

Culture of Care

The silent power of “Honour and shame”:

**A lived experience exploration of accessing
mental health services through an
intersectional lens.**

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access family-centred
norms reputation honour
south-asian individual hierarchy
complex western shame
respect recovery system
help-seeking family
expectations
silence lived-experience

Why am I here to share this?

“Free to Recover”

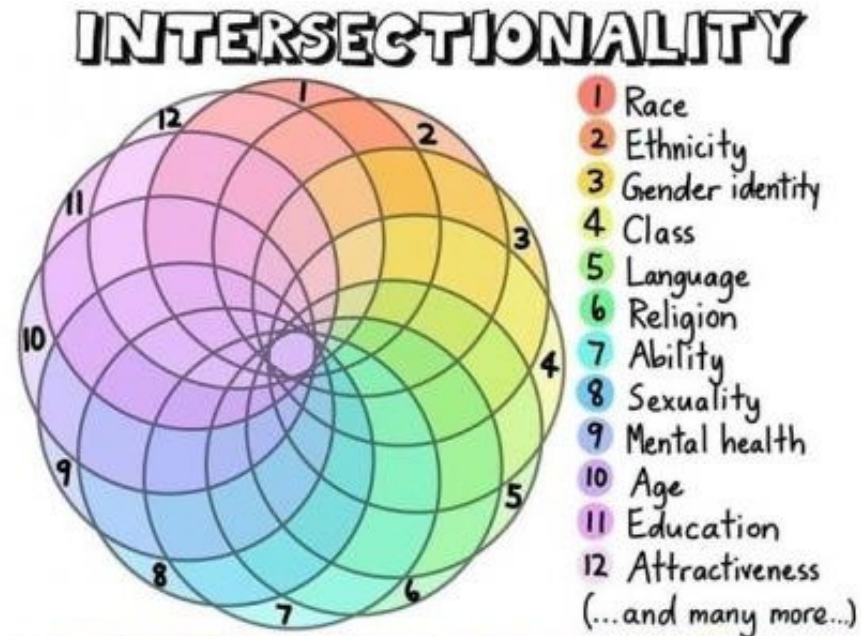


My Lens: Lived Experience, Intersectionality & Research



Research question: How does “Honour, Shame & *Izzat*” Influence the Meaning that British South Asian Communities Assign to Accessing Mental Health Services?

What is intersectionality?



Intersectionality is a lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it locks and intersects. It is the acknowledgement that everyone has their own unique experiences of discrimination and privilege.

- Kimberlé Crenshaw -

Intersectionality

- Intersectionality, a term coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw, is a framework for understanding how multiple social identities can overlap and create unique forms of discrimination and disadvantage

Concept definitions

Honour

Honour is a cultural concept defined by an individuals' respectful behaviour in the community where actions perceived dishonourable or shameful can damage external perceptions of the individual and their family

(Novin and Oyserman, 2016)

Shame

Shame is a cultural concept defined by the guilt-inducing consequences for individuals' dishonourable actions within communities' collectivist cultures and can be used to scrutinise the process of accessing mental health services, which has amplified reluctance to seek help (Tonsing and Barn, 2016; Bhugra and Becker, 2005).

Izzat

“Izzat” is an Urdu word translating to the influential cultural concept of family honour and prestige, regarding individuals' status, respect and standing within their community (Somi, 2013) .

Language

British South Asian

British South Asian=
Pakistani,
Indian,
Bangladeshi and
Sri Lankan
people

Focus on South Asian women (Pakistani)

Often South Asian women experience threats of “honour-based violence” which has shown to worsen psychological distress, and internalised shame (Garg, 2021; Crawford et al., 2002)

The experiences of men

Izzat often symbolises masculinity and mental illness can be perceived as a form of weakness leading to South Asian men being resistant to seek help due to the threat of Izzat loss. Focus was specific due to undergraduate reverts.

Theme 1: Fear

Fear of **gossip** due to **Honour**

“The **honour** does play a part...it becomes Chinese whispers” (Gunasinghe et al., 2018, p.752).

Fear of **disclosure** due to **shame**

“Shame in itself is having to **go outside the family**” (Gilbert et al., 2004, p.124)

Fear of **damaging izzat** through the **community grapevine**

Openness about disclosing mental health issues **conflicts** with “**keeping our parents’ izzat**” (Bradby et al., 2007, p.2418).

“You tell one friend,
**she will just tell a
couple more**”
(Bradby et al., 2007,
p.2417)

“If I tell somebody
then it **could turn
into gossip**”
(Gilbert et al., 2004,
p.125)

Gossip:
a cycle of fear

“We cannot **trust**
anyone” (Bradby et
al., 2007, p.2417)

“once you’ve **lost**
your Izzat [honour],
it’s really hard to get
it back” (Sangar and
Howe, 2021, p.349)

Theme 2: Avoidance

Distress tolerance: The device of Izzat has indicatively increased Pakistani Muslim women's tolerance of distress to appear strong (Gunasinghe et al., 2018)

Silencing needs: "You can't think of your own needs, our own needs do not come into it, it's other people's needs that come first, we don't think about our needs" (Gilbert et al., 2004, p.124).

Honour protection: "surveillance, restriction and monitoring of their behaviour," in which "the family/community can be considered agents of surveillance (Sangar and Howe, 2021, p.363)

Theme 3: Cultural complexities vs professional misunderstanding

“To be labelled ‘mental’ or ‘pagal’ [mad] was said to be stigmatising and should be avoided at all costs (Bradby et al., 2007, p.2417)

“By going to a counsellor she admits she has problems and could make her feel like she is mentally ill if she to resort to such circumstances” (Moller et al., 2016, p.207)

“Stigma attached to being a bit “crazy or depressed” (Moller et al., 2016, p.207)

Suicidal thinking, religion and culture

Being dead is better than being shameful: “it’s probably a better thing for herself, bring less shame on the family if she kills herself... it’s less shameful” (Gilbert et al., 2004, p.121)

The final protection against the pain of Izzat: “I’ve heard, the people, they like erm, think of ending their lives. Especially if you haven’t got anyone to turn to that can, that can help you would feel a bit lost. Some people might go into self-harm” (Gunasinghe et al., 2018, p.751)



Reflections