند ، موضوعات و ایده های مهم فرصت ظهور پیدا کنند. همچنین نتایج ممکن است به آژانسهای پناهندگی انگلیس در بهبود حمایت از پناهندگان افغان کمک کند. علاوه بر این ، ممکن است نتیجه برای پناهندگان سایر اقوام نیز مفید باشد.

در ابتدا هدف ما استخدام بیست زن پناهجوی افغان است که در این سازمان از خدمات استفاده می کنند. اگر تصمیم بگیرید که به این مطالعه بپیوندید ، لازم است که در یک مصاحبه نیمه ساختار یافته (به کادر زیر مراجعه کنید) به مدت حدود یک ساعت شرکت کنید. در این مدت ، از شما سوالاتی پرسیده می شود که به شما کمک می کند در مورد هرگونه تجربه و چالشی که هنگام اجتماعی شدن در جامعه انگلیس روبرو هستید ، با ما صحبت کنید. در پایان مطالعه ، ما نتایج را تجزیه و تحلیل خواهیم کرد تا عواملی را که مانع تسهیل زندگی شرکت کنندگان در جامعه انگلیس می شوند دریابیم.

مصاحبه نیمه ساختار یافته جایی است که مصاحبه کننده از شما مجموعه ای از سوالات را می پرسد که می توانید به قول خودتان به آنها پاسخ دهید. سپس مصاحبه کننده ممکن است از شما بخواهد پاسخ های خود را کاوش کنید یا عمیق تر درباره آنها فکر کنید. در مقابل ، یک مصاحبه نیمه ساختاری به شما فرصتی می دهد تا بتوانید موضوعات مربوط به خود را مطرح کنید

شرکت در مطالعه شامل چه مواردی است؟

یک مصاحبه حضوری نیمه ساختار یافته را برای کمک به شما در گفتگو با ما در مورد تجربه و چالش های خاصی که هنگام ادغام در جامعه انگلیس با آن روبرو شده اید ، کامل کنید.

مصاحبه نیمه ساختار یافته چه زمانی و در کجا برگزار می شود؟

تمام مصاحبه ها در بازدید بعدی شما از سازمان پناهندگان در یک اتاق خصوصی انجام می شود. اگر به دلیل حمل و نقل یا دلایل دیگر این کار مناسب نباشد ، ممکن است یک زمان جایگزین تنظیم شود.

بعدش چه اتفاقی می افتاد؟

برای تعیین مصاحبه توسط دکتر نازی اکبری ، یکی از سرپرستان مطالعه ، از طریق تلفن یا ایمیل با شما تماس گرفته می شود.

چرا از من برای شرکت در مطالعه دعوت شد؟

ما از همه زنان پناهنده افغان ، در سنین 20 تا 60 سال ، که خود یا همسرانشان در انگلستان پناهندگی خواسته اند ، و استفاده کنندگان خدمات این سازمان پناهندگان دعوت می کنند.

آیا باید شرکت کنم؟

نه ، کاملاً به خود شما بستگی دارد. اگر تصمیم به شرکت دارید ، از شما خواسته می شود در بازدید بعدی فرم رضایت نامه را امضا کنید (به فرم رضایت نامه در انتهای این جزوه مراجعه کنید) در هر زمان و بدون دلیل آوردن آزاد هستید انصراف دهید. تصمیم شما تاثیری بر عضویت یا فعالیت های شما در این سرویس ویژه پناهندگان ندارد.

اگر بخواهم شرکت کنم چه کاری انجام می دهم؟

اگر می خواهید به این مطالعه بپیوندید ، تنها کاری که باید انجام دهید این است که این جزوه اطلاعاتی را در بازدید بعدی خود به سازمان پناهندگان برسانید

آیا شرکت در مطالعه برای من فوایدی دارد؟

در صورت شرکت هیچ منفعتی مستقیم برای شما نخواهد داشت. با این حال ، باید مزایایی برای پناهندگان آینده وجود داشته باشد ، زیرا یافته های این مطالعه احتمالاً توصیه هایی را برای آژانسهای پناهندگی و سیاستگذاران ارائه می دهد تا آنها بتوانند نیازهای زنان پناهنده افغان را برای ادغام در جامعه انگلیس بهتر برآورده کنند.

آیا خطراتی برای پیوستن به مطالعه برای من وجود دارد

این احتمال وجود دارد که وقتی به تجربیات گذشته، حال و آینده خود به عنوان پناهنده فکر می کنید، احساساتی شوید. بسیاری از پناهندگان گفتن در مورد تجربیات خود بسیار مفید به نظر می رسند، به ویژه اگر احساس می کنند ممکن است در آینده به پناهندگان کمک کند. با این حال، مشاوره حمایتی برای شرکت کنندگان در دسترس است که احساس می کنند به آن نیاز دارند.

چگونه اطلاعات من محرمانه نگه داشته می شوند؟

در یک جلسه مصاحبه نیمه ساختاری، رضایت شما برای شرکت در مطالعه در فرم حاوی شناسه هایی شامل نام، آدرس ایمیل یا شماره تلفن شما ثبت می شود. این فرم ها در یک مکان امن در خدمات پناهندگان ذخیره می شوند و جدا از داده های مصاحبه نیمه ساختاری شما هیچگونه مشخصات شخصی را در بر نخواهد گرفت. داده های شما با استفاده از شماره شناسایی منحصر به فرد و ناشناس ذخیره می شود و پس از ثبت نام لغو می شود.

در صورت تغییر نظر چگونه می توانم از مطالعه انصراف دهم؟

این مطالعه در صورت انصراف تعداد کمی از افراد از این مطالعه، بسیار با ارزش خواهد بود، بنابراین مهم است که قبل از توافق برای شرکت هر گونه نگرانی با تیم مطالعه در میان بگذارید. با این حال، شما می توانید هر زمان که بخواهید بدون دلیل آوردن و هیچ تاثیری در عضویت و فعالیت های خود در این سازمان ویژه پناهندگان، از شرکت رد یا مطالعه انصراف دهید. در صورت انصراف، اطلاعات جمع آوری شده تا آن زمان قابل حذف نیستند اما می توانید درخواست کنید که از مطالعه خارج شوند. می توانید از طریق تلفن به ناظران مطالعه بگویید: کدتر نازی اکبری (لیندسی باینز). (این به ما امکان می دهد تا نگرانی های شما را با شما در میان بگذاریم. پس از پایان مطالعه، امکان حذف داده ها از روند تجزیه و تحلیل وجود ندارد.

چه کسی مطالعه را سازماندهی می کند؟

این مطالعه از طریق همکاری سازمان پناهندگان و دانشگاه انگلیا راسکین تهیه شده است. مشارکت شما در مصاحبه یک بار است.

چه کسی مطالعه را تأیید کرده است؟

تمام تحقیقات در دانشگاه انگلیا راسکین توسط یک گروه مستقل از افراد، به نام کمیته اخلاق تحقیقات، مورد بررسی قرار می گیرد، که برای محافظت از ایمنی، حقوق، رفاه و عزت شما موجود است. این پروژه توسط کمیته اخلاق تحقیق انگلیا راسکین مورد بررسی مثبت قرار گرفته است. در صورت نگرانی با چه کسی تماس بگیرم؟

اگر هر گونه نگرانی یا شکایتی در مورد هر چیزی در رابطه با مطالعه دارید، می توانید با ما تماس بگیرید: کدتر لیندسی باینز

رهای ما از طریق ایمیل ارسال کنید:

تاریخ 19.02.18

نسخه 1.0

APPENDIX V

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Participant Name

Demographic Data:

How long have you been living in the UK?

Age:

Occupation:

English language certificate:

Background

1. Briefly describe as much as detail as you can what was your life like when you lived in Afghanistan (your family, single/married, any children, qualification, any health issues, what you enjoyed doing, occupation, prior English language knowledge)?
2. Describe the reason you left Afghanistan? And how you left (immediately, if so why; or had a plan to leave, if so, what did you have to do)?
3. Describe how was the journey (did anyone help you; where did you stay; what were the conditions; did you face any problems, if so, how were they dealt with)?

Arrival to the UK

4. Describe as much as detail as you can about your experience when you came to the UK (What happened when you arrived? How were you treated? Who helped you? Did you have any relatives or friends in the UK? If so, did they support you?)
5. Describe what was your life like since you granted refugee status (What were the challenges you faced? How did you overcome any challenges? Are these challenges the same ones to what you face now, if not, why)?
6. Describe the type of people that you commonly engaged with (include relatives, friends inside or outside of your community; how often you are in contact with them; what prevents you from interacting with them)?
7. Tell me how you feel about living in the UK?

Motivations and expectations

8. Describe how you found out about refugee organisation (What encouraged you to join the refugee organisation; How were you feeling; What is good about the service; What skills have you gained through attending the organisation; Do you have any problems?)
9. How did you think that the refugee organisation might support you?
10. Thinking about how you are interacting with people, has this changed?
11. Do you feel joining to the refugee support group has helped you to expand your social integration with other groups/organisations? if so, in what way?
12. Tell me what are the most important things about refugee organisation?

Future developments

13. Tell me anything that you think would be helpful in integrating/rebuilding refugees' life in the future (what other types of support are needed)?
14. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about?

Thank you for participating in this research.

APPENDIX VI

Faculty Research Ethics approval letter



**Anglia Ruskin
University**

23rd March 2018

Cambridge & Chelmsford

Chelmsford Campus
Bishop Hall Lane
Tel: 01245-493131
Int: +44 (0)1245-493131

Fatemeh Azizi

Dear Fatemeh

| | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Principal Investigator | Fatemeh Azizi |
| DREP Number | FHSCE-DREP-17-019 |
| Project Title | Factors which facilitate and inhibit integrated living amongst female Afghan refugees |

I am pleased to inform you that your ethics application has been approved by the Departmental Research Ethics Panel (DREP) under the terms of Anglia Ruskin University's Research Ethics Policy (Dated 8 September 2016, Version 1.7). Approval by DREP is subject to ratification by the FREP.

Ethical approval is given for 3 years from 23rd March 2018. If your research will extend beyond this period, it is your responsibility to apply for an extension before your approval expires.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you comply with Anglia Ruskin University's Research Ethics Policy and the Code of Practice for Applying for Ethical Approval at Anglia Ruskin University available at www.anglia.ac.uk/researchethics including the following.

- The procedure for submitting substantial amendments to the committee, should there be any changes to your research. You cannot implement these amendments until you have received approval from DREP for them.
- The procedure for reporting accidents, adverse events and incidents.
- The Data Protection Act (1998) and General Data Protection Requirement from 25 May 2018.
- Any other legislation relevant to your research. You must also ensure that you are aware of any emerging legislation relating to your research and make any changes to your study (which you will need to obtain ethical approval for) to comply with this.
- Obtaining any further ethical approval required from the organisation or country (if not carrying out research in the UK) where you will be carrying the research out. This includes other Higher Education Institutions if you intend to carry out any research involving their students, staff or premises. Please ensure that you send the DREP copies of this documentation if required, prior to starting your research.
- Any laws of the country where you are carrying the research and obtaining any other approvals or permissions that are required.
- Any professional codes of conduct relating to research or requirements from your funding body (please note that for externally funded research, where the funding has been obtained via

Anglia Ruskin University, a Project Risk Assessment must have been carried out prior to starting the research).

- ☐ Completing a Risk Assessment (Health and Safety) if required and updating this annually or if any aspects of your study change which affect this.

- ☐ Notifying the DREP Secretary when your study has ended.

Please also note that your research may be subject to monitoring.

Should you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me. May I wish you the best of luck with your research.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Jeffrey Grierson (Chair)

For FHSCE Research Ethics Panel (DREP)

Copy to: Lyndsay Baines

