

The future of Muslim religious leadership in Scotland

MA in Islam in Contemporary Britain



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Contents Page

Acknowledgments	v
Abstract	vi
1. Introduction	1
1.1. Research question and aims	2
1.2. Chapter guide	3
2. Literature review	5
2.1. British Muslim religious leadership	5
2.1.1. Who are the Muslim religious leaders in Britain?	5
2.1.2. What roles do Imams in Britain serve and are they adequately equipped?	6
2.2. The Islamic seminary in the UK	8
2.2.1. Origins of the Islamic seminary and its curriculum	8
2.2.2. Critiques of the seminary	9
2.2.3. Suggestions to improve the training of British scholars	10
2.3. The Scottish Muslim experience	13
2.3.1. Early contact and settlement	13
2.3.2. Muslim integration in Scotland	14
2.3.3. Muslim infrastructure and discrimination	15
3. Methodology	17
3.1. Philosophical underpinnings	17
3.2. Research Design: Why I chose mixed methods	18
3.2.1. Online survey	18
3.2.2. Semi-structured interviews	20
3.3. Recruitment and Participant profiles	22
3.4. Ethical considerations	23
3.5. Storage	23
3.6. Data analysis	24
3.7. Reflexivity	25

4. Findings	28
4.1. Experience hitherto with religious leadership	28
4.1.1. Online survey	28
4.1.2. Semi-structured interviews	29
4.2. Envisaging future religious leadership	30
4.2.1. Online survey	30
4.2.2. Semi-structured interviews	35
4.3. Scottish Muslim experience	40
4.3.1. Online survey	40
4.3.2. Semi-structured interviews	41
5. Discussion	45
5.1. Conceptualising a Muslim religious leadership typology	45
5.2. Current state of Imams and their training	46
5.3. Situation of the seminary	47
5.4. Muslims in Scotland	50
5.5. My suggestions	51
6. Conclusion	56
6.1. My contributions	56
6.2. Future research	57
7. Bibliography	59
8. Appendices	
Appendix A - Consent form for online survey	64
Appendix B – Consent for interviews	66
Appendix C - Interview questions	67
Appendix D -Transcript of interview	68

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my gratitude to the Jameel Scholarship Programme for the generous support in funding my MA in Islam in Contemporary Britain at Cardiff University. Without the support, I would not have been able to benefit as much as I did from the tremendous work taking place at the Islam UK Centre. I would like to thank my lecturers, Professor Sophie Gilliat-Ray, Dr Michael Munnik and Dr Mansur Ali. I would also like to thank Dr Abdul Azim and Mark Bryant for their contributions in making the centre a lively and welcoming place.

A special thanks to my lecturer and supervisor, Dr Riyaz Timol whose help was invaluable at every stage of this thesis. A thank you to my colleagues whose support and discussions inside and outside the classroom made this an enjoyable year. Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends for their continued support and encouragement throughout my studies.

Abstract

Scotland, like the rest of Britain, has a growing number of young Muslims. In many cases, these young Scottish Muslims will require recourse to religious leadership. One of the main producers of Muslim religious leadership in Britain is the Islamic seminary, also called *madrasa* or *darul uloom*. The majority, if not all, Islamic seminaries are based in England, thus, the personnel who serve as religious leaders in Scotland, largely conduct their training outside the context in which they serve. This thesis argues that Muslim religious leadership is an extremely varied role, encompassing an array of responsibilities. Moving forward, it is conducive to compartmentalise the various roles and deliver training accordingly.

This thesis synchronizes the current literature on Muslim religious leadership in Britain and Scottish Muslims. The thesis also presents original research conducted with young Scottish Muslim males to elicit their experience and expectations of religious leadership. This is in the form of an online survey and six semi-structured interviews. The findings from the research are compared to the training currently delivered at Islamic seminaries to ascertain whether the training corresponds to the needs of the community. The study also explores the extent to which the Scottish Muslim experience differs from the British Muslim experience and how this affects religious leaders serving in their roles. Based upon the findings and the current literature, the thesis offers suggestions as to how the seminary can deliver their preferred education of focusing on the development of the individual and simultaneously contribute towards producing well-rounded religious leaders with the grounding to serve in various roles.

Key words: Scotland, Britain, Muslim, religious leadership, Imam, seminary, *darul uloom*, *madrasa*, Islamic Studies, young, Scottish, males

1.0 Introduction

Muslims are the largest religious minority in Scotland. According to the 2011 Census, there were around 77,000 Muslims living in Scotland, making the Scottish Muslim population larger than all other religious minorities combined. 30% of the Muslim population was under the age of 15 compared to 17% for the rest of the population. It is estimated that by 2021, Muslim teenagers aged 15-19 will constitute almost 10% of the overall population in that age bracket (Elshayyal 2016, 7-9). These figures show that there is a growing number of young Muslims in Scotland, many of whom will require religious leadership to understand and practice their faith. Hitherto, studies of Muslims in Britain have overwhelmingly focused on Muslims in England. This reflects the fact that the vast majority of British Muslims live in England. There are, however, peculiarities to the Scottish context, which makes the Scottish Muslim experience unique. For example, Scottish Muslims benefit from higher percentages of degree level education, full-time employment, and home ownership compared to English Muslims. The Scottish Muslim prison population is in proportion to the Scottish Muslim population as a whole whereas the English Muslim prison population is almost three times the English Muslim population as a whole (Elshayyal 2016, 28; Ali 2015, 40). Likewise, the nature of Scottish nationalist politics is more inclusive of minorities as opposed to English nationalism (Botterill, Sanghera and Hopkins 2017, 146). These factors implicate the Scottish Muslim experience to be understood within a specific context and subsequent research can then reflect the unique environment. Research on Muslims in Scotland, particularly from a religious perspective, is an emerging field as Peter Hopkins in 2002 found that the existing literature focused mainly on race and ethnicity as opposed to religion (Hopkins 2017, 2). Writing 15 years later, Stefano Bonino similarly mentions that although there are, “outstanding analyses of the Muslim communities living in England”, the experience of Muslims in Scotland from a religious perspective are difficult to come by (Bonino 2017, 4). For these reasons, I have set out to conduct research on the future of Muslim religious leadership in Scotland. A more detailed breakdown of this is provided below in the research question and aims.

Religious leadership includes a number of roles. One of the most commonly used terms to describe a British Muslim religious leader is Imam. Until the 1980’s the role of the Imam was

largely confined to the mosque and aside from duties such as leading prayers, teaching children how to recite the Quran and presiding over rites of passage, the Muslim community did not require the Imam to engage with civil society. The lack of English competency in Imams employed from abroad was also a barrier for serving outside the comfort of the mosque. From the 1980's onwards, there were growing criticisms of Imams lacking awareness of the British social context and their inability to effectively communicate with British-born Muslims (Gilliat-Ray 2010, 163). The situation demanded mosque Imams to take on a number of roles that historically in a Muslim community would be shared amongst scholars. Wider British society analogised the mosque Imam with the parish priest whereby expecting him to 'herd his flock' as well as represent the Muslim community in the media and interfaith dialogue (Scott-Baumann and Cheruvallil-Contractor 2015, 65).

Before moving on, I would like to provide some definitional clarity. The word I will use to describe a Muslim religious leader in Britain is 'Imam' and this term can include a number of roles. At the very least, a British Imam leads the prayers. Duties beyond that are an ever-increasing list of expectations placed upon Imams. The term Imam is used in Britain as a generic term for religious leaders, thus, it is assumed that the Imam has some form of religious training, even if it is at a rudimentary level. For the purpose of this work, I will continue to use the word Imam in its broader sense, which includes a variety of responsibilities. One of the aims of this work is to delineate a more precise division of roles, arguing that using the term Imam in such a broad sense, which includes multiple duties, needs revisiting. Similarly, the institutions of confessional higher Islamic Studies in Britain are usually termed as *madrasa* or *darul uloom*. *Madrasa* in its literal sense means 'a place of study' whilst *darul uloom* literally means 'house of learning' (Moosa 2015, 3). 'Islamic seminary' is another word used to describe such places. In this work, I will use all three terms interchangeably to mean institutes of confessional higher Islamic Studies. The Islamic seminary is where a large portion of British-born Imams receive their training. As mentioned above, when British Muslims are spoken of, it overwhelmingly refers to English Muslims.

1.1 Research question and aims

This research will explore the needs and expectations young Scottish Muslim males have of their religious leadership. This question will be explored in the context of determining how

different the Scottish context is to the rest of Britain. I aim to determine which of the community needs are specific to Scotland and which ones are shared by British Muslims. This can contribute towards religious leadership training specific to Scotland and to the wider British Muslim community. In order to achieve this, I will synthesize the literature on Scottish Muslims and Imam training in Britain with an online survey and six semi-structured interviews conducted by myself. The aim of the research is to better understand whether the religious leadership currently being produced meets the needs of the community. The research will offer greater clarity in services that the community requires and provide the institutions that train religious leaders with findings to adjust their training accordingly, if they wish to do so. The training institutions can tailor their teaching to the specific needs of the community.

I have chosen this research question as I have a four-dimensional relationship to the question. Firstly, I fit the profile of the researched community, in that I am a Scottish Muslim male aged 16-40, and I have experience in approaching religious leadership. Secondly, I have attended and graduated from two Islamic seminaries, which supply religious leaders serving in various roles. Thirdly, I have personally served as a religious leader in the form of an Imam, preacher and teacher. I have first-hand experience of the multiple expectations placed upon Muslim religious leadership. Fourthly, I have taught at an Islamic seminary and engaged with many students who are now serving in roles of religious leadership. Aside from formal studies, this engagement was an opportunity to discuss the practical elements of their future roles. My experience in the field has allowed me to understand the research question from multiple perspectives.

1.2 Chapter guide

Chapter two presents a literature review of my research. The areas presented are the current state of British Imams and their training. This is followed by a description and critique of British Muslim seminaries as well as suggestions already present in literature to improve them. Relevant literature on Scottish Muslims is also presented. Chapter three discusses my methodology. I will explain my philosophical underpinnings followed by explaining why I chose a mixed method and my research design. The chapter also discusses recruitment, ethical considerations and data analysis. I also reflect on issues of reflexivity in

this chapter. Chapter four presents the findings of my research. The findings are presented from my online surveys and interviews. Chapter five discusses the implications of my research for religious leaders who will serve in Scotland. The emphasis in this chapter is upon the training of religious leadership and how it can be tailored to meet the needs of the community. The chapter will also discuss community needs, which are more general and applicable to the wider British Muslim community. Chapter six concludes with reflections on the project. I present the contribution my findings have made to the field and how others might build on my findings.

2.0 Literature review

For my literature review I combine two areas of my research which hitherto have had little overlap, namely, Muslim religious leadership and the Scottish Muslim experience. This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section provides an overview of Muslim religious leadership currently functioning in Britain with a specific focus on Imams. Although there are various forms of religious leadership, I explained in the introduction, that Imam is perhaps the broadest term used. The second section provides a brief overview of the roots of the Islamic seminary in Britain. This is followed by critiques and suggestions to improve them. The third section briefly describes the Scottish Muslim experience, beginning with settlement and moving onto the positive and negative experiences peculiar to Scottish Muslims.

2.1 The landscape of British Muslim religious leadership

2.1.1 Who are the Muslim religious leaders in Britain?

It is important to note that within Sunni Islam there is no formal authority structure of hierarchy as it is found within Christian churches. This thesis focuses upon Sunni religious leadership, as the size of my thesis would struggle to accommodate the dynamics within Shia religious authority. There are scholars who function in varying roles making it difficult to place an exact figure on Muslim religious personnel in Britain. Based upon data that there were between 1,200-1,500 mosques in Britain, Sophie Gilliat-Ray gave a rough estimate of around 3,000 Muslim professionals whose primary income is in the religious sector (Gilliat-Ray 2010, 158). That estimate has significantly increased over the past decade, as according to Naqshabandi, there are around 1,850 mosques in Britain today (Naqshabandi 2017). There is also a growing number of Muslims serving in the religious sector outside mosques. Ron Geaves was successful in gaining the background information of Imams from 300 mosques and found that 8.1% of the Imams were British-born (Geaves 2008, 102). His sample covers less than 20% of mosques and we can safely assume that since his research the number of British-born Imams serving in the UK has risen. A more accurate picture will be available in the coming years with research conducted at Cardiff University's Centre for the Study of Islam in the UK, titled, 'Understanding British Imams'. One of the aims of the

research project is to compile a comprehensive national database of Imams serving in British mosques. Basic biographical details of the Imams such as country of birth, ethnicity, age, education and language usage will be collected as part of the research (Cardiff University 2019).

2.1.2 What roles do Imams in Britain serve and are they adequately equipped?

Recent literature demonstrates that expectations are growing on the number of roles an Imam is expected to perform. The term 'super Imam' is often used to describe one individual who simultaneously juggles leading prayers, teaching children and rites of passage with other responsibilities such as marriage counselling, media representation, youth work, interfaith and outreach (Mukadam and Scott-Baumann 2010, 29). Gilliat-Ray foresees this model as unrealistic and recommends a rethink on behalf of mosque communities, religious organizations and even the Imams themselves to divide the responsibilities amongst the community (Gilliat-Ray 2010, 179). Jonathan Birt describes how the 'good Imam' is juxtaposed with the 'bad Imam'; the former an embodiment of civic virtues whilst the latter an agent of radicalisation to be deterred from serving (Birt 2006, 687). Philip Lewis and Sadek Hamid describe Imams using the same dichotomy, comparing two traditionally trained British scholars and placing them neatly into a contextualised and decontextualized category (Lewis and Hamid 2018, 54-55). Similarly, Birt and Lewis describe two different traditionally trained scholars in the 'good Imam v bad Imam' trope, this time comparing the talk of one scholar addressing youths about the importance of education and engaging with civil society with another scholar who addresses the same audience in a manner that inhibits integration (Birt and Lewis 2013, 107-108). Although I agree that there are legitimate concerns over competing tropes of religious leadership, I will argue in the discussion chapter that there is a potential risk of reducing religious leadership into two simple dichotomies; good Imam and bad Imam, contextualised Imam and decontextualized Imam. I will argue that there is more nuance in religious leadership which ought to be appreciated.

Islamic seminaries known as *darul ulooms* are the largest producers of British-born scholars, some of whom go onto become Imams. Geaves notes, however, that these institutions have neither the resources nor the personnel to train their graduates to an adequate level envisaged by government or wider society (Geaves 2008, 100). There is a shared concern

regarding the contextualisation of sacred learning and transferrable skills that the Islamic seminaries provide their graduates for life in Britain. Mukadam and Baumann's report on "The training and development of Muslim Faith Leaders" was compiled after an independent review was commissioned to

"evaluate the current training provisions for imams and scholars provided by seminaries and other imam-training institutions in the UK; to explore the strengths and weaknesses of current provision; and, in particular, to identify any gaps in the training of faith leaders that need to be addressed" (Mukadam and Scott-Baumann 2010, 8).

The report quotes Musharraf Hussain stating that graduates from British seminaries are, "without sufficient communication skills, without leadership skills and without a good understanding of British culture" (Mukadam and Scott-Baumann 2010, 16). Scott-Baumann's more recent work reiterated the lack of preparation seminary graduates are provided for engaging in wider society and proposes an applied theology model to equip graduates with the relevant knowledge and practical skills required to serve effectively in Britain (Scott-Baumann and Cheruvallil-Contractor 2015, 23-24). A day consultation at the Markfield Institute of Higher Education concluded that the seminary system should be "divided according to function-oriented exit points" or a "tier system". For those graduates who aspire to specialise in a particular field, the necessary training can be offered within the seminary system. As for a student who "wishes to become an Imam in a local community, for him a six-year course would not be necessary and he could exit at earlier stages of study and acquire other skills such as communication or counselling" (Setting a Subject Benchmark for dar al-'ulums in Britain 2017, 22). There is a common theme in the aforementioned literature that British-born seminary graduates lack some practical skills in serving their communities. This moves us onto the largest producer of British Imams, the seminary.

2.2 The Islamic seminary in the UK

2.2.1 Origins of the *darul uloom* and its current function

The majority of the Islamic seminaries in Britain have their roots in the Sub-continent and teach the *dars nizami* syllabus. This syllabus was devised by Mulla Nizamuddin (d.1748) to be taught at the *Farangi Mahall*; later it became a franchise for nearly all the *darul ulooms* across the Sub-Continent. The early curriculum centred on subjects such as logic, philosophy and theology but over time the emphasis shifted towards prophetic traditions and Islamic Law. The vision of Nizamuddin was to, “produce a graduate who would think logically, acquire excellent writing and linguistic skills, and above all know enough about Islam as a religious tradition to address issues beyond basic questions of religious practice” (Moosa 2015, 83-84). Gilliat-Ray describes the syllabus as, “an ideal educational training ground for the production of legal professionals who would serve the public institutions of the Mughal Empire” (Gilliat-Ray 2006, 65). Graduates also had the opportunity to pursue specialisation through apprenticeships to become experts in various sciences (Moosa 2015, 84). Moosa explains, that in our times, an adapted version of the *Nizami* syllabus is taught throughout the sub-continent and ‘satellite’ *madrasas* around the world (Moosa 2015, 139). The purpose of the modern day seminary and the ‘adapted syllabus’ taught is a point of contention for those within and outside the seminary system. Moosa, a graduate of the seminary system in India, is highly critical of the purpose the *madrasa* serves in modern society. He argues that the *madrasa* has “morphed from being an academic cum religious institution into an exclusively religious institution” (Moosa 2015, 140). The new role of the *madrasa* is to promote piety, very different from the vision of Nizamuddin. This has led to a number of *madrasa* authorities questioning whether the skill set transferred to graduates sufficiently equips them for the modern world. For the protagonists of maintaining the status quo, “finding scapegoats-the West, secularists, modernizing Muslim elites-is a convenient excuse to deflect the problem” (Moosa 2015, 140). Baumann and Contractor found that when young Muslims in Britain were asked why they want to study Islam, often the answer was to become a better Muslim (Scott-Baumann and Cheruvallil-Contractor 2015, 37). Personal development and cultivating piety are commendable objectives, however, many graduates of the seminary move into roles of religious leadership that

require particular skills. Whether those skills are provided and a broader critique of the seminary is presented below.

2.2.2 Critiques of the seminary

That seminaries in Britain have their roots in the Sub-continent or what Moosa describes as ‘satellite *madrastas*’, results in a transnational shift of pedagogy. The grievance Moosa has with seminaries in the Sub-continent are shared by some British Muslim scholars about seminaries in Britain. Gilliat-Ray quotes Attaullah Siddiqui as stating,

“The tragedy is that the syllabus of such seminaries hardly reflects contemporary challenges and needs. The only difference between an imported Imam and a local trained Imam lies in the fact that the latter can convey his message in English, whilst the former cannot” (Gilliat-Ray 2006, 67).

Likewise, she quotes another young British Imam who states,

“Much of our current training seems to prepare people not to live in this world—but to leave this world! How often do we hear of Imams being taught the salient features of modern Western knowledge—grappling with the complexities of modernity, learning about European philosophy, art, culture and heritage? We hear of Imam Shafi’i writing [and] re-writing his book of fiqh when moving to a new region, yet that spirit of contextualisation is, on the whole, missing from the education process... My criticism is hence not directed at individual Imams but at the system for training and employing Imams that we all as a community have to take responsibility for” (Gilliat-Ray 2006, 67).

Both comments raise the concern about contextualising sacred knowledge. Gilliat-Ray proposes that the ‘reform’ to address these concerns will come from British seminary graduates (Gilliat-Ray 2006, 67). Another criticism of the seminary is the lack of transferable skills with which students graduate (Lewis 2006, 173; Mukadam and Scott-Baumann 2010, 16). As the roles and expectations of the modern British Imam increase, the skills within the Imam’s toolkit should give him enough ability to navigate the field, at least at a rudimentary level. Lewis places the responsibility upon the seminary to provide their students with the relevant intellectual, social and communicational skills; he observes the most able graduates

taking up to a decade to feel at ease in wider society. If the seminary does not address this issue, he warns of a two tier system amongst the scholars, stating, “those least able to understand and connect with the concerns of British Muslims will find employment inside the mosque, and those most able to connect will find employment outside it” (Lewis 2006, 178). As with the good imam v bad Imam dichotomy cited above, I will argue in my discussion chapter that such juxtapositions are reductionist and can prove to be counterproductive.

Hamid Mahmood, a graduate of a British seminary, found that younger voices within the seminary are pursuing the desired changes to make the education relevant. There is, however, resistance on the part of some senior scholars who are apprehensive of change, Mahmood quotes a senior scholar at a British seminary, at the graduation ceremony, downplay the need for accreditation from external universities (Mahmood 2012, 44-45). Moosa notes that in the Subcontinent, one of the reasons why *madrasas* don't want their degrees to receive national recognition is due to the fear that their graduates will abandon serving the religion in pursuit of other careers (Moosa 2015, 54). The British context, however, is very different to the Sub-continent in that even a career within the mosque requires professionalisation. The literature cited above demonstrates the increasing roles an Imam is expected to perform. Moosa argues that the protagonists of the current curriculum have turned it into a monument infused with providential sanctity. Advocates for change argue that the curriculum reflects anti-colonial mind-sets, which actively avoided anything to do with the English language and Western disciplines. Those conditions have now changed and studying English and modern subjects are indispensable to serious academic endeavour (Moosa 2015, 133-134). Muhammad Qasim Zaman similarly notes that there is a fear of change on the part of some scholars. He argues that for such scholars change is, “the result not of legitimate, evolving historical processes, which must be understood and faced, but of conspiracies, which have to be uncovered and resisted” (Zaman 2002, 182).

2.2.3 Suggestions to improve the training of British scholars

A number of suggestions have been proposed to improve the skill set British scholars are equipped with upon graduation. Some of them involve making adjustments to the seminary whilst other suggestions offer alternative spaces to the seminary; either a parallel system or post-seminary graduate training. There are also calls to delineate the roles of British Muslim

religious leadership and train scholars accordingly, thus, relieving the pressure of becoming 'super Imams'.

One of the leading scholars of the Sub-continent, Mufti Taqi Usmani, proposes a filtered version of secular subjects to be taught in the seminary. A graduate of law and MA in Arabic from secular universities in Karachi and Lahore himself, he is cautious of tampering with the seminary in a way that sows seeds of doubt and scepticism. In his view, modern disciplines are designed to challenge the authority of the Muslim faith tradition and it would be corrosive to expose *madrasa* students to this risk. Instead, discerning scholars, who have a firm understanding of the modern disciplines, are best placed to offer a 'cleansed' version of modern subjects (Moosa 2015, 223-224). Scott-Baumann and Contractor found that collaborations between seminaries and mainstream universities have mixed results. A number of obstacles currently make collaboration difficult and a fair amount of engagement is required between key members of universities, seminaries and the government. They also found that there is a need to provide courses to seminary students on 'soft skills' such as counselling, psychology and social skills. Respondents to their research felt that graduates from the seminary are ill-prepared for the secular world and senior authorities in the seminary must acknowledge this. The relevant authorities can then introduce new teaching methods, curricula and pedagogy that will better equip graduates to deal with community-related issues (Scott-Baumann and Cheruvallil-Contractor 2015, 140-142). Haroon Sidat found during his ethnography of a British seminary that British-born teachers are the primary drivers for change. Their 'mediator' position allows them to navigate modern challenges whilst maintaining the traditional ethos expected by senior teachers (Sidat 2018, 5). Gilliat-Ray highlights the point that the seminaries value their independence and that although the pace of change may be a little slow for some, British-born graduates are showing signs of optimism in reforming the seminary (Gilliat-Ray 2006, 72). Ibrahim Mogra is likewise adamant that the reform within the seminary should be an internal decision without interference from external voices (Geaves 2008, 101) Musharraf Hussain explains the gradual change in a three-step process. He argues that most Muslim institutions are in the first two stages of creation and consolidation. Over time, they will move into the third phase of professionalization (Lewis 2006, 171). The aforementioned voices recommend adjustments to the seminary set-up and are optimistic of change, albeit gradually.

Another suggestion proposed to improve the skill-set of seminary graduates is to offer post-graduate courses for scholars who have completed their theological training at the seminary. Cambridge Muslim College took on their first cohort of seminary graduates in 2009 to study a one-year Diploma in Contextual Islamic Studies and Leadership. The diploma introduces students to an array of subjects including Western philosophy, counselling, British political history and world religions (Cambridge Muslim College 2019). Having completed the diploma myself in 2018, I can personally attest to the excellent selection of subjects and outstanding quality of teaching. Currently the diploma is not running and its foreseeable future remains unclear. Cambridge Muslim College is, however, in the third year of its inaugural four-year BA honours program accredited by the Open University. The BA blends the traditional theological study with the 'contextualising modules' offered at the diploma. Likewise, the Markfield Institute of Higher Education offers a BA in Islamic Studies and MA degrees in Islamic Studies, Islamic counselling, Islamic Finance and Islamic Education accredited by Newman University (Markfield Institute of Higher Education 2019). Similar to CMC, Ebrahim College delivers a four-year Islamic studies course which combines the traditional sciences with modern subjects and is in the process of gaining accreditation from Gloucester University (Mahmood 2012, 47). I was unable to access via their website whether they have been successful in gaining accreditation (Ebrahim College 2019). The aforementioned examples are Islamic institutes of higher education that combine secular and Islamic subjects along with gaining accreditation from mainstream universities. These institutions have designed their courses with a view to gain accreditation from mainstream universities. Whether the seminaries wish to adopt this approach in designing their syllabi remains to be seen. For scholars currently serving in mosques, Faith Associates provides Continuous Professional Development courses. Training courses include media training, counselling, E-safety training and safeguarding (Faith associates 2019). Moving forward, it would be ideal if the Imams were already equipped with these skills before commencing their roles. These are some of the suggestions proposed to improve the skill set of religious leadership. I will engage with these suggestions in my discussion chapter and offer my own suggestions in light of my research.

2.3 The Scottish Muslim experience

2.3.1 Scottish-Muslim contact and settlement

Bashir Mann found that information about Muslim contact with Scotland from the middle ages is fragmented and scarce due to material being destroyed during conflicts between England and Scotland (Maan 2008, 10). Despite the challenge, he has undertaken the arduous task of locating information from church records, diaries, letters and government archives to map out a fascinating encounter of Muslims with Scotland. Mann demonstrates positive contact between Muslims and Scotland beyond the well-documented engagement via crusades and empire. One of the most intriguing entries is of a certain Michael Scot (d.1232), who travelled to Spain and translated the works of *Ibn Sina*, *Al Ghazali*, *Ibn Rushd* and *Al Farabi*, as well as penning some of his own works. He is buried in Melrose Abbey and has a statue dedicated in honour of him at the attached museum. Mann travelled to Melrose Abbey and found the statue of ‘the wizard’ garbed in Arab clothing with an Arab headdress.



(Maan, *The Thistle and the Crescent* 2008, 137).

Humayun Ansari identifies Wazir Beg as possibly the first Indian Muslim student studying at Edinburgh University in 1858 (Ansari 2004, 32). There were also an increasing number of Muslims in Britain during the middle of the 19th century due to lascars congregating at ports around Britain, with Glasgow, the Second City of Empire, receiving the most in Scotland

(Ansari 2004, 36). As work in the ports dried up, the lascars in Glasgow looked towards peddling as a steadier source of income (Ansari 2004, 47). From the 1920's onwards, Muslims began peddling and spread across Scotland, laying the foundations for entrepreneurial enterprise (Maan 2014, 20). Post-war migration saw a large influx of Muslims arrive in Britain from the commonwealth with the majority of migrants settling in England. At the same time, Muslims in Scotland replaced peddling with the opening of small businesses (Maan 2014, 36). With the closure of factories and mills in England, coupled with news of successful self-employed Muslims north of the border, many families 'internally migrated' to Scotland and settled there (Maan 2008, 200). Around the mid-1960's there were an estimated 10,000 Muslims living in Scotland as families settled in the region (Maan 2014, 53).

2.3.2 Muslim integration in Scotland

This section will highlight the positive experiences Scottish Muslims have had over the past few decades in terms of integrating into society. The literature points towards a positive experience in terms of personal engagement, an inclusive civic and political environment, as well as better media representation. During my research, I aim to further explore how much some of these themes resonate with my respondents. Bonino provides data from the 2011 Census that 24% of Muslims in Scotland feel being Scottish is part of their identity in comparison to 14% for English Muslims (Bonino 2017, 67). Other researchers have mentioned the same point based on their research and observations (Hopkins 2017, 2) (Botterill, Sanghera and Hopkins 2017, 146; Shaikh and Bonino 2017, 175). One of the key factors mentioned in the literature for the increased feeling of belonging is the absence of high-concentrations of Muslims in any one area; this results in Muslims having to engage with wider society and vice versa (Bonino 2017, 189; Shaikh and Bonino 2017, 191). The literature also points to the nature of nationalism in political discourse differing either side of the border. Scottish nationalism promotes inclusion whereas the British National Party and the United Kingdom Independence Party are seen as exclusionist (Botterill, Sanghera and Hopkins 2017, 146). Scottish Muslims have played a pioneering role in politics with Bashir Mann becoming the first Muslim Justice of the Peace in 1968 and Britain's first Muslim elected councillor in 1970. The first British Muslim Member of Parliament was Mohammed Sarwar elected in 1997 to represent Glasgow Govan (Shaikh and Bonino 2017,

172). Michael Munnik found during his research on Scottish journalists reporting on Muslims, that Scottish journalists displayed a, “general goodwill to Muslims” (Munnik 2017, 222). His journalist respondents were clear to distance their own news organisations from ‘other organisations’ in reproducing Islamophobic content. Munnik provides a stark example of this, stating,

“At a time when the UK national media were debating the admittance of refugees from Syria, balancing ethics against security with an undercurrent of Islamophobia, the newspaper [The National]... headline ran as follows ‘To the first refugees fleeing war-torn Syria who will arrive at Glasgow airport today, we’d just like to say WELCOME TO SCOTLAND” (Munnik 2017, 224).

Likewise, the response to the Glasgow Airport attack in 2007 offers a unique example of political astuteness. Instead of denouncing the evils of terrorism, Scottish First Minister Alex Salmond delivered his statement from Glasgow Central Mosque pledging his solidarity with the Muslim community (Bonino 2017, 149). Bonino notes the lack of reaction a few years on, with his Muslim respondents rarely mentioning the Glasgow attack during interviews between 2011-2013. Some of those who were reminded were quick to argue that the perpetrators were ‘not one of us’. Both perpetrators were from England, with one of them on a temporary work placement in Glasgow (Bonino 2017, 150). Scottish Muslims highlighted this point at the time of the attack and Bruce indicates a noticeably different tone of reporting in the Scottish media compared to reporting from other outlets on other attacks in Britain (Bruce 2014, 196). Historically, the National Front never built support in Scotland and this absence of pseudo-fascism has prevented the stirring of racial hatred in recent times. After a group of Pakistanis kidnapped and murdered 15-year-old Kirss Donald in Glasgow, Nick Griffin organised a British National Party march but they “came and left in the dark” (Bonino 2017, 146). Similarly, the Scottish Defence League hasn’t gained the traction their English counterparts have (Bonino 2017, 146). These are examples of positive interaction between Muslims and Scotland.

2.3.3 Muslim infrastructure and discrimination

Researchers are candid in clarifying that Scotland is not bereft of discrimination and a myth of tolerance can be mistaken. The following authors have documented discrimination faced by Muslims in the form of prejudice, racism, Islamophobia and verbal and physical abuse

(Bruce 2014, 199) (Botterill, Sanghera and Hopkins 2017, 144; Bonino 2017, 131). Getting an accurate picture of anti-Muslim sentiment is impeded by the difficulty of disentangling religion from race and ethnicity as many victims of the abuse are hurled inaccurate offenses (Bonino 2017, 125). Bruce also notes the subtlety in ascertaining anti-Muslim sentiment from secularists, calling them 'accidental Islamophobes' as their gripe is with all religions and not Islam specifically (Bruce 2014, 210). There are also potential drawbacks for Muslims in having a smaller population in comparison to England. The migrant experience resulted in mosques functioning as community centres and a centre point for Muslims to turn to for help with an array of issues (Shaikh and Bonino 2017, 189). Overtime, Muslims services and infrastructure throughout Britain have grown and I will explore how Scottish Muslims feel about the growth of Muslim infrastructure in Scotland. As an example, I was unable to locate a single Islamic seminary in Scotland whereas England has over two dozen registered seminaries (Gilliat-Ray 2006, 57).

This chapter has presented the background to my research. These are two areas, which I found to have little to no overlap in the literature. Religious leadership and seminaries are mostly discussed within the English context. Literature on Scottish Muslims is an emerging field and I found nothing substantial on Scottish Muslim religious leadership. These two areas helped me to design my research as I was able to not only explore questions hitherto unasked but also probe what is found in the literature .

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Philosophical underpinnings

I took an inductive approach to my research in that the data will be collected and analysed prior to developing a theory. My epistemological approach to the research is interpretivism. The interpretivist approach is critical of positivism, arguing against the application of the scientific model to study the social world. Proponents of interpretivism argue that the procedure for studying the subject matter in social science, people and their institutions, requires a different logic to the positivist approach to the natural sciences. The emphasis is upon understanding human behaviour as opposed to explaining human behaviour. The intellectual heritage of interpretivism includes Max Weber's *Verstehen* (understanding), which shifts the focus from forces external to the subject to interpretive empathic understandings of social action (Bryman 2008, 15). Developing upon Weber's *Verstehen*, Alfred Schutz applied 'phenomenology' whereby social scientists interpret the social conditions and actions of people from the subject's point of view (Bryman 2008, 16).

My ontological approach to the research is constructionist. Constructionism implies that social phenomena and categories are in a constant state of revision. I took a constructionist position that Strauss and Becker have taken, both careful not to take constructionism to its extreme. Their position is that culture has a reality which exists prior to the participation of people; a reference point which is in the process of being formed (Bryman 2008, 20). For my research, I selected interpretivist and constructionist approaches as they best facilitate the data I wanted to gather. Willis explains that, as opposed to positivism, which seeks rigid explanations, interpretive methods are more inclusive of multiple viewpoints (Willis 2007, 194). Researchers coming from an interpretivist and constructionist paradigm prefer qualitative methods as they provide richer sources of data. In contrast, researchers from a positivist paradigm prefer quantitative approaches, which provide more measurable approaches (Silverman 2000, 13). For my research, I wanted to gather multiple viewpoints from my respondents, thus, employing qualitative methods would best suit my research. Although I have taken a mixed methods approach, it is largely qualitative and the reasoning for this explained below.

3.2.1 Research design: Why I chose mixed methods

For my research, I decided to undertake a mixed methods approach to collecting data by combining qualitative and quantitative methods. This was in the form of an online survey and six semi-structured interviews. The online survey was largely quantitative with a qualitative element in the form of respondents given space to make comments. Julia Brannen notes that by taking a mixed methods approach, the researcher is bridging the divide between both methods and able to appeal to proponents of both camps. I followed a research design which she describes as 'sequential' in that quantitative research precedes the more dominant qualitative research (Brannen 2005, 15). This method allows, "quantitative research help with the choice of subjects in the qualitative investigation" (Blaxter, Hughes and Tight 2010, 206). For my qualitative research, I had originally planned to conduct two focus groups but after conducting a pilot semi-structured interview, I decided to conduct six semi-structured interviews. Further detail behind the reasoning for this decision is provided below. My approach fits the 'complementary' model whereby multiple methods are used to, "reveal the different dimensions of a phenomenon and enrich understandings of the multi-faceted, complex nature of the social world" (Alexander, et al. 2008, 128).

3.2.2 Online Surveys

For my online surveys, I opted for a website called Online Surveys, which is used by over 130 UK-based universities for academic research (Online Surveys 2019). One of the main advantages of using an online survey was the efficiency in gathering qualitative data. I benefited from the advantages of using the internet for collecting data, namely, economic in terms of time and money, reaching a large number of respondents over a large distance and collating the data very quickly (Bryman 2008, 632). I also used two methods recommended to get a higher response rate. One was to mention in the invitation that the survey will take around 10 minutes and the second was providing a progress indicator as respondents answered questions (Bryman 2008, 649).

A potential drawback I envisaged was respondents not understanding either the questions or the multiple-choice options provided (Bechhofer and Paterson 2000, 76). To overcome this, I conducted a pilot of the survey, which brought a few issues to my attention. Although

I felt that I had kept a balance between academic language and common parlance, some of the feedback from the pilot made me reconsider. For example, I asked a question about the importance of 'theological training' for a religious leader to which one of my pilot respondents answered 'not important'. Upon asking him why he chose 'not important', he replied that he didn't know what was meant by 'theological training', so I changed this option to the importance of 'Islamic knowledge'. I also asked what might seem an obvious question by asking respondents to confirm if they are Muslim males aged 16-40 and raised in Scotland. Asking this obvious question paid dividends as three of the respondents did not fit the profile but completed the survey. Similarly, I found that providing a comment section for respondents to express their thoughts in their own words had a twofold advantage. Firstly, it allowed respondents to expand on their answer and secondly, it demonstrated that some multiple-choice options were not ticked due to not understanding them. For example, when asked about the importance of interpersonal skills a religious leader should possess, there was disparity between the 'interpersonal skills' option checked and the comments highlighting the importance of interpersonal skills. I assumed from this that the term 'interpersonal skills' may not have been understood by some participants as they highlighted the importance of interpersonal skills in the comments section using different words.

The invitation mentioned that the survey invites responses from Muslim males aged 16-40 who grew up in Scotland. Once a participant clicked on the link provided, the first question posed was if they fit the profile invited. Three participants responded negatively but proceeded to fill out the survey. From their comments, I assumed that these three responses were from females as all three spoke about services for women in the Muslim community and access to scholars for women. Online Surveys has a function which allows the researcher to filter answers, thereby allowing me to exclude these three responses from my data. The reason why I excluded females altogether and males outside the age category mentioned above was that I felt the size of my research would be unable to accommodate them. My dissertation research period began during Ramadan, which meant that I had to factor in my potential respondents' circumstances. Accordingly, I decided to conduct the online survey during Ramadan due to the relative ease and flexibility with which it could be completed and closed the survey one week after Ramadan. I was able to view responses as

they were submitted and begin analysing the data. The software updated the tables, graphs and pie charts as each response was submitted. I closed the survey a week after Ramadan in order to analyse the data submitted and refine my interview questions accordingly. I will discuss the details of the data gathered in the survey and how those responses influenced my interview design in the 'findings' section of this thesis. I received thirty-eight responses in total, including the three null responses.

3.2.3 Semi-structured interviews

My original research design was to follow up the online survey with two focus groups consisting of six participants each. My reasoning behind this was to collect the views of a large number of people in a format less structured than interviewing. The benefit of this was that a discussion would ensue, where views are probed and challenged as opposed to a 'question followed by answer' format. Participants would also have had the opportunity to hear the thoughts of others and perhaps modify their view (Bryman 2008, 475). However, after conducting a pilot semi-structured interview, I realised that semi-structured interviews would be more conducive to answering my research questions. During the piloted semi-structured interview, I was able to ask follow-up questions and found that the 'crux of the matter' for the participant was often revealed after some follow-up questions (Brinkmann and Kvale 2015, 161) and second questions (Brinkmann and Kvale 2015, 165). I could have exercised follow-up questions in the focus groups but the element of control over the conversation was a concern. Finding a fine balance between allowing the group to freely discuss and as a moderator trying to get through a set of questions seemed a challenge (Bryman 2008, 488). Logistics would also prove more difficult in gathering six people at the same time in the same place (Bryman 2008, 488), especially as my participants were not expected to have had any prior contact with one another. Perhaps if my research was based in a classroom or work setting where organising logistics was easier, a focus group may prove an easier option to arrange. Other possible issues were individuals dominating the discussion and a 'group think' atmosphere materialising whereby participants express the 'socially accepted' views (Bryman 2008, 489). There were also potential problems of people speaking at the same time and issues of audibility which could implicate the transcription and analysis (Bryman 2008, 488). Instead, I opted to conduct six semi-structured interviews for the following reasons.

Bryman lists some of the advantages of semi-structured interviews. A semi-structured interview allows the participant to express their concerns and going off on tangents is seen as relevant (Bryman 2008, 437). I experienced this more so with my older participants who would go on to answer beyond the question asked. I duly noted their comments and pursued their responses with follow-up questions. The semi-structured method provided me with the flexibility to ask follow up questions and momentarily depart from the set questions. My pilot interviews brought to light that I needed to be less quantitative as I found myself asking the pilot respondent how he felt on every issue that I had included in the survey. This felt as though I was verbally taking him through the survey and pigeonholing the exercise. The semi-structured format allowed me to pursue the participants' response and at the same time I was able to question all participants on the main themes which emerged from the literature review and survey. To give the interview some structure and to allow the participant to know what to expect, I followed an order of topics (Bryman 2008, 442). I began with questions about the experience the participant has had hitherto with religious leadership, followed by how they envisage future religious leadership and finishing with the Scottish context. I informed the participants of this format at the beginning of the interview so that they were aware of the order of topics.

On a few occasions I had to reword my question for the participant to fully understand what he was being asked. As an example, Hamid aged 32, was asked, "You've lived in Scotland all your life, born and bred here. How different do you feel the Scottish context is to the rest of Britain for Muslims?" There was a long pause followed by his answer, "I think it's a difficult one" to which I reworded the question to, "In what ways is it easier or better to be a Muslim in England than is it in Scotland and vice versa?" Hamid gave a lengthy answer when I reworded my question. One of the possible challenges facing novice interviewers is 'unexpected interview behaviour' whereby the participant may say something surprising which shocks the researcher (Roulston, de Marris and Lewis 2003, 649). I was prepared for this and at no point felt surprised by any of the answers the participants gave. I felt this confidence due to having the advantage of having read the literature as well as personal experience in the field for over a decade. On the contrary, I found myself able to probe and instigate discussion when participants raised issues. As an example, Hamid mentioned that scholars should be familiar with the basic principles of science because there is a perception

that followers of religion shun the sciences. I followed this up by mentioning knowledge of evolution to which Hamid went on to discuss Darwinism. Another practical skill suggested in interviewing is seeking clarification on what the participant intended without imposing meaning upon them (Bryman 2008, 445). I followed this by often repeating what the participant said to gain clarification. At the end of the interview, I repeated the three main themes that we had covered to allow the participant to add any additional comments. Hasan took this opportunity to give a lengthy summary of how he felt about the current situation of Muslim religious organisations in Scotland.

3.3. Recruitment and participant profiles

Recruitment for both the survey and interviews was arranged through contacting Muslim organisations, namely, the Muslim Council of Scotland (Muslim Council of Scotland 2019) an educational organisation called isyllabus (isyllabus 2019), local mosques and a university chaplain. The online survey was also sent to personal contacts to share on their social media platforms. I requested isyllabus if they could forward the survey via email to their students but they politely declined. They explained that emails are sent solely for study related material but were happy to post the survey on their Facebook page. Alan Bryman similarly notes a decline in responses to email surveys as the novelty of email surveys in the early years has worn off (Bryman 2008, 648). I noticed a spike in responses to the survey following their Facebook post and I estimate that perhaps a quarter of my responses may have been due to their post. For my interviews, I was able to access young Scottish Muslim males from a range of backgrounds. Three of my interviewees were from Edinburgh and three from Glasgow; these two cities share over 60% of the Muslim population in Scotland (Bonino 2017, 25). Two of the participants were in their late teens and both were students. Two were in their late twenties and two were in their early-mid thirties. The occupations of these participants included student, civil engineer, optometrist, pharmacist and financial risk assessor. Five of the participants had Pakistani heritage and one was of East African-Indian heritage. Interviews took place at venues and times convenient to the participants; there were four different venues in total, two mosques, a Muslim community centre and a Muslim education centre. The interviews with the two youngest interviewees were the shortest. Discussions about life in Scotland as a Muslim and comparing that to life in England as a Muslim were significantly shorter with the younger participants. One of the participants

wanted to meet at 8pm after he finished from work. I conducted the interview at 8pm but the participant was clearly tired so I wrapped up the interview after 15 minutes.

Coincidentally, the timing for this interview was the latest time I had conducted an interview.

3.4 Ethical considerations

Before embarking on my research, I requested ethical approval from Cardiff University by submitting the 'School of History, Archaeology and Religion Research and Teaching Ethical Approval Form'. Participants of both the online survey and interviews were provided with separate ethical approval forms (see appendix A and B). The participants of the online survey were entirely anonymous and aside from knowing the gender, age range, and country of upbringing, no other information was requested from participants. The interviews involved meeting participants in person; hence, I explained the nature of my research during recruitment and again before the interview. Discussing the nature of my research just before the interview allowed me to gauge the participants' familiarity with terminology and jargon. For example, I attempted to discover if the participant is familiar with words such as *darul uloom*, *madrasa* and seminary, thus allowing me to use the appropriate word during the interview. As well as providing them with the consent form, I explained that I would use pseudonyms for them. I assigned a pseudonym to each participant directly after the interview and referred to them in my notes with their pseudonyms henceforth. I also made a conscious effort not to mention their real name during the interview, instead, referring to them as 'my participant'. The only place where the real names of my participants appear is on the consent form. I verbally reiterated before the interview what was included in the consent form regarding voluntary participation and the right to withdraw at any time.

3.5 Storage

The responses to the online survey were stored in a password protected website, Online Surveys (Online Surveys 2019), as well as encrypted external storage. The audio and transcripts of the interviews were stored in a password protected website, (Otter Voice Notes 2019), and a password protected USB drive. The only place where the interview participants' real names appear is on the consent form. The consent forms, interview

transcripts and survey data is securely stored with me and in line with Cardiff University's School of History, Archaeology and Religion Guidelines (Cardiff University 2019), I will destroy them after five years.

3.6 Data analysis

I took a grounded theory approach to my data analysis. Grounded theory is attributed to Anselm Strauss and Barney Glaser for bringing together positivism and interactionism. Grounded theory aims to develop a theory by analysing the patterns and themes discovered from the data (Babbie 2013, 336). Central to the process of grounded theory is a three-step process of coding. Open coding involves breaking down, close examination, comparing and contrasting, conceptualising and categorising data. This process yields concepts, which are later developed into categories. Axial coding puts the data back together by linking codes to contexts, to patterns of interactions. Selective coding then develops broader theoretical conclusions by linking the relationship between the most significant categories (Bryman 2008, 543). As mentioned above, an induction approach generates theory (Bryman 2008, 12). As an example, when I asked an open question to my interview respondents about why they approach the personnel they do so for their religious questions, all of them spoke of having a personal relationship with either their mosque Imam or locally based scholar. They used different words to express this and after open coding their responses, I used the term 'personal relationship with Imam' for axial coding this category. I then linked having a personal relationship with the Imam to concerns expressed in my online survey about not contacting mosque Imams due to privacy and confidentiality, as my selective coding. Thus, these sub-nodes came under the broader category of the importance interpersonal skills are for religious leaders.

The software I used to conduct the interviews, Otter, transcribed the interviews almost instantaneously. The accuracy level was considerably lower than my pilot interview due to a few reasons. Participants had heavy Scottish accents which resulted in the software transcribing words different to those spoken. Participants spoke in their colloquial sentence structures which 'confused' the software to think they are saying something different. There were a number of Arabic and Urdu words used during the interview which the software did not recognize. Some of the most common Arabic words used were Imams, *darul uloom* and *madrasa*, which the software transcribed as moms, darker rooms and Mother Theresa,

respectively. The software also presents the most commonly used words. Whilst editing the interviews I removed the 'um' and 'erm's but maintained the colloquially spoken sentence structure. The transcripts therefore read grammatically incorrect but accurately reflect local parlance. The interviews took place over a few days and were transcribed within a couple of weeks. I coded my interviews during transcription and again after completing the transcription. A section from a sample interview is provided in appendix D. The software I used to conduct my survey, Online Surveys, generates the results almost instantaneously and presents them in a graph, table and pie chart format. Examples of this will be provided in the findings chapter. I have used the Harvard referencing style throughout my thesis.

3.7 Reflexivity

Nigel Gilbert defines reflexivity as, "a style of research that makes clear the researcher's own beliefs and objectives. It considers how the researcher is part of the research process and how he or she contributes to the construction of meaning on the topic under study" (Gilbert 2008, 512). With this in mind, I will describe the impact of my personal profile on the research. I feel that my upbringing, education and work experience are all related to the study at hand. Raymond Madden explains that, "Acknowledging the fact that the ethnographer is the primary tool of research and an active participant in the ethnographic field also means that properly confronting the influence of the ethnographer on research and representation is an unavoidable pre-condition of a reliable ethnographic account" (Madden 2010, 23). I personally fit into the demography of the respondents I was researching, as I am a Muslim male raised in Scotland aged 16-40. Therefore, I have also experienced accessing religious leadership living in Scotland as a Muslim of Pakistani heritage. In terms of questioning participants about comparing life in Scotland as a Muslim to life in the rest of Britain as a Muslim, I have lived for over a decade in both Scotland and England, so have personal experience of both countries. Whilst interviewing Imran, aged 18, about the nature of discrimination he has felt in Scotland, it was similar to my own experience in that ethnicity was targeted more than religion. During the interviews, I was able to mirror the colloquial vernacular of my participants, this is something which is natural for me when I return to Scotland. My mode of speech perhaps made the participants feel comfortable speaking to an 'insider'. Although I wasn't strictly an 'insider' as I haven't lived in Scotland for over 15 years, my participants didn't know of my history and due to my

accent mirroring theirs, perhaps did not make the cognitive switch to place me as an 'outsider' researcher. The interviews felt more like a casual conversation between two fellow Muslim Scots as opposed to 'some researcher them asking about Islam'. Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney explains that native researchers benefit from not only accessing the intellectual dimension but also the sensory and emotive dimension of the researched community (Ohnuki-Tierney 1984, 585). I could relate to my participants discussing issues surrounding language and contextualisation barriers when accessing religious leadership.

There are ethical implications when the participant community allows 'one of their own' to conduct research amongst them. Lanita Jacobs-Huey speaks of her experience of being transparent in her publications as a native African American studying her own community. At the same time, the researcher ought to be careful not to alienate themselves, as researchers, from their own community nor alienate the research subjects (Jacobs-Huey 2002, 800). I faced no issues in gaining access to participants through the organisations I contacted and these 'gatekeepers' were pleased to hear of my research. Some expressed interest in reading my research when it is complete. The ease of access places the researcher in a position of responsibility whereby the gatekeepers allow access and expect the insider to "cause no harm" (A.-A. Ahmed 2017, 212). Ahmed shares his ethical standpoint of the responsibility an insider shoulders as being honest about his observations yet careful not to implicate the participants (A.-A. Ahmed 2017, 217). I feel as though I have been faithful to research procedures and don't feel as though I was told anything that implicates any of my respondents.

In terms of discussing the training of future Imams, I have studied at two Islamic seminaries and taught at one Islamic seminary over a total period of 15 years. Hence, I have experience of both being trained and training others in becoming an Imam. As I will discuss in the discussion chapter, the seminaries don't actually deliver 'Imam training courses' but an adaptation of the *Dars Nizami*. Those who complete the *dars nizami* are expected to be adequately trained to begin serving as religious leaders in the Muslim community. I also have personal experience of serving as a religious leader in the form of a mosque Imam, preacher and teacher. Like many other British-born Muslim religious leaders, my experience began whilst I was a student. I have personally taught children as young as six and adults over the age of 80 how to recite the Quran. I have delivered sermons to large congregations

and conducted the rites of passage. I have served as a mosque Imam on a temporary basis numerous times, but have never been appointed as the official Imam of any mosque. This is due to my commitments in my primary occupation as a teacher not allowing me to take on a permanent Imam position. I also studied a BA in Islamic Studies at the University of Leeds after graduating from seminary, thereby attending both confessional and non-confessional forms of higher Islamic Studies. From my experience, I was aware that the majority of Muslims outside the seminary are not aware of the syllabus or pedagogy within the seminary. My personal background placed me in a position of familiarity with the research topic in comparison to my respondents, hence as mentioned above, I wasn't surprised by any of the conversations. Hammersley and Atkinson explain,

“The concept of reflexivity acknowledges that the orientations of researchers will be shaped by their socio-historical location, including the values and interests that these locations confer upon them. What this represents is a rejection of the idea that social research is, or can be, carried out in some autonomous realm that is insulated from the wider society and from the biography of the researcher, in such a way that its findings can be unaffected by social processes and personal characteristics” (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007, 15).

In terms of the implications of social research, Hammersley and Atkinson explain that reflexivity acknowledges that the researcher can be producing knowledge for the sake of knowledge and keep in mind the political and practical effects of their research (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007, 17). I am hopeful that my research will contribute towards discussions on training religious leadership to serve in Scotland. My research may also interest Islamic seminaries, Islamic colleges, mosques and institutes offering practical applied theology skills.

4.0 Findings

I will merge and present the findings of my online survey and interviews. This chapter is divided into three sub-sections, namely, the experience respondents have had hitherto with religious leadership, how the respondents envisage future leadership and finally how much the Scottish Muslim experience differs from the rest of Britain Muslim experience. Within each sub-section, responses from the survey and interview are presented. Please remember that the interviews took place after analysing the survey.

I will refer to my interview respondents by their pseudonyms. Below is a brief description of them.

Imran. 18-year-old student from Edinburgh

Samir. 18-year-old student from Glasgow

Manzoor. 27-year-old optometrist from Glasgow

Raheem. 28-year-old financial risk analyst from Edinburgh

Hamid. 32-year-old civil engineer from Edinburgh

Hasan. 34-year-old pharmacist from Glasgow

4.1 Experience hitherto with religious leadership

4.1.1 Online survey

54% of my respondents contacted a mosque for their religious questions. This was in contrast to my interview respondents as all six of them contacted mosque Imams. The most common reasons selected for not contacting a mosque Imam were language barrier (47%) and concerns over privacy and confidentiality (41%). 83% of the respondents contact someone based in their city, which means there are locally based religious personnel who are not Imams that respondents are contacting. In response to the question asking respondents who they approach for their religious questions other than Imams, the two highest responses were scholars who are not Imams and 'the internet'. 'The internet' is a vague answer and can mean anything from studying courses delivered online to searching for answers on Google.

4.1.2 Interviews

All of my interview participants, except Manzoor, stated that the mosque Imam is the first person they approach if they have a religious question. Manzoor stated that friends who are scholars but not Imams are easier to access and that he contacts multiple scholars, including the Imam, on one issue. Others also spoke of contacting friends or scholars who are not Imams if their question needed a quicker response. All of the participants commented on having a personal, and in some cases a longstanding, relationship with the Imam. Samir and Imran both stated that their Imam was also their mosque teacher with Samir stating, “Most Imams don’t really have the knowledge of what’s going on here, they’ve got that different mentality from Pakistan and stuff. He [his Imam] knows English and he knows everything that’s going on and stuff with the youth and all that”. Raheem spoke of a, “trust element to go to somebody that’s qualified, they will most likely understand your context, understand the context of your question”. Hasan spoke of contacting the Imam and also scholars who are not Imams. When asked the reason for approaching the personnel that he does, he responded, “I think a mosque Imam is, you get to know him. You come to the *masjid* regularly, you gain a friendship, even with some a close relationship”. Haimd’s response to being asked why he chose to contact a mosque Imam was,

“That’s just because I have a better relationship with my local mosque Imam. Whereas of course, there are other religious scholars available online or even further afield in the world but because I have a good relationship with my local mosque, I would always tend to go to my local mosque”.

The respondents valued having a personal relationship and this highlights the importance of interpersonal skills in a religious leader. Imran spoke of his experience with disengaged Imams, stating,

“Generally, I do think that a person can gain as much knowledge as they can but they might not have necessarily have the right ways to teach it forward. Like first-hand, I’ve have been taught by many teachers, some of them know stuff out of the world but when it comes to teaching, you see them lack [sic] just teaching or interest. So I think there should be some kind of qualification where you can actually learn how to teach, find different ways to teach kids, know how to motivate kids to come to the mosque... I think there should be maybe even a separate course that you can go through, but not to be that long, but ensure you’re capable of going and teaching other kids”.

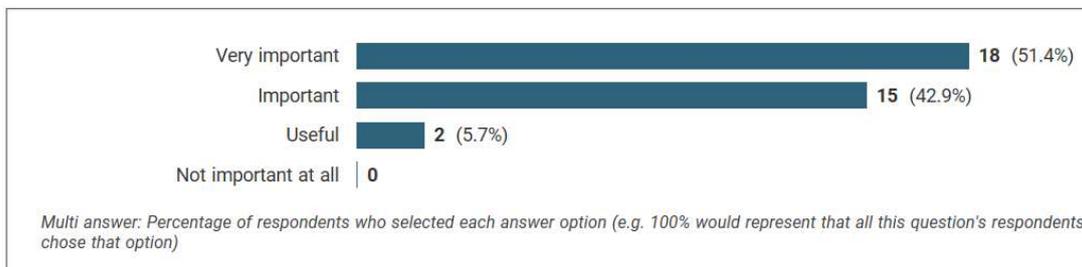
Imran spoke specifically about religious leaders connecting with children and suggested training courses which will help young scholars to engage with children. With a young population, teaching children is an important function that religious leaders will serve and relevant training will enhance their credentials to do so.

4.2 Envisaging future religious leadership

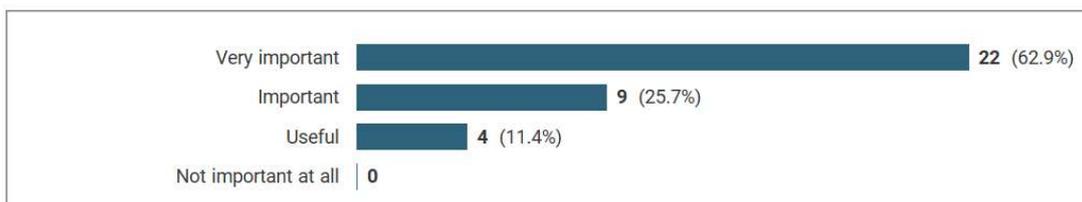
4.2.1 Online Survey

Respondents were asked to rate the importance of religious leaders possessing qualifications and professional training in a range of topics. The respondents were given 13 areas of knowledge and practical skills to rate with the options of very important, important, useful and not important. An additional field was left open for respondents to add any other skills they felt were very important for religious leaders to possess. The skills can be broadly categorised under interpersonal skills and contemporary application. Under interpersonal skills, some of the standout responses are the following:

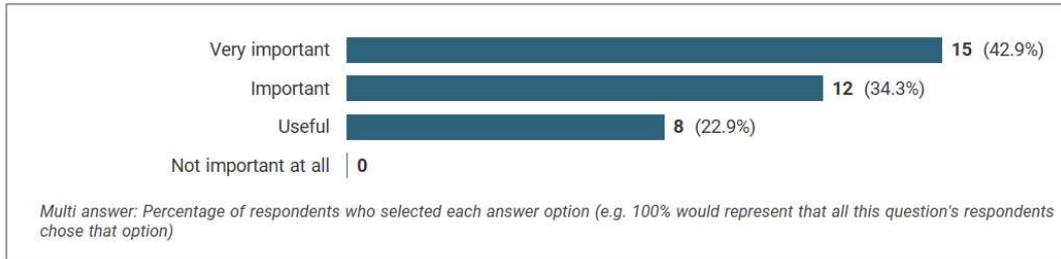
9.4 Counselling skills (mental health)



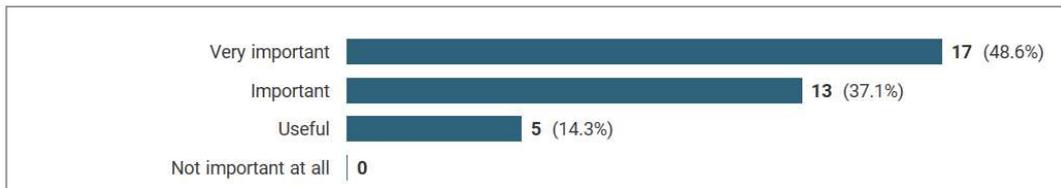
9.5 Marital counselling skills (pre, during, post)



9.6 Bereavement support

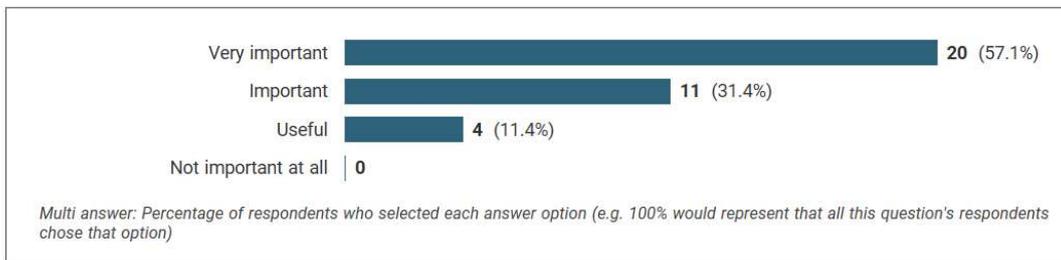


9.7 Conflict resolution skills



Under contemporary application, some of the standout responses were the following:

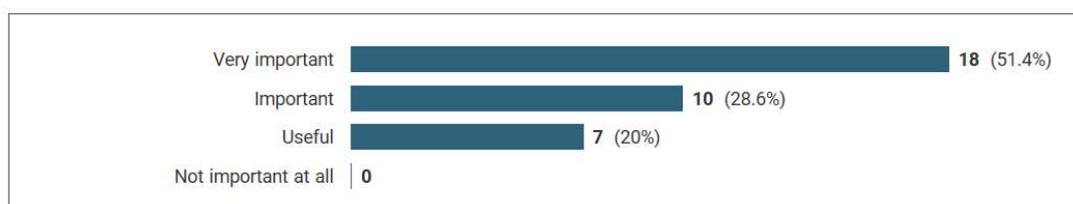
9.10 Knowledge of current ethical debates (e.g. gender, sexuality)



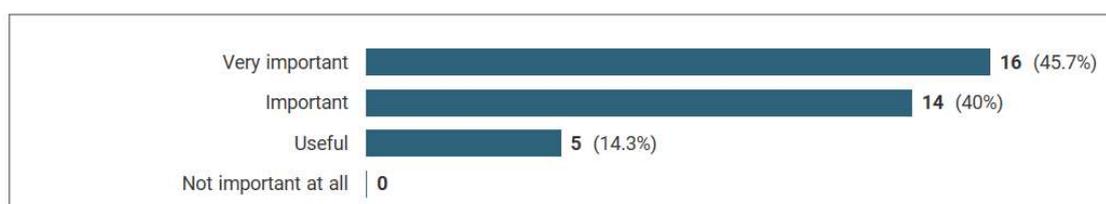
9.11 Knowledge of contemporary finance (e.g. mortgage, insurance)



9.9 Knowledge of current theological debates (e.g. atheism)



9.12 Knowledge of contemporary medical issues (e.g. abortion, organ donation)



There is clearly a wide range of skills expected from future religious leadership. The practicalities of how one individual is equipped with training in multiple fields will be explored in the discussion chapter.

The option to add ‘any other skills which are very important’ drew a wide range of responses. The most prominent qualification quoted was good communication skills in English. The comments included, “Good ability to express his views with formal use of the English language” to, “Being able to take his Islamic knowledge and then link it to secular knowledge to at least some degree”. Responses spoke of being accessible to all ages, with youth and women specifically mentioned. Responses also spoke of addressing concerns specific to the local community. Interpersonal skills were also mentioned but in different words. Respondents were then asked where they envisage future leaders to primarily receive the aforementioned qualifications to which they were able to select multiple options. 74% selected the Islamic seminary (*darul uloom/dars nizami*) option. 60% selected Islamic colleges other than *darul ulooms* and 37% selected mainstream education institutes such as college and university. This showed that the respondents felt that the seminary or Islamic colleges have a prominent role in preparing their graduates with the adequate skill set.

The next question asked respondents about the importance of religious leaders possessing higher education at different levels. The order was Standard Grade (GCSE equivalent), Highers (A-levels equivalent), BA/BSC, MA and finally PhD. 77% responded that Standard

Grade education is very important, 59% responded that Highers are very important and 46% responded that a BA/BSC degree was very important. For MA degree, there was a drastic shift with 44% responding with useful and 27% with not important at all. The responses to PhD were 51% useful and 42% not important at all. Respondents were then asked to explain their reasoning behind their answers to the above question. This section gave an interesting insight into the respondents' thoughts about the level to which future religious leaders should be educated and their reasoning behind it. My question was specifically worded with 'religious leaders' but the comments overwhelmingly responded with 'Imams'. This perhaps indicates towards a subconscious notion that the 'Imam' has come to represent a multi-talented, multi-skilled religious leader.

Four key themes emerged from the comments explaining their answers. The first theme was related to quality assurance in Imams with regards to acquiring a skill set by attending higher education. One comment explained, "Within a degree, it is not necessarily the knowledge that an Imam will learn that will be useful; however the presentation skills, working in groups, speaking with people who may not necessarily agree with you are all important soft skills". Another comment resonated this point, stating, "I think at degree level because at degree level it teaches the individual useful skills while obtaining that degree that will help in development". One response equated the answers Imams will give to questions asked with the level of their secular education, stating, "If they are somewhat educated then you will get an educated answer rather than a cultural answer".

Communication skills were also mentioned with one comment explaining, "I believe an Imam nowadays should have a religious and educational background where they can properly speak on things happening day to day in an intellectual manner".

The second theme which emerged was the ability to contextualise the knowledge Imams have acquired and being able to relate to the congregation. This theme had the most number of comments. With regards to relating to the congregation, one comment stated, "If they're not educated and experienced in secular knowledge, it will be hard for them to relate to the youth who have went [sic] through higher education". Another comment stated, "Its [sic] important as a lot of the congregation are educated and the Imam should be too so that he/she is relatable". Another response stated, "To be able to relate/understand to their communities, leaders should have had similar experiences of

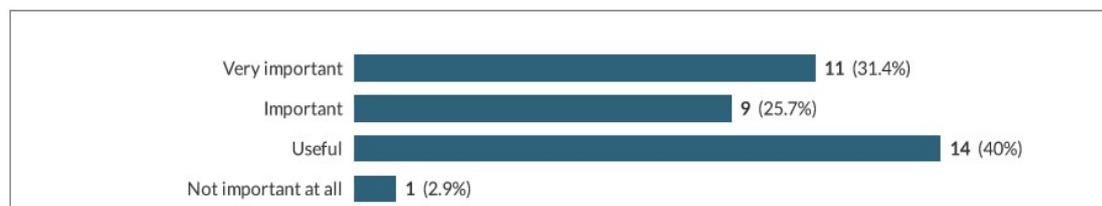
education of the community. In Scotland a large proportion of the community go on to complete some form of higher education degree”. This theme of relating to the congregation was also raised in the following question about the importance of Imams having experience outside of the mosque setting. One of the respondents who felt that higher education would help to contextualise the Imams’ outlook stated, “The more education they have, the more open minded they are and understanding to the relevance and context of our time and practising our faith”.

The third theme which emerged was that respondents felt higher education was a requirement for leadership. One respondent commented, “A first degree is almost considered essential for people on a similar level of leadership in our society”. Another comment mentioned that acquiring leadership skills are more important than going through the education system, stating, “Religious education may not always be measured academically. As long as the religious leader is knowledgeable in his field and has the qualities if [sic] leadership and wisdom”. The fourth theme stated that studying anything outside their seminary training was an added bonus, with one comment stating, “I don’t see the need for them to study other things outside of their field, they should just stick to that if they want to study otherwise then that’s an individual choice”. Reading the comments highlights an assumption that the seminary does not provide key skills and training which would be acquired by attending mainstream university.

The next question asked respondents how important it is for religious leaders to have experience of working external to the mosque/religious setting. The multiple options produced the following results:

How important is it for Muslim religious leaders to have experience working in an environment external to the mosque/religious setting?

Experience working outside a mosque/religious setting



Respondents were then asked to explain the reasoning behind their answer. The overwhelming response to this question was the importance of Imams being able to understand and relate to the congregation. This is mentioned in comments such as, “It’s good for a Muslim leader, this may give him a better understanding of what the laymen come across on a daily basis” and, “If they have experience working outside the mosque it will give them a feel for the environment and its people and culture and can develop interpersonal skills”. Some commented that having first-hand experience was important to understanding the wider problems in society, stating, “They need to understand how it is in the real world and they won't have that experience if they are in the mosque 24/7”. Another commented, “Not critical [working outside the mosque] but helps to shape a more rounded character”. Some stated that the important aspect was that the Imam can relate to people and this did not necessitate having to work in an external environment. One comment stated, “Being a religious leader working in a religious environment does not mean that they are secluded from society. Although it may help to be more relateable [sic] person, through counselling members of the community they can learn and reflect on issues within society”. The standout factor was the ability to relate to others who are outside the religious sector.

4.2.2 Interviews

Based on the responses to the survey, I asked my interview participants two main lines of questions. The first question asked the interviewees what qualifications and skills they felt were important for a religious leader to possess. I left the question open for the participant to comment on what he felt was important. All the participants spoke about the importance of the religious leader engaging with the community, whether that was with children, youths or adults. Imran had stated his experience with some teachers who possess a vast amount of knowledge but he felt were unable to convey that knowledge to the children they taught. I asked him what other skills a religious leader should possess and he responded with a similar answer highlighting the importance of teachers having a positive relationship with students, stating,

“[He] Should be able to bond with kids as well... You shouldn't be too strict that the kids are scared to even come [sic] mosque and you shouldn't be too free that they're obviously not learning... So it should be definitely a bonding between the teacher and the children”.

For Imran, the religious leader in his capacity of a teacher was like a mentor. In some mosques, especially the smaller ones, the children might have the same teacher for a number of years. Unlike secondary school, where the teacher is changing multiple times in the day, in a mosque setting a student could have the same teacher for a number of years. Samir had a positive experience with his Imam who spoke English and connected well with the youth. His response to my questioning him about the skills future religious leaders should possess was, "Talking about the future Imams, I think they need to specialize more in the youth because there's a lot of youth that are just on the streets and doing whatever. That's what they need to focus on". Both Imran and Samir mentioned the vast knowledge the Imams may possess but there was a need to connect to children and youths to convey the knowledge. This perhaps reflected that fact that both Imran and Samir were 18 years old, hence their concerns were with children and youth. They will have recent experience of the evening mosque system.

Manzoor similarly spoke of youth work but his examples were reflective of issues which concern Muslims a little older. Asked the same question he responded with,

"I think one of the main issues is youth work. For example, drug rehabilitation and relationships, which is the main thing, for example, after marriage and kind of relationships in terms of marriage courses, etc."

Drugs and marriage concern teens too but these were specifically mentioned by Manzoor. The response to this question was perhaps a reflection of him being in his late twenties and these issues more pertinent to his age category. Raheem's response to this question was the importance of having 'recognised scholarships' whose backgrounds in learning are transparent. This is due to the proliferation of knowledge available in this day and age.

When asked what else is important, he responded with,

"People skills is a must... people are coming to you for advice for all sorts and that that can range from anything from somebody feeling depressed to somebody looking to seek advice. Within religion, the wrong advice to one person can lead to some catastrophic results. So somebody has come to you in a depressed way and you weren't to handle that appropriately, it could lead to disastrous consequences for that individual. The same with marriage, I think having those people skills links into all the social problems that people have".

Raheem again reiterating that good 'people skills' is essential for engaging with the community. Hamid similarly spoke of the importance attached to having studied at an 'Islamic university or seminary'. Hamid then spoke of the importance of scholars training in the UK, explaining, "Rather than then consulting a scholar, say based in Pakistan, who has no knowledge of life in the UK, it's better to get someone who's born and grown up in the UK so that they know what I'm experiencing or what sort of questions I have". Perhaps due to his age being 32, he is of a generation that experienced mainly foreign Imams. The recurring theme is about understanding the issues which affect the congregation and being able to relate to them.

Hasan, the eldest interviewee also spoke of the difficulties foreign Imams face when connecting to young Scottish Muslims, stating, "In most *masjids* in Scotland the Imams weren't born in Britain so asking them some more pertinent questions which are suitable to UK life, they may not understand the scenario". For Hasan, as someone who is a member of the Muslim Council of Scotland, the nature of skills and professional training which he felt were important was also connected to engaging with the community but his examples were different. For Hasan, the most important training was,

"At the moment, I think safeguarding of children is very important. Knowledge of the laws of the land are very important, laws of Britain, what's allowed to be said and what's not allowed to be said. I think also, counselling. Imams will have all sorts of questions asked so I think we need to have some kind of teaching or some kind of education in counselling, professional counselling because it's a very deep topic".

The consistent theme in all the responses was interpersonal skills and dealing with the community. This sheds interest upon the delivery of 'soft skills' within the text heavy seminary.

The second question asked interviewees where they envisage future religious leaders to receive the training for the qualifications that are important for them to possess. Imran mentioned the fact that there are no *madrassas* in Edinburgh and that students have to travel to England to study. He'd like to see the establishment of locally based institutions that offer higher Islamic education. When pressed on whether attending *madrassa* was sufficient for a religious leader, Imran responded with, "*Madrassas* are sufficient from the [Islamic] knowledge you learn. The universities could be used to enhance that knowledge

and learn how to teach others, as well as new skills". Imran once again mentioning the importance of pedagogy and speaking of other skills acquired by attending university. His response resonates the implication found in the survey responses that the seminary doesn't or is unable to provide additional skills. For Samir, there was an emphasis on going through a certified professional course, stating, "I would say there should be something like university of becoming Imam... so you're certified, you're a proper professional". Samir wants quality assurance and professionalization, again implied that the seminary doesn't provide this.

Manzoor took a bit more of a pragmatic approach, weighing up the number of years a seminary graduate would spend if they were to attend university after seminary education. At the same time, he noticed that a number of young scholars who attended *madrassa* after secondary school and spend five or six years in a seminary environment, would struggle to relate to the challenges of their peers. Weighing up both options of either attending university, which would extend the number of years of study, with the possibility of being disengaged from young Muslims, Manzoor stated, "I think having awareness is a big issue, because a lot of the time, you don't need to have done something to know how it feels like you do. You just have to have that kind of general awareness". Resonating the survey, Manzoor spoke of being able to relate to the community.

Raheem similarly gave a more nuanced response looking at the pragmatic implications for a young person to attend *madrassa* and then university. He explained that it is difficult to pinpoint precisely whether the onus is upon the *madrassa* or the student to ensure that the young scholar is a well-rounded individual able to deal with multiple issues. Raheem explained,

"I don't think that [additional training such as interpersonal skills] should be addressed in *madrassa* because a *madrassa* is there to teach you religion... It becomes a very delicate process of what do you eliminate from teaching people that has previously been deemed as 'you must know this', but then we start compromising [the teaching of] religion to deal with political and social problems. I don't think that would be right. I think it should be in two separate environments. But I would understand on the back of that, that would put a lot of pressure on young individuals who are looking to become Imams that okay, now I have to go to *madrassa*, okay, now that I've done that I have to go to a university to a local college now to understand the social problems. But that's where I think it's difficult to put an exact

answer on that to say, yes, it should or no it shouldn't be putting [responsibility] on the *madrasa* because we're taking the stress from the *madrasa* to the individual and vice versa”.

When asked that if we assume the onus to be upon the individual to acquire the relevant skills, Raheem responded with,

“I don't want to contradict the previous answer. I think I would agree that the onus should be a bit more on the individual... a 60/40 kind of way. If a *madrasa* could offer [training for] social problems as well, social education following religious education, I think that would be fantastic. But then I would kind of revert back to my original point of undue pressure on *madrasas* where, I'm only speculating here, some institutions probably already face financial constraints and staffing constraints”.

Hamid, who expressed the importance of Imams being able to deal with Darwinism, atheism, gender and sexuality, was asked where young scholars would train to deal with the aforementioned issues. Hamid clarified that scholars should know a bit about everything and only specialise in the most pertinent issues such as atheism. When asked if the *madrasa* could incorporate some of the secular subjects, such as atheism, into their curriculum his response was, “No, I think they [*madrasas*] should remain as a specialist teaching facility for Islamic knowledge and the knowledge that you want to gain must come from the university for these other fields”.

Hasan, in his capacity as a member of the Muslim council of Scotland, has perhaps experience of engaging with religious leadership in a way that my other participants didn't. He explained the multiple challenges the modern Imam is expected to simultaneously deal with, stating,

“I think the role of an Imam is so varied. I don't think there's many jobs in the world where the job is so varied. One day, you can be teaching about the Quran *sharif*, which is obviously the core of it but then the next day somebody could be coming to ask you a question like organ donation... I guess the future Imam will need to have knowledge of lots of different things but it's difficult to be an expert in them all”.

We then went on to discuss a number of issues the modern Imam is asked about including abortion, mortgages, organ donation. Hasan compared religious scholars with General Practitioners, stating, “it's difficult for the GP to be an expert in all the illnesses... they know a little bit about everything but then either do research in more depth or refer to someone more specialist”. It was interesting to note the comparison with a General Practitioner as

that is the model I have considering developing. In the discussion I will expand upon my model of analogising the Imam with a GP. When asked where the Imams can receive the training for these multiple issues, Hasan stated,

“There's not really many places unless these training institutions bring in specialists of a certain field to give maybe a couple of days crash course or a day crash course on that certain topic. So, for example, Jamia Al Karam is the one that comes to mind. First of all, if they are doing the usual teaching of an Imam, that's great and then they have social teaching which they bring in an expert in the Islamic banking industry to give a one day course or two day course. The next day, bring in an Islamic doctor who specializes in medical issues. Then the next day, somebody who specializes in Islamic mortgages, that I think would be good to give them a broad overview of all these different things”.

Hasan was also appreciative of the length of time it would take an individual to go through *madrassa* education and then attend university. It would total a decade in full-time higher education which is not feasible for many people. Despite this, if some members were able to attend seminary and become specialists in a ‘secular’ field, that would be ‘excellent’ for the community.

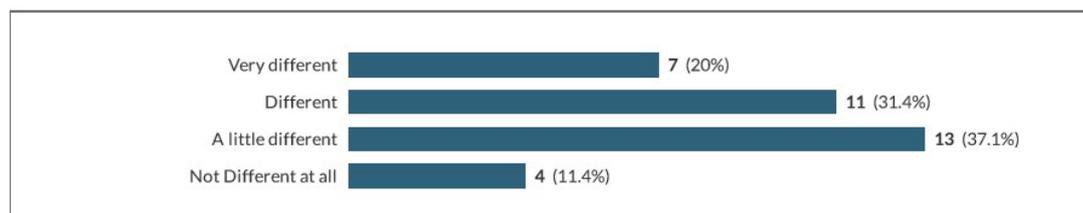
4.3 Scottish Muslim experience

4.3.1 Online survey

Respondents were first asked how different the Scottish context is for Muslims compared to the rest of Britain. The results are below:

How different is the Scottish context for Muslims to the rest of Britain?

Scottish context compared to the rest of Britain



Respondents were then asked about the significance of six factors which contribute towards a unique Scottish Muslim experience. Regarding a smaller Muslim population in Scotland, 37% of respondents felt this was a ‘very significant’ factor and 40% felt it was ‘significant’. One of the comments alluded to the smaller population of Muslims being a disadvantage for

Muslims, stating, “Less Muslims (having moved from England) makes it harder for halal food and halal activities for families”. During the interviews, the overwhelming feeling was similar in that having a smaller population lead to better integration and less segregation. At the same time, a smaller population meant less facilities and infrastructure compared to England. This negatively affected learning about Islam and having Islamic activities.

With regards to Scotland being a friendlier host nation, 65% felt it was ‘very significant’ and 23% felt it was ‘significant’. I also gave an option for respondents to explain any other factors. One comment explained,

“The question [of] are you Muslim or Scottish has made little sense when it was a mantra of the far right in England. Countrysides [sic] in England are bastions of imperial racist attitudes. Countrysides [sic] in Scotland are the most welcoming places you can go as an ethnic minority or Muslim. Scottish Nationalism is internationalist in outlook and not based on anti-foreign immigration as in England. Despite community perceptions - there is a huge level of working and talking together between sects in Scotland”.

The two themes which emerged were that integration and civic life in Scotland was better compared to the rest of Britain but there are less Islamic facilities available in Scotland. These two themes also emerged in the interviews.

4.3.2 Interviews

The interviewees were asked about how the Scottish context for Muslims differed from the rest of Britain. The younger participants had less experience and thus fewer opinions on the topic. Imran, aged 18, stated, “Obviously, there’ll be similarities and differences but personally, I don’t know much about anyone else in other countries. I just know me in Edinburgh to be honest”. I appreciated that he has less experience but I wanted his views on the host nations. So I pressed him on the issue but he wasn’t understanding my question. Reluctantly, I ended up asking in very simple terms, “Are white Scots more friendly towards Muslims than White English?” to which he responded,

“Yeah, I do think so. Actually, because you always hear a lot of stories of crime issues in other country [sic] whereas here I think, obviously I’ve had a few encounters of being called Paki but it’s not as bad as like things you see on social media what’s happening in like England”.

I mentioned to him that in some places in Britain the insults have moved from ethnicity to religion and if he has experienced any discrimination based on religion. His response was a casual, "Mainly it's still Paki. Yeah, literally, that's what I hear.... in fact, even a week ago, I was in a car and a driver went by and said Paki, So yeah, it's still Paki for me". He didn't seem too fazed by being insulted in that manner. Samir, aged 18, similarly had little experience of life outside Glasgow. He also felt safer in Scotland in comparison to England, stating,

"I'm being brought up from here [sic] and the environment I think it's been comfortable as nothing like you to be scared of that you're Muslim [sic]. These incidents will happen in England when there used to be acid attacks and stuff like that. So I think that England, it's more dangerous...But in Scotland, these things, you don't see these things happening".

I asked him if his views about England were based on personal experiences or via media reports. Initially he said it was only through media but then recalled an incident with his cousin, stating,

"No it's just been news. Actually, I've got a cousin, he lives in England, and he's got a beard, he's got a big thick beard. So he goes to work and then there's white people there and they're talking about him like that he's a terrorist coz he has a beard and stuff".

Manzoor commented on the larger population in England resulting in more opportunities for Muslims. Conversely, a smaller Muslim population in Scotland meant, "I think the thing that makes the Scottish experience better is because there's a lot more diversity and a lot more interaction between the general non Muslim public and Muslims... whereas in England it feels a bit more segregated". In terms of receiving racial or religious abuse, like Imran, he stated that he had received racial abuse but not religious.

Raheem spoke extensively about the difference between living in England and Scotland for Muslims. His wife is from England and he had personal experience of feeling threatened whilst in England. Raheem began by explaining that due to the smaller Muslim population, there lacked a community spirit and services for Scottish Muslims. He also explained,

"I'd say the biggest thing is actually the Imams and scholars that we all look to, we look for them to be educated in England... So I'd say the biggest advantages, they've [English Muslims] got access to religion a lot more easier and on a larger scale than

we have, there is a lot more mosques... If ten people have the same problem it's going to get addressed faster and that's where I'd say there's a difference between us and England. There is a lot more [Muslim] individuals facing the same issues [in England]”.

This resonates Imran’s point earlier that Scottish students have to travel to England to attend seminaries as there none in Scotland. When it came to discrimination, Raheem was very clear that Scotland was a more welcoming place than his experience of England, stating, “I've experienced more Islamophobia and racism as a tourist in England, than I have as a citizen of Scotland”.

I reaffirmed that he felt that Scotland was a more welcoming place for Muslims to which he remembered an incident regarding his wife from England, stating,

“My partner, she's English and she's lived in Scotland for six years and she also feels safer here than down south. Especially, you might be aware that in the news, there's talks of acid attacks and particularly in England, my wife was actually fearing to go traveling for work reasons to these places but I'd get constant phone calls and she would refuse to use public transport. She was only using taxis as a public transport”.

Hamid described living in England as a “double-edged” sword for Muslims. There are more mosques and Muslim institutions but at the same time, he feels they suffer from more institutionalised racism. He gave his personal experience as,

“I think, what's happened in places in England, I can use Oldham as an example, the council don't spend as much money on the densely populated Muslim areas and I don't know what the reason for that is but it's evident when you visit these places. It's highly deprived areas where there's not much hope for jobs, or education. So that's why young people [Muslims], I feel tend to turn to crime”.

He explained his experience of suffering racism in Scotland as, “When I was a lot younger, the levels of direct racism were very high... but as I've grown older, I've noticed a massive change in Scotland”. I asked him what has caused the change in attitudes to which he responded, “The younger generation tend to not be so racist anymore [compared to older people]. I think this has to do with the onset of the Internet, and the TV programs and such that people see different cultures and communities begin to accept black and ethnic minorities”.

Hasan, who has experience serving as a member of the Muslim Council of Scotland, explained that he felt the Scottish Muslim community is about a decade behind English Muslim communities in terms of infrastructure. He stated,

“I think because the Muslim population is quite a lot smaller in Scotland. I think we’re maybe still a little bit behind places in England. In terms of infrastructure, for starters... the *masjid* we're in just now, there's still a lot of work to do... we're just breaking walls to try and make things fit. Two, we're behind I think in teaching staff for the mosques, we struggle to find teaching staff here. In terms of availability of Imams to come to Scotland, that's probably the hardest thing that we've found in Scotland is attracting Imams to come here and live. Why would you leave the life in England, where there's a bigger community, more work, etc. to come to Scotland, when it's more isolated. I think it requires more work for each mosque to identify an individual and say, okay, he can be good at this. Let's fund him through education, send him to a *darul uloom* and bring him back to teach in the mosque. I don't think that's been done enough. I think we're about 10 years behind England at the moment in terms of generating scholars”.

Hasan added that he felt that as well as better relations with the wider community in Scotland, there were better intra-Muslim relations. He stated,

“I think we [Muslims] work better than down south. It seems to be in England, quite almost sectarian. In Scotland friends get on with all [other Muslims]... if there's a difference on Eid, everyone is quite happy. You enjoy your day and we will enjoy ours when it comes and there's no friction, but I think down south it can get quite nasty... I think also the people, non Muslims are more tolerant of Muslims in Scotland... I think that people in Scotland are more understanding or more receptive to Islam in Scotland but in England, there seems to be a rising Islamophobia”.

He also mentioned that although he has never personally experienced discrimination in Scotland, the discrimination he is aware of is targeted at ethnicity more so than religion. The Islamophobia he witnessed was more ‘on the screen than on the street’.

The main themes were that having a smaller population has resulted in better integration and less discrimination. The drawback is the lack of religious personnel, infrastructure and services for Muslims. In the following chapter, I will discuss the implications of my findings.

5.0 Discussion

In my literature review, I found that there is little to no literature about Muslim religious leadership in Scotland. To address this gap, I conducted original research in the form of an online survey and six semi-structured interviews. The original research aimed to provide insight into three main areas, namely, the experience of my respondents with religious leadership hitherto, envisaging future religious leadership and to what extent living in Scotland as a Muslim differed from living as a Muslim in the rest of Britain. This chapter will merge my findings with the existing literature and demonstrate the implications of what I researched. In many cases, the findings reinforce the existing literature and some findings add further depth to the existing literature. Before discussing the implications, I will offer a typology of Muslim religious leadership. The implications of the three areas will be discussed in light of the typology. I will then present my suggestions for moving forward.

5.1 Conceptualising a Muslim religious leadership typology

As mentioned in the methodology chapter, I took a grounded theory approach to my data analysis, analysing themes and patterns to develop a theory. My epistemological approach of interpretivism has attempted to understand the social conditions from the respondents' point of view. My ontological approach is constructionism similar to the one Strauss and Baker have taken (Bryman 2008, 20). By that, I refer to the concept of Muslim religious leadership having a reference point, which is in the process of constantly developing. The reference point for religious leaders are the roles such as the rites of passage and the new roles, which have been constructed for British Muslim religious leadership, are those specific to the British context. The emphasis on interpersonal skills and contemporary application of religious training are constantly developing as the needs of the community develop. Using grounded theory, I developed a typology based on my findings, to conceptualise Muslim religious leadership. I feel that such a typology aids in demarcating religious leadership before delineating levels of religious leadership. To conceptualise Muslim religious leadership, I will use Azim Ahmed's typology of British mosques. Ahmed uses three Islamic jurisprudential terms in a sociological sense to conceptualise the diverse functions of British mosques in a coherent way. I will apply the same terms to conceptualise British Muslim religious leadership. The first tier is *fard*, individual obligation; it is what

makes a religious leader inherently qualified to serve the community. The second tier is *fard kifaaya*, communal obligation; this is when individuals fulfil the communal obligation of actualising their role as a Muslim religious leader. It differs from *fard* in that in the former, the individual does not necessarily serve in a role but is simply equipped with the skills. The third tier is *Sunna*, optional or recommended; this is the realm of those who go above and beyond the *fard kifaaya* (A. A. Ahmed 2019, 139). For Ahmed, the *fard* and *fard kifaaya* are relatively fixed, whereas the *sunna* mosque, “can and does adapt dynamically to suit the changing needs and circumstances of the congregation” (A. A. Ahmed 2019, 144). Hence, *Sunna* Imams focus on personal development to suit the needs of the community. Ahmed points out that mosques don’t necessarily follow a linear trajectory in that every mosque aims to end up at *sunna*, rather some mosques are content with their status of fulfilling particular roles (A. A. Ahmed 2019, 145). Likewise, I will argue that Muslim religious leadership should be viewed in light of the multiple roles which need fulfilling as opposed to idealising a linear trajectory towards the ‘good Imam’. The personal development does not necessarily have to be academic in nature, for example, a *sunna* Imam focusing on youth work can either attend relevant training or through personal charisma and good interpersonal skills be able to navigate his chosen line of service.

5.2 Current state of Imams and their training

Out of the 300 mosques Ron Geaves contacted to gain the background information of their Imams, he found that 8.1% of the Imams were British-born (Geaves 2008, 102). That data was from over a decade ago, so we can assume that the number of British-born Imams has since increased. The biggest reason noted by my survey respondents for not contacting a mosque Imam was language barrier. One of my interviewees, Hamid, aged 32, also spoke of the importance of contacting British-born scholars as opposed to someone from abroad due to the locally trained scholar understanding the context better. Language is a barrier that can be expected due to the nature of migration and mosque committees historically opting for foreign-imported Imams. Over time, language barrier should become less of an issue as more British-born scholars are trained and subsequently employed as mosque Imams. The high percentage of concerns over privacy and confidentiality are worrying and instigate inquiry about the procedures involved in Imam practice. Matters are further complicated by the fact that many of my respondents spoke of having a personal relationship with their

Imam and in some cases a longstanding relationship. Considering that Imams deal with a broad range of personal issues including marriage, mental health, family disputes and addictions, regulating practice and holding accountability is an issue. There is also the question of whether there are procedures to follow when a member of the public approaches an Imam with a personal question. For example, is an Imam obliged to report an individual who discloses that they are self-harming or having suicidal thoughts? It would be useful for an 'Imam-specific' code of conduct so that the Imam is aware of his responsibility when approached by the public. As of yet, I'm unaware of Imams being privy to a formal 'code of conduct'.

As Gilliat-Ray mentioned (Gilliat-Ray 2010, 163), there have been growing expectations upon British Imams to fulfil roles beyond the rites of passage. My respondents also mentioned the multiple skills required to fulfil the various roles they would like the religious leaders to perform. There was a great amount of emphasis upon interpersonal and communication skills. Areas such as counselling and tackling contemporary issues such as atheism and gender were also highlighted. Most of the respondents in both the survey and the interviews wanted the training for this to take place mainly at seminaries or Islamic colleges. The seminaries can note the expectations Muslim youths have of the seminary's input to training religious leaders. Scott-Baumann's report (Mukadam and Scott-Baumann 2010, 16) concluded that Imams are not adequately trained and likewise the day consultation at Markfield (Setting a Subject Benchmark for dar al-'ulums in Britain 2017, 22) suggested exit points according to function. Gilliat-Ray spoke of dividing the multiple responsibilities (Gilliat-Ray 2010, 179) and my respondent, Hasan, also commented on how varied the Imam role is. He compared it to a General Practitioner and I will suggest a similar model of tailoring the training of young scholars with a balance between their own personal development and their function in society upon graduation.

5.3 Situation of the seminary

Considering that hitherto, the seminary is the main producer of British-born Imams and that my respondents wanted the seminary and Islamic colleges to take a leading role in training future leaders, the seminaries' role in the production of adequately trained religious leaders is crucial. The seminary is a space for confessional Islamic scholarship which values piety (Moosa 2015, 140). Without compromising on confessional learning entrenched in piety, the

seminary, as the largest producer of British-born scholars, would benefit by re-evaluating the function they currently serve and will serve in the future. As others have stated (Geaves 2008, 101; Gilliat-Ray 2006, 72), any decision made on curriculum and pedagogy should be an internal decision. According to the literature (Mukadam and Scott-Baumann 2010, 16) (Setting a Subject Benchmark for dar al-'ulums in Britain 2017, 22) the current seminary set-up is not providing adequate training for their graduates to function in the multiple roles demanded from the modern British-born Imam. This critique includes Muslim scholars, such as Musharraf Hussain and Ataullah Siddiqui, who are familiar with the seminary (Mukadam and Scott-Baumann 2010, 16; Gilliat-Ray 2006, 67). These feelings were also expressed in my survey, whereby many respondents spoke of Imams benefitting from mainstream university education as a means of acquiring skills, which would enhance them in their role as a religious leader. This places the seminaries in a position to decide whether they want to take on the responsibility of providing the relevant training or if that training should be designated to other institutions. If the seminary takes on the responsibility, then discussions will be required as to selecting which skills based training will be taught and how this teaching will fit into the current curricula. If the responsibility is designated to other institutions, do seminaries hold responsibility in ensuring their graduates attend external institutions for further training?

Many students of the seminary make the choice to attend to become better Muslims (Scott-Baumann and Cheruvallil-Contractor 2015, 37). I would classify the seminary's role in fulfilling this service as *fard*. That is to say, that the individual is provided with the social nurture framework to remain committed to the practice of Islam. If the graduate wishes to serve the community, he has the basic skills to do so. This is based on my respondents explaining that the seminaries should remain primarily focused on delivering confessional higher Islamic studies. Those graduates who go on to serve in the community fulfil the *fard kifaaya* in terms of fulfilling the communal obligations. The communal obligations include the rites of passage, public lectures, teaching and a rudimentary level of training in the multiple requirements of the community. This is the akin to the General Practitioner, as analogised by respondent Hasan, in that the religious leader is familiar with general community concerns at a basic level and is able to signpost people to specialists for more advanced issues. The *sunna* Imams train in the areas, which over time change to the varying

needs of the community. My respondents spoke of the practicalities of seminary graduates studying further, after having spent five or six years of intense study within the seminary. Hence, out of the *fard kifaaya* Imams, only some of them would go on to fulfil the *sunna*. In this way, the typology works as a pyramid with all seminary graduates at the bottom fulfilling the *fard*. The next level up are those fulfilling *fard kifaaya* and the *sunna* Imams numbering less than the *fard kifaaya* Imams. This typology is not set in stone and it is possible that an individual shifts between them. For example, a seminary graduate working in a non-religious profession deciding to cover a mosque Imam for a few weeks will move from *fard* to *fard kifaaya*. During this time, he may go above and beyond his assigned duties and work as a *sunna* Imam. Upon completing his temporary work, he returns to the *fard* category. My respondent, Hasan, spoke of a scholar who is usually a taxi driver but sometimes covers the local mosque Imam. This scholar shifts from *fard* to *fard kifaaya* when covering the local mosque Imam and returns to *fard* after the mosque Imam returns. I will discuss in more detail below with regards to how the seminary can train graduates to fulfil all three tiers. At this point, I would like to clarify a potential misreading of the typology presented. Just as Ahmed notes about British mosques (A. A. Ahmed 2019, 145), that they don't follow a linear trajectory from *fard* to *sunna*, so too I would make the same clarification on religious leadership. In other words, there is a space for all three tiers and graduates should not feel pressured into reaching the *sunna* stage. Hence, Lewis predicting that those who will be employed in the mosque are 'less able to connect to the concerns of British Muslims' (Lewis 2006, 178) is an unfair criticism of those graduates who fulfil the *fard kifaaya*. If an individual wishes to serve solely within the mosque or in a limited role, it is still serving the community in some capacity. Expecting every single graduate to reach the *sunna* level, places undue pressure on individuals, many of whom attend seminary for their own personal development. Similarly the 'good Imam v bad Imam' dichotomy (Birt and Lewis 2013, 107-108) has the potential of becoming reductionist, especially if seen in light of Lewis' prediction. Although Birt and Lewis cite valid examples of 'bad Imams', there is potential of some religious leaders not fitting neatly into a 'good Imam' category. For example, if a graduate simply leads the prayers and teaches people how to recite the Quran, without having any other responsibility in the community, which category of good/bad Imam does he fall into? His role neither advocates for nor agitates against civic virtues. Therefore, to avoid a potentially reductionist categorisation, discussions surrounding the

roles of seminary graduates ought to have more nuance, I have attempted to add some nuance with my typology. The issue is further complicated due to the usage of the word 'Imam' in Britain encompassing a number of unspecified roles.

The seminary thus has to decide on what purpose it serves British Muslims. If it is a space simply for confessional learning and personal development, then the responsibility of leadership training is a vacuum which will need filling. If the seminary claims that the current curriculum is sufficient in leadership production, then this view contradicts both the literature and my original research. I will discuss below how the seminary can adjust to catering for the multiple roles expected from religious leadership.

5.4 Muslims in Scotland

The existing literature and my research brought forth a dichotomous Scottish Muslim experience. On the one hand, Muslims in Scotland feel safer, more welcome in civic life and better integrated than Muslims in the rest of Britain. Conversely, a significantly smaller Muslim population makes Muslims feel that they lack the infrastructure and Islamic services available to their fellow Muslims south of the border. On the whole, Scotland was deemed to be not too different from the rest of Britain (see survey response in the findings chapter above). Thus, there are some peculiarities with Scotland, such as better integration and less infrastructure, but there are also concerns shared by all British Muslims

The positive Scottish Muslim experience is to be viewed holistically. Bonino speaks of the 'myth of paradise' regarding the Scottish Muslim experience (Bonino 2017, 131). My research corroborates the risk of being naïve to existing discrimination. All of my interviewees had either personally experienced or were aware of Muslims in Scotland being discriminated. One of the mosques where I conducted an interview was 'fire bombed' in October 2001. Reports suggested the attack was in reaction to attacks in America a few weeks earlier (BBC News 2001). On the day of the interview, I happened to be wearing *shalwar kameez*. A few hours after the interview, I experienced the racial discrimination reflected by my respondents, with my ethnicity targeted. Despite these types of incidents, my respondents overwhelmingly spoke of having a more positive experience in Scotland compared to England. Both the survey and interviews mentioned the host community in Scotland as more tolerant and welcoming of Muslims. Politics, in particular, is a positive

example, whereby the first British Muslim MP was elected in Glasgow. Likewise, Scottish nationalism is seen as inclusive and has attracted the 'Muslim vote' as opposed to English nationalism, which is widely accused of racism. Attempts at stoking racial tensions in Scotland by the British National Party and the English Defence League have been ineffective. Similarly, Munnik reports of his Scottish media respondents distancing themselves from other media outlets who portray Muslims unfairly (Munnik 2017, 222).

Where Muslims feel disadvantaged is the infrastructure to facilitate Islamic services. The lack of infrastructure can be expected as the combined Muslim population in Scotland is lower than the individual Muslim population of English cities such as London, Birmingham, Bradford and Manchester (British Muslims in Numbers: A Demographic, Socio-economic and Health profile of Muslims in Britain drawing on the 2011 Census 2015, 26). I was unable to locate any Islamic seminary functioning in Scotland. My interviewees also noted the absence of an Islamic seminary. This provides the more nascent Scottish Muslim community an opportunity to learn from the experiences of Muslims in the rest of Britain if they wish to open a seminary. Scottish Muslims have a good foundation to build upon in terms of their relations with the wider community. For the near future, it seems that Scottish Muslims will continue to travel to England to pursue higher Islamic studies. There are however, part time options available such as isyllabus, which accommodate courses around people's working and studying lives (isyllabus 2018). Should Muslims in Scotland decide to open a full-time seminary such as those in England, then hopefully my findings will provide some foundation upon which the establishment of a seminary is a smoother process. I would emphasise to build upon the positive civic relations Scottish Muslims have had with wider society to facilitate a Scottish Muslim seminary becoming a welcomed endeavour.

5.5 My suggestions

In light of the literature review merged with my research findings, I present my suggestions for addressing the training of future religious leadership. There are currently a number of options for studying higher Islamic studies. There are newer institutes such as Cambridge Muslim College and Ebrahim College who have developed four-year programs, which are modelled on the mainstream university systems. These types of institutes are set up in a manner which facilitates awarding graduates with BA degrees in Islamic Studies in collaboration with an external university. In 2020, the first cohort of Cambridge Muslim

College will graduate with a BA degree from the Open University (Cambridge Muslim College 2019). A second model is to offer seminary graduates post-graduate training like the Diploma at Cambridge Muslim College (Cambridge Muslim College 2019). The drawback to this is that unless more post-graduate courses are delivered, only a fraction of annual seminary graduates can be accommodated in such a scheme. There is also the option of Continuous Professional Development for serving Imams as offered by Faith Associates (Faith associates 2019). This is a positive initiative and, as with many other professions, my findings demonstrated that religious leaders would benefit from attending CPD courses. Hopefully the mosques and institutions will accommodate their Imams and teachers attending such programs. There are however, a number of basic skills, knowledge and training, which religious personnel should ideally possess before commencing their service to the community. Ideally, the next generation of religious leaders will be equipped with these skills at graduation and before commencing in their roles of serving in the community. My key suggestions, based upon my findings, therefore are reserved for the largest producers of British-born scholars, the seminaries.

To begin with, the seminary itself needs to recognise what the current and future challenges facing the community are. Once this is acknowledged, the seminary can introspect and make decisions accordingly. Maintaining piety as the ethos of the seminary can help facilitate better-prepared graduates. Robert Hefner explains that debates about Islamic education in the Muslim world have been present for over two centuries (Hefner 2007, 3) and that modern Islamic education is an institution which evolves with the forces of the age (Hefner 2007, 28). Similarly, Abdullah Sahin argues that rigidity in education leads to stagnation (Sahin 2013, 15), whereas the classical *madrasa* produced well-rounded individuals (Sahin 2013, 18). There is precedence in the classical and modern Islamic literature on education serving the purpose of creating well-rounded individuals who are also good citizens. Eleventh century scholar, Ghazali, likens an educator to a farmer who uproots thorn bushes and weeds from around the individual to ensure that they will develop and reach fruition (Reisman 2010, 100). In recent times, Al-Attas has explained that, “the philosophical objective of education from the lower to the higher levels should be not the emergence of the complete citizen, but the emergence of the complete man as the ultimate goal” (Daud 1998, 130). Al-Attas also notes that knowledge in Islam applies to the

spiritual, intellectual, religious, cultural, individual and social aspects of life (Al-Attas 1979, 37). Thus, the concept of the seminary creating well-rounded individuals is not alien to the Islam or the *madrasa*. The concerns raised during my research about seminary graduates in terms of quality assurance, communication skills, contextualisation and leadership skills are areas which can be addressed within the seminary, thereby producing well-rounded individuals with training reflecting contemporary challenges.

My experience and reflections upon the research conducted converge closely with Moosa's proposal for seminary reform. He explains that even though he worked hard during his seminary education, his appreciation for the Nizami syllabus materialised after he studied history, modern philosophy and debates in religious studies (Moosa 2015, 137). For Moosa, the gems of the *Nizami* syllabus should be imparted as a post-graduate program. He recommends a foundational three to four year intensive program that exposes students to an array of Islamic disciplines. Within this course, students are also exposed to the humanities and social sciences. Upon completion, the graduate is equipped to serve as a mosque Imam, teacher and engage with wider society in the form of journalism, media and publishing. Based upon my research, I also suggest the seminary to provide a four-year intensive program which produces well-rounded graduates with intermediate level Islamic Studies knowledge. Within the four year program, students are taken through various Islamic sciences and introduced to a number of contextual modules. The contextual modules can include counselling, pedagogy, teaching skills, journalism, psychology and the humanities. These contextual modules serve the dual function of providing a basic understanding of these areas to the students as well as giving the students insight into each field, should they wish to further pursue it after graduation. The idea is that even if they weren't to pursue the contextual modules, they at least have basic familiarity with them. This corresponds to my respondents who felt that religious leaders ought to be familiar with multiple subjects at a basic level. After graduating from the four-year course, students can be encouraged to either move onto advanced Islamic Studies or pursue studying one of the contextual modules. Having been introduced to the contextual modules, the graduate will have a good idea as to which area of study will supplement their role in the community. For example, a graduate who wishes to become a teacher can study pedagogy and teaching, a mosque Imam who will be dealing with people can study counselling and psychology. There

is precedence for this from the fifteenth century Ottoman *madrasas* which classified and ranked religious schools in a hierarchy of eleven levels. There was a criteria for scholars to pass from the lower to higher ranks in the religious hierarchy (Hefner 2007, 14). The purpose is that the seminary produces well-rounded graduates who have a foundation upon which they can excel further in various fields.

As for graduates who opt to study advanced Islamic sciences, they can supplement their education with relevant corresponding academic and secular subjects. This contextualises their advanced learning and prepares them to study at a specialisation level. My respondents spoke of British-born Imams being able to contextualise their Islamic education. For example, advanced Islamic Sciences students whilst studying *Fiqh* (jurisprudence), are introduced to Western legal systems, Western legal theory, and the philosophy of law. This will contextualise their advanced learning with the environment they're living in. This will also aid them in relating to contemporary issues affecting the community. To take organ donation as a contemporary example, advanced students of Islamic Studies can be introduced to the medical and legal aspects of organ donation in Britain. Thus, they are better informed on the issue from both an Islamic and secular perspective. It also provides a strong foundation for them, should they wish, to specialise in organ donation. Similarly, Islamic philosophy can be supplemented by studying non-Islamic philosophical traditions and scriptural studies can be supplemented by studying non-Islamic scripture. There are some encouraging initiatives discussed below, which have been set up in the past couple of years to address contextualising jurisprudential learning specifically.

Jamia al Karam, a traditional seminary, which has produced over 300 British-born graduates to date, completed their inaugural 'Higher Diploma of Specialisation in Islamic Law' in June 2019. This diploma was a one-year intensive offered to students who have previously studied five years of foundation and advanced Islamic Studies at the institute. The students studied, "the classical and contemporary legal framework of jurisprudence within the Islamic tradition, while being trained in the practical manifestation of that framework... whilst understanding contextual relevance and methodologies of relation". (Jamia al Karam 2019). The diploma culminated with students attending a bespoke course designed at Al-Azhar University specifically for this cohort. This is an example of the seminary providing post-graduate training to their own students.

Whitethread Institute is also in the inaugural cohort of their specialisation in 'Fiqh and Ifta Program'. Unlike Jamia al Karam, Whitethread Institute primarily offers courses to graduates of seminaries and those who have studied to an equivalent level. Their cohort thus consists of students who will have had their prior training elsewhere. This course is an example of one designed for graduates of the seminary but delivered outside the seminary. Students study legal theory, legal maxims, principles of fatwa giving and derivative rulings, followed by specialisation in areas such as Islamic bioethics, food and dietary law, family and marital law and trade and commerce. The institute is also in the process of opening a new *fatwa* centre which aims to. "meet the growing ethical, religious and spiritual needs of the Muslim community around the UK" (Whitethread Institute 2019). The aim is to have the graduates of this program answer the questions submitted to the *fatwa* centre.

Based upon the typology I laid out at the beginning of this chapter, this is the model which I have suggested for the seminary. All students graduate within the *fard* category and have the adequate training to serve in the *fard kifaaya* category. The graduates are also provided with a good foundation to pursue the *sunna* category. It does not compromise the confessional learning infused with piety and at the same time addresses the needs of the community. Both the typology and subsequent model are subject to development and works in progress. They emerged as a result of my research and hopefully contribute towards an ongoing discussion. Based upon my research, the seminary should always be a work in progress, responding to the ever-changing needs of the community.

6.0 Conclusion

6.1 My contributions

My research has added further depth to the peculiarities of the Scottish Muslim experience and how it differs from the British Muslim experience. The research demonstrated that the advantage of having a smaller Muslim population meant better integration and engagement with wider society at the expense of Muslim specific services and institutions. The research also brought forth the needs my respondents expressed about what they want in a religious leader. These needs can be broadly categorised as interpersonal skills and contextualisation. The respondents also wanted appropriate application of the Islamic tradition to their context. In terms of interpersonal skills and contextualisation, I presume that these are not specific to Scotland. Although I have not conducted research on young English Muslim males, contextualisation and interpersonal skills have nothing inherent within them to make them unique to Scotland. My respondents also mostly felt that Scotland was not too different to the rest of Britain, hence my assumption that interpersonal skills and contextualisation are not specific to Scotland. What is unique is the ability to contextualise for each specific context. A religious leader should be able to appreciate the different contexts of East London and Bradford West to Northern Scotland and Western Wales.

My research findings offered a typology of categorising Muslim religious leadership to help delineate the roles the religious leaders perform. At the moment, the term Imam is a generic term used by Muslims and non-Muslims to mean various kinds of religious leadership. Religious leadership however is diverse and more accurate categorisation helps conceptualise roles and functions. I have suggested that there is a need and a space for different types of leadership. In light of my findings, I also made suggestions to the seminary, in particular, analogising seminary graduates with General Practitioners in that they are trained in variety of areas without necessarily specialising in them to begin with. Specialisation can come later along with deeper contextualisation. In theory, discussions about educational institutes should be an ongoing process, which corresponds to the needs of the time.

6.2 Future research

As mentioned in the introduction, research on Muslims in Scotland is an emerging field, specifically from a religious perspective. This offers many opportunities for further studies in the field. My research was aimed at Muslim males aged 16-40, which excludes females altogether and males outside the aforementioned age category. Three null responses to the survey commented on accessibility and services available to Muslim women from religious leaders. There is an opportunity to study Scottish Muslim females and perhaps compare and contrast their sentiments with Scottish Muslim males. According to the 2011 Census, Muslims aged 65+ constituted just over 3% of the Muslim population compared to 17% for the population as a whole (Elshayyal 2016, 8). Due to the pattern of migration and settlement, Muslims in the elderly age category will rise and relevant issues of care will need to be addressed with religious needs considered. Provisions for the education and services of children is another area which can be further studied as many respondents spoke of religious leaders having the skills to connect with youngsters. Another possible perspective is to research the religious leaders currently serving in Scotland, particularly British-born religious leaders. Garnering their views about their own level of training and how effective they feel in serving their community would shed light on this topic from another angle. Their thoughts on the community and the structures within which they work would help to appreciate the advantages and constraints of their role from their perspective.

My assessment and critique in terms of confessional higher Islamic Studies was of mainly the Islamic seminary with some attention given to newer Islamic colleges. There is an opportunity to explore part-time courses such as isyllabus (isyllabus 2018), which offer Islamic studies to accommodate working and studying lives. There is also Islamic Studies taught at mainstream universities, although these are not taught from a confessional perspective.

A major focus of my thesis was the seminary and there is scope to further explore the curricula, pedagogy and function of the British Muslim seminary, specifically in terms of training future religious leaders and equipping them with an adequate skill set upon graduation. The decision for the seminary to make is to decide whether it is an institution of education only or a leadership training institute too. If the seminary takes on the responsibility for providing leadership training, then the curricula and syllabi will need

revisiting. There are a number of areas which respondents to my research wanted religious leaders to have some familiarity with. Deciding on which skills to include and how to accommodate them into the seminary is a continuous task. Whether the seminary adapts the current curriculum by inserting skills-based modules or extends the training beyond the current set up is a decision best left to the seminary.

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Appendix A - Consent Form for Online Surveys

You are invited to participate in a web-based online survey on Scottish Muslim religious leadership. This is a research project being conducted by Muhammad Belal Ghafoor, a student at Cardiff University School of History, Archaeology and Religion (SHARE) Department of Religious Studies

It should take approximately 10 minutes to complete.

PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this survey is voluntary. You may refuse to take part in the research or exit the survey at any time without reason. You are free to decline to answer any particular question you do not wish to answer for any reason.

BENEFITS

You will receive no direct benefits from participating in this research study. However, your responses may help us learn more about the future of Muslim religious leadership in Scotland.

RISKS

There are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this study other than those encountered in day-to-day life.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Your survey answers will be sent to a link at Onlinesurveys.ac.uk where data will be stored in a password protected electronic format. Online Surveys does not collect identifying information such as your name, email address, or IP address. Therefore, your responses will remain anonymous. No one will be able to identify you or your answers, and no one will know whether or not you participated in the study.

CONTACT

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact my research supervisor, Dr Riyaz Timol via email at timolr1@cardiff.ac.uk.

ELECTRONIC CONSENT: Please select your choice below. You may print a copy of this consent form for your records. Clicking on the “Agree” button indicates that

- You have read and understood the above information
- You voluntarily agree to participate
- You are 16 years of age or older

Agree

Disagree

Appendix B - Consent Form - Interview

I understand that my participation in this project will involve participating in an interview. The interview will explore the experience and expectations the Scottish Muslim community has of its religious leadership. The interview should last between 20-40 minutes.

I understand that participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I can withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason.

I understand that I am free to ask any questions at any time or discuss my concerns with Dr Riyaz Timol.

I understand that the information provided by me will be held confidentially, such that only the Principal Investigator can trace this information back to me individually.

I understand that I can ask for the information I provide to be deleted/destroyed by August 2019 and, in accordance with the Data Protection Act, I can have access to the information at any time.

I, _____ **[PRINT NAME]** consent to participate in the study conducted by Muhammad Belal Ghafoor of Cardiff University

School of History, Archaeology and Religion (SHARE) Department of Religious Studies with the supervision of Dr Riyaz Timol.

Signed:

Date:

Appendix C - Interview questions

Current experience

- 1) Do you contact a mosque Imam for your religious questions?
- 2) Would you like to elaborate on your answer to question one? Please give the reasons for/against contacting a mosque Imam.
- 3) Please state the occupation(s) of people you contact for your religious questions other than a mosque Imam.
- 4) What is the location of the people you contact for religious based questions? Local, national or international
- 5) What are the reason(s) for contacting these people?

Future Ideals of religious leaders

- 6) Which qualifications/training do you feel is important for religious leaders to possess?
- 7) Where do you envisage future religious leaders to receive this training/qualifications?

Scottish context

- 11) How different do you feel the Scottish context is to the rest of Britain for Muslims?
- 12) What are the differentiating factors?

Appendix D - Section of interview

Belal Ghafoor: I'm here with my participant. He is a 34 year old optometrist from Glasgow. Good evening. How are you?

Hasan: Thank you. Thank you for having me along.

Belal Ghafoor: Thank you for participating in this interview. So to begin, we'll start with your experience until now with religious leadership. In the past until now, if you've had a religious question, have you approached a mosque Imam to answer your question?

Hasan: Yes. Usually if there is an Islamic question that I need an answer to, it will be either a question I'll ask to a local Imam at the *masjid* or if it's something that I needed answered quicker, I will ask a close family friend who's an Imam also. Maybe not an Imam at a *masjid* but an Imam... a general....

Belal Ghafoor: Scholar?

Hasan: Scholar. Yes, exactly.

Belal Ghafoor: Okay, so scholars, some of them are Imams and some are not. What is the profession and occupation of the person you ask who is not a mosque Imam but a scholar?

Hasan: Some are still scholars but don't have a set *masjid*. And some are scholars who have other jobs as well, maybe taxi drivers to supplement their income or who just don't have the need in their life to be set in the *masjid* but have the religious knowledge at the same time. One comes to mind who is a taxi driver but also an Imam at the same time, who's available to go to *masjid* when required but supplements income elsewhere.

Belal Ghafoor: So you are happy to go both to a mosque Imam and a scholar who's not a mosque Imam. And the reason why you're happy with both?

Hasan: I think a mosque Imam is, you know, you get to know him. You come to the *masjid* regularly, you gain a friendship even with some a close relationship depending on how you are with that individual and you feel comfortable in asking certain questions. There are in most *masjids* in Scotland, the Imams weren't born in Britain, maybe they come from the subcontinent. So asking them some more pertinent questions which are suitable to UK life, they may not understand the scenario. So asking a scholar who's maybe British-born and

understands the way of life in Scotland or England can sometimes be more beneficial in gaining an understanding of what they perceive as the correct Islamic way forward.

Belal Ghafoor: So them having knowledge of the context we are living in?

Hasan: Exactly, yes. Yes, absolutely.

Belal Ghafoor: Okay, so if we move on to future leadership. So in terms of us now as a community creating Imams, which areas do you feel are the most important for them to be qualified in or to be professionally trained in to become Imams?

Hasan: I think there's a lot. At the moment, I think the safeguarding of children is very important. Knowledge of the laws of the land are very important, laws of Britain, what's allowed to be said and what's not allowed to be said. I think also, counselling. Imams will have all sorts of questions asked. So I think they need to have some kind of teaching or some kind of education in counselling, professional counselling, because it's a very deep topic. As well as other marital issues. Again, this I guess, counselling comes into that bracket as well. But I think that the safeguarding of children and the requirements of looking after children in a *madrassa* scenario if they are teaching is very important.

Belal Ghafoor: So when you say safeguarding, that is so that they're on the safe side of law and they know what's allowed?

Hasan: Exactly

Belal Ghafoor: When you said, 'to know what you can say and can't say', is that when they're preaching or when they're speaking to the media. Which capacity?

Hasan: Well both, I think both speaking, maybe the *khutbah* for *Jummua* or even a *dars* or anything, you know, an event which has been held in the *masjid*, but also if they have media relations. If there's a topic which the media want an answer to. In general, in Scotland, if there is a question from the media, it goes to the Muslim Council of Scotland as opposed to a centre or a *masjid*, they will sometimes go to Glasgow Central mosque, but invariably they'll go to the MCS, Muslim Council of Scotland, to get their opinion on it. And if it's an Islamic question, then they [the Muslim Council of Scotland] will usually seek guidance from an Islamic scholar for something that they're not sure.

Belal Ghafoor: So the Muslim Council of Scotland, do they have one designated scholar they approach?

Hasan: No, not at the moment. There used to be, he unfortunately passed away, but they're in the process of setting up an *ulama* board where there'll be Imams from all backgrounds. But I guess that opens up a whole can of worms as well because if there's one question, the current topic at the moment is organ donation and the new law from next year in Scotland, I think it's autumn 2020, is everyone will be opted in. And there's, I guess you could call it an information day on the first of July where there is an Imam coming from England who I think, his view is that it is allowed. So we'll probably be attending hopefully with the Imam of the *masjid* to see what he says. But after speaking to the Mufti of the *masjid*, he informed me that we believe it is not allowed. So there's a conflict, well, I guess, you've got a difference of opinion. So I think it's up to each individual to seek knowledge from their own Imam that they trust, and go along with what their beliefs on the topic are.

Belal Ghafoor: That brings me along to the next question, which is, this future Imam that we're envisaging, something like organ donation, you don't study that in the classical literature because it never existed then, it's a new issue. So is that something that new Imams need to learn about the Islamic position on this and what's the science behind it?

Hasan: I think so. I think, you know, the role of the Imam is so varied. I don't think there's many jobs in the world where the job is so varied. You know, one day, you can be teaching about the Quran *sharif*, which is obviously the core of it. But then the next day, somebody could be coming to ask you a question like organ donation or whether or not going to certain places is allowed, which wasn't available or around in these classical literatures either. So I think the Imam job is very difficult nowadays, they don't get enough credit I think, for what they do. So that, I guess, you could call it the future Imam will need to have knowledge and it's difficult because you need to have knowledge of lots of different things but it's difficult to be an expert in them all. So I think if they have a little knowledge of each thing, and then maybe, it's unfair to ask a question expecting to have the answer there and then. A fair answer from most Imams would be that's fine, I understand the question, I'll get back to you and they can go and do some research and speak to colleagues. And I think that's the only fair way, you know. In my own job, if somebody asks me a question, I'll say sorry I don't know the answer, I'll get back to you and that's a fair way. I think it's a shame

for us to expect Imams to know everything, it's not possible. The next thing that Imams are going to be hit with is the new classes of gender. You've got male, female, other. In my own job, we have a lot of different equipment and on the equipment you have to put in gender. And some of the newer machines are coming with type gender male, female, other or unknown. You know, previously it was just two and that was it. But now there's four, and they'll be added on and added on. So you know, gender neutral toilets. That's another one that will have parents ask their Imams, what's the Muslim standpoint on that if there are no other toilets? And again, that's not something that would be in the classical literature. And maybe it is but it's not something that you know, you can say yeah, you can quote a reference from a book. It's something that is common sense I think, a lot of the time, but people will still ask these questions.

Belal Ghafoor: Yeah, I mean, that's interesting, because gender is something people are expecting Imams to know something about, same with organ donation, abortion. Now you've got issues about atheism, you got political issues, halal mortgage, insurance. These are all, sort of, expert fields in themselves, one is economics, one is politics, one is theology. Like you said, they should maybe know a little bit about everything.

Hasan: Yeah and it's difficult even at that, like, yeah, those things I've not even thought about people come to ask about buying a mortgage, everyone buys, most people buy a house. Not many people have that amount of money lying about cash. So a mortgage is usually the way that they fund it. And again, there's consequences behind that, consequences behind money in savings, ISAs and so on. Consequences in your own bank account giving you interest. So again, you know, if you want to ask an Imam, what's the regulation in Islam on an interest savings account. A pretty common sense question but some people wouldn't know the answer. And an Imam would have to then say yes or no, and maybe have to do some research on it themselves. But is that a halal way of doing that. Again, that's difficult, I think it's a very difficult varied job. See in UK, the job of a GP, is one where somebody will come with an illness and it's difficult for the GP to be an expert in all the illnesses they'll come with, so they know a little bit about everything but then either do research in more depth or refer to someone more specialist.

Belal Ghafoor: So an Imam is almost be like a GP, where he knows a bit of everything but then he can signpost you to other specialists,

Hasan: In some cases, I mean, there will always be and I think an Imam will have the basic knowledge of Islam, as you are. That's an "Imam" I guess, in inverted commas qualifying. You'll have the knowledge of Islam, which is perfect. But then these new topics which have come about when we spoke about abortion, nikah with somebody of another religion, which I guess is old fashioned as well. But gender issues, the new problems in school about religious and sexual education. Again, these are things which Imams are gonna have people questioning them on, which they will gain knowledge on as the topic develops. But I don't think it's any shame in an Imam saying I'll get back to you on that one. I think a lot of them would, at the moment, feel they're unable to say that to a mum, dad, or a child. I think it's only fair that an Imam says I'll get back to you on that. Maybe the next day or two, I'll just do some research or speak to some other colleagues and let you know.

Belal Ghafoor: So it's quite clear that there's a lot of expectations in the field, I mean an Imam can be asked absolutely anything. You might even be asked something which really a GP should be getting asked.

Hasan: Yeah, yeah, illness, it's absolutely right. Yeah.

Belal Ghafoor: So I mean, I've heard Imams being asked about hair loss and can you help me with that? And so, I mean, for an Imam to get all this training, which kind of institutions do you envisage them to attend in which they'll get the training and qualifications?

Hasan: This is again a very difficult one, there's, I guess, there's a few institutions in the UK, which produce English speaking Imam. I guess more than a few, other different schools of thoughts have their own schools and training institutions. But there's not really many places, unless these training institutions bring in specialists of a certain field to give maybe a couple of days crash course or a day crash course on that certain topic. So if, for example, Jamia Al Karam is the one that comes to mind. First of all, if they are doing the usual teaching of an Imam, that's great. And then we have, I guess social teaching, which they bring in an expert in the Islamic banking industry to give a one day course or two day course. The next day, bring in an Islamic doctor who specializes in medical issues. Then the next day, somebody who specializes in Islamic mortgages, that, I think is good to give them a broad overview of all these different things, just to give them an idea of these are the certain things and I guess that builds up ties with that certain person. So if in the future,

they do have any questions asked it is an easy access to that individual that will have had expertise in Islamic mortgages and see what the Islamic viewpoint is on that

Belal Ghafoor: So it seems like one method is that the *darul uloom* itself, the *madrassa*, provides that education. What about somebody going through the *madrassa* system and then going into mainstream university to learn about, I don't know, economics or medicine?

Hasan: Yeah. That's also good. It's quite a lengthy process. I mean, I'm not sure how much the *darul uloom* course...

Belal Ghafoor: It's usually about five years.

Hasan: Five years, right, and then you went to another degree, minimum four years you're talking. So that's nearly 10 years of your life gone. There is, I'm sure there's a few Imams who have maybe done the other way round and have done a degree of some sort first and university and then done the Islamic training to become a scholar. I think that's an excellent idea. I think there should be more of that but then you have the issue of when will they be able to give that time to the *masjid* if they have a *masjid* or they could be a scholar like we spoke at the beginning of a scholar who maybe isn't situated or based in a *masjid* but is available for questions in a certain field. I think, again, if you have a group of 10 boys, for example, and they all qualify as Imams, and five of them go to *masjids*, and five of them go to university. That's I guess, another way of doing it. Who wants to become an Imam at the *masjid*? Yeah me, right, five of them go and the other five go, one's a doctor, one's engineer, one's a banking specialist. Then that creates another problem, in my opinion. You've got the five who gone on to become Imams at the *masjid* will get paid pennies. You'll get the five who've done the same Islamic course, and going off to the other job and get paid about three, four times the amount. Everyone's got a life to live. We've got bills to pay. So it's a difficult line to draw.