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Everyday Lived Islam among Hazara Migrants in Scotland: Intersectionality, Agency, and Individualisation

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Abstract: The mainstream literature on the religiosity of Muslims in Europe often homogenises this diverse minority. This article diverges by focusing on a less visible ethno-religious minority within the Muslim population, specifically examining how Hazara Shia Muslim migrants from Afghanistan, resettled in the UK, live and organise Islam in everyday contexts. Addressing this gap, the research highlights the intersectionality of religion, ethnicity, and migration in reconfiguring religious practice. Grounded in the intersectional and lived religion approaches, this study contends that the religiosity of this Muslim minority undergoes a dynamic shift entwined with agency and adaptation in the new secular and plural context, becoming more individualised, privatised, and elective. Employing an ethnographic design, data are collected through semi-structured and key informant interviews, as well as participant observation, over 18 months of fieldwork across various council areas in Scotland. The findings illustrate reconfiguration, adaptation, and innovation in everyday Islam among this intersectional Muslim minority, identifying three main themes: the adaptation and reconfiguration of religious practices and rituals, the renegotiation of authoritative sources, and the navigation of intersectional identities and belonging since resettlement in the UK.

Keywords: everyday religion; Muslim minorities; lived Islam; intersectionality; religious identity; ethnic identity; migration; Muslims in Britain; Shia Islam in the UK; Muslims in Europe

Citation: Mosawi, Sayed Mahdi. 2024. Everyday Lived Islam among Hazara Migrants in Scotland: Intersectionality, Agency, and Individualisation. *Religions* 15: 950. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15080950

Academic Editors: Tahir Abbas, Richard McNeil-Willson and Lianne Vostermans

Received: 18 July 2024
Revised: 2 August 2024
Accepted: 3 August 2024
Published: 6 August 2024

1. Introduction

This article examines how Muslim migrants with an ethno-religious minority background[1] live and organise their religion in the everyday context of the UK. Addressing Muslim minorities' religiosity is significant and fills a critical gap in the field, which often homogenises the Muslim category and overlooks the diversity of backgrounds, practices, and intersectionality of identities within this category and migratory context.

The issue of Islam and Muslim practice has become hypervisible in public and scholarly discourses, particularly since the Rushdie affair in the late 1980s and the events of 9/11 and the 7/7 London attacks in the 2000s (Bleich 2009; Patel 2022). More recently, the increased number of immigrants from Muslim countries following the so-called 2015 refugee crisis has further intensified this focus (Duman 2021). In this context, public and political discourse conceptualises Muslims through a 'religioethnification' lens (Jeldtoft 2013b), where religious belonging and practice become key markers to identify and homogenise Muslims in Europe, irrespective of their diverse backgrounds in terms of citizenship, migration, ethnicity, or religious denominations. In the UK, this homogenised and essentialist discourse represents Muslims as 'Islamic migrants' who live their lives and religion within the confines of mosques and under the guidance of imams (prayer leaders), forming a 'parallel society' (Husain 2021) and a 'threat to the British way of life' (Stacey 2024) and security (Abbas 2018; Kundnani 2014).

In response to these public and political discourses, interdisciplinary works from the sociology of religion and migration have shown significant interest in the religiosity of Muslim minorities. They ask, 'what happens to the religious identity, belief, and practice

of Muslims who settle in Western countries? Do they, or their children or subsequent generations, gradually become more secular? Or do they react and become more religious?' (McAndrew and Voas 2014; Voas and Fleischmann 2012). However, the main body of literature tends to focus on organised, institutionalised, and public aspects of Muslim religiosity, such as attending rituals, prayers, fasting, or religious services in public places like mosques (de Hoon and van Tubergen 2014; Kollar et al. 2023), as well as reactive and revivalist tendencies (Molteni and Dimitriadis 2021) and the role of religiosity in radicalisation (Dawson 2021). Moreover, studies often reify the Muslim minority by focusing on vocal, authoritative figures such as imams, activists who 'live out their religiosity in the public space' (Jeldtoft 2011), and radical actors (Larsen 2020). When examining non-vocal cases, they tend to emphasise larger demographic profiles, such as Sunni Muslim immigrants from Pakistan and Bangladesh in Britain, and those of Turkish origin in Germany and the Netherlands (Hamid 2011; Maliepaard and Verkuyten 2018). These studies often conclude that Muslims are more religious and conservative compared to the native non-Muslim majorities, including British Christians and religious 'nones' (Lewis and Kashyap 2013).

This article diverges from the overarching discourse that neglects the heterogeneity of Muslim religiosity at the everyday level and the impact of different identities and power structures on living that religiosity. The study problematises the premise that treats Muslim minorities 'as if they are a single solidary group in the social world' (Statham 2024) and responds to Ammerman's call to include an 'intersectional' approach (Ammerman 2021) in the study of everyday or lived religious practices. In doing so, it focuses on the less studied everyday religious experiences of a less visible ethno-religious minority within the Muslim population in the UK, specifically the Hazara migrants from Afghanistan who resettled in Scotland. This diasporic community provides a significant case for studying Muslim minority religiosity due to their non-privileged status—ethnic/racial, religious, and migratory—in both their country of origin and the UK. In Afghanistan, a traditionally religious country with a Muslim majority, the ethnic minority of Hazara belong to the Shia denomination (also spelled as Shi'a, Shīa, Shi'ite, and Shiite)—specifically, the Twelvers—and have been subjected to religious discrimination and persecution (Saikal 2012). In the UK, a secular and multicultural context that simultaneously homogenises and securitises the Muslim category (Abbas 2020), they persist in their minority status compared to the major Sunni Muslim minorities and non-Muslim citizens.

Grounded in the intersectional and everyday religion approaches (Ammerman 2021; McGuire 2008a), this article contends that the religiosity of Muslim minority immigrants undergoes a dynamic shift entwined with agency and adaptation. It becomes more individualised, privatised, and elective in the new secular and multicultural context compared to the traditionally religious pre-migration milieu. The findings reveal three pivotal themes: the adaptation and reconfiguration of religious practices and rituals, the renegotiation of authoritative sources, and the navigation of intersectional identities and belonging since resettlement in the UK. This research provides a nuanced understanding of the everyday lived religious practices, identities and meaning-making of Hazara migrants in the UK. It contributes to the literature in the fields of Muslim religiosity in Europe and British Muslim studies by highlighting the plurality, intersectionality, and agency within the Muslim minority category. This study challenges the homogenised and essentialist views prevalent in public and academic discourses, emphasising the diverse and dynamic nature of Muslim minorities' religiosity.

2. Everyday Religiosity of Muslim Minorities in Western Europe

2.1. Theoretical Reflections

The concept of 'lived religion' or 'everyday religion' (Hall 1997; Orsi 2003) has gained significant traction within the sociology of religion (Ammerman 2007; Bender 2003; Neitz 2012), offering a critical alternative to traditional analyses that primarily focus on religious institutions and organisations. This approach shifts the focus to how faith and religion are 'practiced, experienced, and expressed by ordinary people in the context of

their everyday lives' (McGuire 2008a). Here, 'ordinary' people are non-religious experts who engage with religion, and 'everyday' implies embodied practices that occur in both the private and public spheres, through mundane routines and significant personal moments (Ammerman 2007). Understanding everyday religiosity thus requires analysing 'the empirical variation in practices oriented to sacralization, the institutions (religious and other) that facilitate such practices, and the resulting religious experiences and moral orders that emerge in specific times and places' (Edgell 2012).

Transnational migration is particularly significant in understanding the variation in lived religious practices due to the multiple settings and trajectories involved. Migrants transport multiple identities, religious backgrounds, and practices from one cultural and geographical setting to another, raising new inquiries about proper religious practice within majority host communities. In this everyday migratory context, 'being a 'good Muslim' requires a lot of interpretive activities' (Volpi and Turner 2007), making change and innovation inevitable (Ammerman 2021).

Building on these theoretical foundations from the everyday lived religion approach (Ammerman 2021; McGuire 2008a) and intersectionality (Boussalem and Hopkins 2020), this study extends the scope of the empirical variation in everyday religiosity by focusing on ethno-religious Muslim minority migrants in the UK who are not religious experts and are non-privileged individuals. These lay men and women engage in religious practices that may not necessarily align with the grand narratives of institutionalised religion and may not even appear overtly religious. Moreover, they have moved from traditional and religious contexts to secular and plural ones, where they navigate asymmetrical power relations and intersectional identities—ethnic/race, religious, gender, and migratory—as minorities within their everyday context. This intersectionality shapes their lived religious experiences in relation to both broader Muslim minorities and the non-Muslim majority context (Ammerman 2021; Stausberg et al. 2023).

2.2. Empirical Research

The empirical study of everyday lived Islam among Muslim minorities in Western Europe is a burgeoning field, marked by collaborative efforts beginning with the workshop on 'Forms and Elements of Muslim Religiosity' held in 2010 at Leiden University and the subsequent seminar on 'Everyday Lived Islam' in 2011 in Copenhagen (Dessing et al. 2013b). These initiatives culminated in key publications, notably 'Everyday Lived Islam in Europe' (Dessing et al. 2013a) and 'Methods and Contexts in the Study of Muslim Minorities: Visible and Invisible Muslims' (Jeldtoft and Nielsen 2012), which originally appeared in a special issue of *Ethnic and Racial Studies* (Jeldtoft and Nielsen 2011). These foundational works critique the predominant focus on visible and organised expressions of Islam, advocating instead for attention to 'invisible' Muslims and the 'noninstitutional' features of their everyday religiosity, including personal spirituality, morality, and informal practices.

Using qualitative, ethnographic methods and quantitative surveys, scholars explore the dynamics of everyday lived Islam across diverse Muslim minorities, considering different ethnicities, genders, ages, and contexts. Jeldtoft (2012, 2013a), for example, examines 'new age' Muslims in Germany and Denmark who eschew formal religious contexts in favour of individual spirituality, meditation, and reiki healing. Kühle (2012) investigates non-organised but highly practising Muslims identified as Salafis in Aarhus, Denmark, while Hemmingsen (2012) observes non-organised Jihadi-Salafis during terrorism trials. Additional significant contributions include Schmidt's (2012) study of Muslim activism in Copenhagen's Nørrebro neighbourhood and research on Muslim women's faith and religious reinterpretations in the UK and Finland (Bokhari 2013; Silvestri 2012; Tiilikainen 2013). Collectively, these studies reveal the diversity, eclecticism, complexity, and fluidity of Muslim religious identities and practices, challenging simplistic categorisations of Muslims into 'organised'/practising and 'non-organised'/non-practising or private and collective religiosity.

Women's religious experiences are critically examined, exploring the intersectionality of faith and gender. Fadil's research (Fadil 2009, 2011) on Belgian Maghrebi women highlights their agency in navigating religious and secular emotional regimes. Focusing on non-practices like not fasting or handshaking, Fadil underscores their ability to adapt to multiple affective layers, challenging conventional understandings of religiosity. Tiilikainen's extensive work (Tiilikainen 2003, 2007, 2013) on Somali Muslim immigrant women examines how Islam plays a role in daily life management, particularly in relation to suffering and ill-health. This research reveals that these women actively redefine their religious meaning, with Islam both shaping and being shaped by their everyday experiences (Tiilikainen 2007). This tactical use of Islam is evident in their engagement with male-dominated religious interpretations and Finnish biomedical institutions (Tiilikainen 2013).

The impact of the socio-political environment on Muslim identities and practices is also another key theme in this scholarship. Jensen (2012) and Schmidt (2012) demonstrate how local and national contexts influence the fluidity of religious identities and the coexistence of individual and organised religiosity. Bevelander and Otterbeck (2012) identify a correlation between negative attitudes towards Muslims and right-wing populism in Sweden. Maliepaard et al. (2012) examine generational differences in ethnic and religious attachment among Dutch Turks and Moroccans, noting a decline in these identities among the second generation. These findings underscore the influence of socio-political factors on religious behaviour and identity, with less welcoming contexts being associated with reactive forms of religiosity (Connor 2012).

Despite these substantial contributions, gaps remain in the scholarship on everyday lived Islam among Muslim minorities with an ethno-religious background in Western Europe, particularly concerning Hazara migrants and their religious affiliations. The few studies that exist focus on Australia and the Middle East context, highlighting the adaptability and fluidity of their religious practices and identities in new environments. Parkes (2020) explores the religious beliefs and identities of three Hazara siblings in Australia, revealing paths ranging from deep religious commitment and pilgrimage to scepticism and entrepreneurial engagement. Similarly, Radford and Hetz (2021) illustrate the fluid nature of religious identity among Hazara migrants in Australia, influenced by their integration into broader society, with some maintaining strong religious ties and others shifting towards secular or culturally Muslim identities. In the Middle East, Glazebrook and Abbasi-Shavazi (2007) focus on pilgrimage to Imam Reza's shrine for Hazara Afghans in Mashhad, Iran, noting its role in reinforcing the Shia religious identity, providing spiritual solace, and influencing community cohesion and return intentions. This study significantly contributes to the existing literature by addressing a critical gap in understanding everyday Muslim religiosity at the intersection of ethno-religious identities in the UK context.

3. Methodology

This ethnographic study employed a combination of qualitative methods, including semi-structured and key informant interviews, as well as participant observation (Creswell 2014). The empirical research spanned 18 months, from 2022 to 2023, across various council areas in Scotland, including Glasgow, Edinburgh, and Dundee. Participants were selected based on their ethno-religious identification as Hazara and Shia Muslims, their Afghan citizenship background, and a minimum residency of three years in the UK to ensure they were established as ordinary residents.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 11 participants (six men and five women) to understand their lived experiences and narratives concerning religiosity and identity formation in the new context. These interviews emphasised how participants live and organise their religion in daily interactions and their self-identification and identification by others. Participant observation provided a nuanced understanding of everyday contexts and practices within natural settings (Jorgensen 2015). This involved attending diasporic ceremonies, religious commemorations such as Eid gatherings (Muslim feast

celebrations), and other communal events. Additionally, a key informant interview with an influential Hazara community member offered in-depth insights into the community's migratory trajectory and profile in Scotland.

Participants ranged in age from 18 to 50 years and were categorised into two groups: younger generation (18–29 years) and mature generation (30–50 years). To protect their privacy, specific ages and cities of residence are not disclosed. Instead, participants are referred to by age category and gender using pseudonyms, each consisting of 'M' or 'F' to indicate gender (male/female), followed by a randomly generated three-digit number. Among the participants, seven were married, one was engaged, and three were single. Their legal statuses included leave to remain, British citizenship, and refugee status. Their employment status varied, with five employed, four students, and two unemployed.

Interviews were conducted in the participants' local language (Dari/Farsi), occasionally mixed with English according to preference. The length of residency in the UK varied from three to nine and a half years. The interviews lasted between one and a half to three hours. The interviews were transcribed and, along with observation memos and records, were analysed using thematic analysis. This technique facilitated data segmentation, categorisation, summarisation, and reconstruction to capture important concepts and patterns of practice, experience, and meaning-making within the qualitative dataset (Ayres 2008). The coding process included generating initial codes, identifying the main categories and themes, and conceptualising them.

Throughout the research, I positioned myself as both an insider and an outsider. Sharing a similar minority background with the participants helped build trust and rapport, facilitating a deeper contextual understanding of their lived experiences, culture, and religious nuances. This insider status enabled me to approach the data collection with empathy and mutual respect, enriching the contextualisation of their narratives. However, as an outsider and a researcher affiliated with an academic institution, I had to consciously address and mitigate potential power imbalances. I acknowledged this positionality by emphasising informed consent and ensuring transparency throughout the research process. The interviews were approached as social interactions, where power dynamics were minimised by fostering a natural and open dialogue. This dual positionality allowed me to balance empathy with critical distance, providing a nuanced understanding of the participants' religious practices and experiences.

4. Results

The analysis of the interviews and observation records identifies three main themes in how Hazara Shia Muslim migrants in Scotland practice and experience Islam in their daily lives. These themes include the adaptation and reconfiguration of religious practices and rituals, the renegotiation of authoritative sources, and the navigation of intersectional identities and belonging since resettlement in the UK. These themes are detailed in this section and are contextualised within the broader literature in the subsequent discussion section.

4.1. Reconfiguring Everyday Religious Practices

Everyday religiosity and religious practices, along with their associated meanings, are complex and contested among the participants. These dimensions are diverse and have shifted for the interlocuters over time, particularly since their immigration and resettlement in Scotland. Participants frequently recontextualised their lived experiences of everyday religiosity in relation to institutionalised practices common to various Muslim communities (e.g., daily prayers, fasting, Zakat (almsgiving), Hajj) and rituals specific to Twelver Shia Muslims (e.g., Muharram (the first month of the Islamic calendar, during which the Shia commemorate the martyrdom of Husayn, the third Imam of Shia Islam), Ashura commemoration). Before migration, all the participants practised these rituals in an organised manner, mainly through collective institutions like mosques and traditions. Post-migration, however, two trends emerged: more than half either demonstrated a decline in practising everyday rituals (one man, three women) or had not practised for over two years

(two men), while four participants (two men, two women) maintained regular practices, viewing them as Fard (compulsory).

Those who practise infrequently or are non-practicing share a common perspective: religious practices and rituals no longer hold a central place in their everyday lives post-migration compared to their pre-migration routines. Instead, they have adopted a more flexible and spiritual understanding of religiosity, where being a Muslim is primarily about adherence to spiritual and moral values rather than the everyday performance of religious rituals. Reflecting this idea, M470, a mature man over 40, who now only practices during Ramadan (the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, known for fasting) or Muharram, explains this idea:

> As a Muslim, my religion and practice are centred on humanity. I don't practise frequently like others do, except on special occasions like Ramadan or Muharram. I believe that God doesn't need my praying or fasting. When I am a good human and value humanity by not harming others or violating their rights, I'm a good Muslim even if I don't practise all the time. There's a saying that a house is incomplete without a window; I think religion is similar. True religiosity and Muslimness stress on more than rituals; they involve the human values. For me, religiosity is not limited to actions and is fundamentally about being a good person, which I strive to be.

This shift from ritual-centred religiosity to value-centred religiosity not only highlights the new meaning-making about religiosity but also the practicalities and individual choices participants face in their new context, necessitating a flexible and pragmatic approach to faith. Consequently, they prioritise non-religious matters over religious rituals in their daily lives. F210, a young mother, observed a decline in her religious performance and mosque attendance compared to her time in Afghanistan when she regularly participated in these activities. She emphasises that her responsibilities have increased in Scotland, as she is now busier with outside activities, including managing her children's school affairs, studying, and sports. As a result, she practices sporadically when possible, prioritising motherhood and personal tasks over rituals:

> Here, unlike in Afghanistan where I was mainly at home, sometimes I can't do all my prayers. There is no time. I have a tight schedule managing my children and going to sports. So, there is no time for praying each time or going to the mosque. I practice whenever I can, like in the evenings at home. There are mosques near us, but I think praying at home or in a mosque makes no difference. Maybe there is more Thawab (reward) for it, but God is with me everywhere, even if I can't practice all the time. So, there should be no problem with it.

The emphasis on spirituality and pragmatism is also shared by two men who do not practice. M434, a mature man under 40, considers himself to have grown up as a 'religious' Muslim but does not practice post-migration. He believes the essence of religion is about morality, which he adheres to. Now, his personal priorities, such as working and providing for his family, leave less space for religious rituals. Comparing his current religiosity with his life in Afghanistan, M434 notes:

> When I reflect on myself, and I should say, it is not only me but many others I see here, we've changed a lot in the way we were religious. For instance, if I may say, I am no longer fasting or praying. Maybe this unconsciously developed in my new life here, not practicing as I did routinely in Afghanistan. I have now adopted different habits. This doesn't mean I am not religious anymore. No! I consider myself a less religious person, not living as strictly as before. For instance, after coming to the UK, I started questioning the logic of fasting as others and clerics say, just to make God happy. The fasting hours are longer in Scotland, and if I fast and can't work properly or fulfil my family duties, would God be happy? I think God is happier when I serve my family and take better care of them.

Further probing into M434's narratives revealed additional reasons for the changes in his religiosity. In Afghanistan, collective institutions like family and community strongly influenced adherence to traditional religious practices. Immigration altered this collective emphasis and oversight. In the UK, the interviewee distanced himself from those collectivities and embraced an individual-centred discourse, where personal choice and pragmatism are prioritised over sacred rituals:

> I was a religious person in Afghanistan and regularly practised in an organised way. But this was not entirely personal; there was pressure to attend rituals like Muharram mourns, Nazr o Niaz [vow and distributing free food], and congregations. Some people performed daily prayers and fasting because their parents or families emphasised it. Since resettling in Scotland, I distanced myself from those religious spaces and found more freedom of choice. Even if I wanted to practise like in Afghanistan, nobody hinders me, and as a Shia, I can do it safely without worrying about being attacked during ceremonies or at the mosque. However, the distance and time spent here led me to develop a new habit of not practising like before. Migration made me more independent of family and community influences from Afghanistan, allowing me to think and decide better what to perform. There are no elderly family members here to pressure to practice daily or do it out of respect for them. I believe God is always watching me, regardless of practising. So, my current religiosity is more a personal choice.

In contrast to the less and non-practicing category, four participants (two men and two women) retained their everyday religious rituals in the new environment. These individuals exemplify the continuation of everyday religious practices and identification as Muslims. Practices such as praying, fasting, and attending Shia rituals are integral to their religiosity. They attend mosques when possible but emphasise maintaining their practices despite busy lives. F948, a young woman under 30, represents this category:

> In terms of practising, it is almost the same as when I was in Afghanistan, like praying, fasting, and giving Zakat. I did it there and here as well.

While it initially seems that F948's religiosity shows no change, further probing demonstrated that her regular practice tends to become an individual choice in the new context. She notes:

> I think I can't attend the mosque as frequently here. In Afghanistan, it was almost every day and very close to our home, but here I'm very busy with my studies, and the mosque is not close. But this is fine, and I maintain my practising even if it is at home or at the University prayer room. And even if sometimes I can't, I make sure to do Qadha [make-up prayer/missed prayer]. This is my duty as a Muslim. Another difference is that here, my practices have become more conscious. Previously, I was practising without understanding the meanings of those practices or the reasons behind them. I learnt it from my family, and they told me to do it, but here I researched and chose to perform them. I mean, here I'm living my religion based on the research I did myself and understanding the meaning of these practices, such as why as a Muslim I should pray, fast, or wear a Hijab.

Further discussion with F948 revealed that her individual understanding of religious practices is significantly influenced by interactions with other Muslim minorities and non-Muslim peers in educational settings. She elaborates:

> In my schools in Scotland, I encountered many questions from my non-Muslim friends about why I should pray or fast. Especially, I was asked all the time about why I wear a Hijab. They assumed my family made me do it. So, I started searching for the meanings of these practices and increased my religious knowledge to answer their questions. I told my friends it was my own choice to wear a Hijab and nobody forced me. I also had a close Muslim friend from

> Pakistan who is a very good friend and a good Muslim who also wears Hijab. We started a dialogue about our practices every day when we met, discussing what we do as Muslims. This was also very helpful for me.

4.2. Navigating Religious Authority: Tradition, Digital, and Personal References

The shifts in notions of religiosity among the participants encompass changes in religious practices as well as significant engagement in navigating and re-negotiating sources of religious knowledge and authority. Almost all the participants resettled in Scotland with prior engagement with authoritative religious sources such as the Quran, Hadith (traditions attributed to Prophet Muhammad and Shia Imams —legitimate successors of the Prophet—encompassing sayings, actions, and approvals or disapprovals), Fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence), Marja'e Taqlid (source of emulation), Sheikh and Mullahs (religious scholars), schoolteachers, religious books, family, and community elders. In Afghanistan, their socialisation as Shia Muslims occurred within a minority context where the state and public institutions recognised the Sunni Hanafi school as the official religion. Regardless of their current religious commitment, participants learned to read, recite, and memorise the Quran and Hadith, either through formal primary education or informal mosque-based courses. They also acquired knowledge about their Shia heritage, such as the Imams and traditions, through collective and traditional informants like family, ethnic ties, mosques, local schools and communities, and ritual commemorations like Muharram or religious Eid celebrations.

In the current migratory context, participants re-negotiate these collectivities and utilise new sources, asserting autonomy and self-interpretation or seeking guidance through the internet, digital applications, immediate families, and mosque clerics. Three male participants rejected Taqlid (emulation/imitation) and no longer adhere to a Marj'a. M155, a mature man with a higher education degree who does not practice or attend mosques, exemplifies the shift from institutional guidance to personal interpretation. During his youth in Afghanistan, local mosque Mullahs were his primary sources of religious knowledge. Now, he relies solely on his own A'ql (wisdom) and personal understanding of Sharia (Islamic law) sources, including the Quran and Hadith. He attributes this change to his increased education, his migration experience, and the political turmoil caused by the Mujahidin (Afghan fighters who resisted the Soviet invasion in the 1980s and were later involved in the civil war in the 1990s) in the name of Islam in Afghanistan:

> I attended the mosque in Afghanistan until I was a teenager. I accepted whatever the Mullah said during religious occasions like Khutbahs (sermons delivered by an imam (prayer leader) as part of Sharia and Islam. At that time, I had no education or migration experience to compare different perspectives. When the Mujahidin and Taliban took over, claiming to represent true Islam, their actions contradicted Islamic teachings and plunged the country into internal war. Since then, I haven't followed any Mullahs or religious figures. Instead, while at university, I studied, searched, and understood the Quran's verses and hadith myself. Now, I know I can decide for myself.

Other participants, whether experiencing a decline in or maintaining regular practices, use multiple sources to address inquiries about their religiosity. Questions often involve technicalities like prayer and fasting times or the amount of Fitriya [Zakat al Fitr] in Scotland. In this category, six participants (two men and four women) use online resources, especially Google, while three younger participants also consult their parents. Instead of relying on a specific Marj'a website, they screen information in English and Persian from various Shia sources, including those posted by Shia mosques in Scotland and the UK, as well as websites in Persian. F407, a young female student, highlights the challenges of determining prayer times and her reliance on a prayer times app:

> There hasn't been much that I don't know about my faith. I started practising early in Afghanistan, like other girls. So, when I moved here, nothing changed about praying or fasting style, but the timing did. In Afghanistan, it was easy;

> you could hear Adhan (ritual call to prayer) from mosques or TV channels. Here, I didn't know what to do at first. But then I found an app online and installed it on my phone. The app seems made for the Pakistani Shia community here, but it's useful for all. That's how I figure out prayer timing. Fasting was more confusing because timing is stricter, but I found information on the Facebook page of an Islamic centre. So, whenever I want to pray or fast, I use these.

F725, a mature woman who practices regularly, also finds using Google to be an effective way to find answers to her religious questions:

> I think it's easier today to find answers. There's no mosque close to where we live, and even if there was, I practice more at home. So, I just type my question into Google using my phone, and I find my answers there. It's much easier. You don't need to wait to ask anyone as we did before, during religious ceremonies where the Mullah discussed Ahkam [Islamic rulings]. Now, I find these online.

In addition to online inquiries, younger participants living with their families frequently seek religious guidance from their parents before turning to virtual resources. This intergenerational transmission of religious knowledge is evident in M439's experience. M439, a young man, exemplifies this practice by initially consulting his father on religious matters. When parental guidance is insufficient, he supplements it with online research:

> I feel very comfortable talking to my parents about my questions, especially my father. I ask him why I should pray, why I should practice certain things, or avoid what is Haram (forbidden under Islamic law). He explains without forcing me to do them. But sometimes they don't know the answer, like when I asked why boys start practicing later than girls. I looked for this online and I discussed what I found with them. So, we have handled everything together so far, and there hasn't been a big issue we couldn't manage.

Additionally, in four cases, participants expressed a preference for seeking assistance from a cleric for their religious issues. A young practicing woman considered this to be her last option, after consulting her family and conducting online research. In contrast, two practicing participants—one man and one woman—viewed clerics as their primary source of religious guidance. M434, a non-practicing man, noted that although he does not engage in regular religious practices or follow a Marj'a, he still considers consulting a cleric for specific rituals, like funerals. M434 explains:

> In Afghanistan, I asked my questions to religious A'lims (religious scholars). I would call them whenever I faced difficult questions, like when I wasn't sure whether something was haram or halal (lawful or permitted by Islamic law), and they would inform me. But here, I don't feel the need for such advice because I am now more mature and ethical, and I avoid actions I believe are wrong. Religion is also about ethics, isn't it? For example, if someone steals, I see it as immoral rather than just haram. So, I feel I was more influenced by religion in Afghanistan, but here my attitudes have changed. However, there is one aspect where I might still seek a cleric's help, which is conducting burials and FatihaKhani (funeral prayers and reciting Quran for the deceased). This is a sensitive issue, and if it arises, I may look for a cleric's assistance.

In their everyday migratory context, participants reconsider and utilise a broad spectrum of references for their religious interpretations, ranging from collective and traditional sources to digital and individual ones. This renegotiation and reinterpretation involve engaging with diverse sources of religious knowledge, highlighting a new process of identification that will be detailed under the subsequent theme.

4.3. Navigating Intersectional Identities

The interlocutors highlighted the complex interplay of multiple identities—religious, ethnic, national, and migratory—in their self-identification and how they are perceived

by others within the everyday context. Originating from a minority background within a Muslim-majority context, being a Shia Muslim is an internalised value intertwined with their cultural and ethnic identity as Hazara in Afghanistan. Participants frequently discussed their ethno-religious identification as Shia Hazaras and the persecution their community faces in their country of origin. M815, a mature man, contextualises this sense of belonging and the intersection of ethno-religious identities in their pre-migration context:

> Being a Muslim and a Shia is a value for me; this is how it is defined for us. I grew up with these values and lived with them all my life. Being Muslim is a religious value that has been passed heart to heart and generation to generation for us. So, of course, I know myself as a Muslim and a Shia. These become inseparable from our life and culture. Just because of being known as a Shia and Hazara, we have been targeted and massacred by Daesh [ISIS] and the Taliban. My folks even can't safely go to mosques or education centres for their rituals or studying.

In the new environment, the assertion of identity becomes more relational, hybrid, and context-dependent, influenced by interactions with non-Muslim majorities, other Muslim minorities, or Afghan diasporic groups. Participants noted that, in this context, when interacting with the non-Muslim majority, they are mainly identified as 'Muslim' or 'Afghan', rather than by their denomination and ethnic identities. M470, a mature man, explains that in everyday interactions, they are primarily perceived as Muslims, rendering their local ethno-religious identities invisible:

> In my daily life in Scotland, it's not really important if I am a Hazara or a Shia. Where I work, my clients have never heard about these. They only ask about my nationality—where I came from? When I say Afghanistan, they automatically think of me as a Muslim and don't know what a Shia Muslim is. Sometimes, I talk to them and share the stories about how our people are suppressed in Afghanistan. That comes as a shock to some of them.

The visibility of Muslimness as the overarching identity is more pronounced in the lived experiences of practicing women who wear the hijab. The hijab serves as a Muslim identity marker, subjecting them to the majority gaze and prompting inquiries about their religiosity. F948, a young woman, elaborates:

> Here, my local ethnicity (being Hazara) and denomination (Shia) are not known most of the time. I think people only know that I'm a Muslim when they see my hijab. Otherwise, if I don't wear it, how would they realise that I'm a Muslim or specifically belong to the Shia community unless they ask me? But with the hijab, I have received many questions from my classmates about this and other habits—what I'm drinking or eating and what not. So, I feel sometimes that I should explain everything each time. It's challenging, but I also learned more about Islam.

The ethno-religious identities of being Hazara and Shia, however, unlike the majority–minority interactions, become salient in minority–minority interactions, particularly when participants engage with other Muslims or the Afghan diaspora. Here, being Shia Muslim and Hazara serve as common identifiers, facilitating solidarity and networking within minority communities in Scotland. Participants reported developing new networks of friendship and contact with Muslims and Shias from Pakistan, Iran, and Iraq, as well as other Afghan ethnicities and Hazaras. This diasporic engagement allows Hazara migrants to assert their ethno-religious identities and cultural values in the everyday minority context. Six participants, both practicing and non-practicing (four men and two women), expressed their participation in other communities' cultural and religious programs. M434 provides a representative quote:

> While I'm not practicing myself, I take part in religious and cultural gatherings by Muslim communities in Scotland. Whenever I am invited, as they know I am a Shia Muslim from Afghanistan, I respect this and attend the events, like

> commemorations. This is because such gatherings are a part of my culture and my life. Like for Eid, it's a great opportunity to get together, support each other, and feel better. So, here I'm more engaged with other Muslim and Shia communities from everywhere that I had no idea about before, and this is good.

M434's emphasis on new identity formation and networking with other Muslim minorities is echoed by other participants and confirmed through observed events. During an annual religious gathering hosted by a Shia organisation in a Church Hall in Edinburgh to celebrate Eid after Ramadan, I met several Hazara migrants. At the event, one of them delivered a short talk, expressing excitement about the diversity of Muslim and Shia communities gathered in the Church and the inclusivity of the religious landscape in the UK. The speech also highlighted the plight of the Hazara Shia minority in Afghanistan, sparking an emotional expression of solidarity among the attendees. The migrant later shared feeling proud to voice the challenges faced by the community in such a diverse and inclusive faith-based gathering in Scotland.

5. Discussion

The results of this study illustrate the lived religiosity of Hazara migrants in the UK, focusing on their embodied practices, authoritative navigations, and religious identification. These findings present a significant case of an 'intersectional Muslim minority'—adapted from Stausberg et al. (2023)—based on the interplay of multiple identities, particularly ethnic/racial, religious, and migratory, in the reconstruction of their religious practices, experiences, and identities in the UK. The Hazara migrants in this study immigrated from Afghanistan, a multi-ethnic and religious society where Islam and the Sunni Hanafi school are recognised as the public and official religion. In this context, their ethnic identity as Hazaras and their religious identity as Shia Muslims distinguish them as an ethno-religious minority, resulting in historical discrimination and persecution. They shared their collective memory of this background, conveyed through popular culture, literature, Shia faith, and oral traditions (Phillips 2011). For most participants, their minority status was crucial to their decision to immigrate and take refuge in the UK. In the new society, they retain their minority status, identified as part of the Muslim minority, which in total comprises about 6 percent of the UK population (House of Commons Library 2024). Hazara migrants address their religiosity within legal and political structures emphasising secularism, individual rights, and pluralism, needing to determine how to be 'good Muslims' and develop appropriate strategies for living as a minority in a non-Muslim society (Abbas 2004).

The findings reveal significant changes in everyday religious practices and belonging, illustrating reconfiguration, adaptation, and innovation. This study captures a range of commitments to religiosity, from decreased practice to non-practice and regular practice. While the interlocutors shared a similar religious background and engaged with organised and institutionalised forms of religious practices pre-migration, their patterns and notions of religious observance became heterogeneous post-migration. This confirms Ammerman's concept of multiple 'religiosities', encompassing both traditional practices and new innovations (Ammerman 2007). A common theme among all the participants is the shift in their notions and perceptions of religiosity, regardless of their level of commitment. Living Islam became an individual choice rather than an ascribed identity. Participants chose their level of religiosity, determining whether or not to practice and what practices to engage in. This demonstrates their agency in reconfiguring traditionally inherited and socialised notions of Islam and Shia identity, which were closely mediated through family, community, customs, and habits in the pre-migration context. Post-migration, they utilised investigation, subjectivity, and agency in choosing how to be a Shia Muslim in a new minority context, whether non-practicing, less practicing, or practicing. This finding is consistent with Warner and Neitz's argument that religious affiliation is achieved rather than inherited and that pluralism can lead to both a decline in and strengthening of religious commitments (Neitz 1986; Warner 1993).

Participants experiencing a decline or leaving regular religious practices, mainly mature married men and women, exhibited a transition from ritual-centred religiosity to value-centred religiosity. Here, spirituality, morality, and pragmatism took precedence over regular observance of rituals like daily prayers, fasting, and mosque attendance. This notion of spirituality highlights the 'important qualitative differences in religion-as-lived' among the participants (McGuire 2008b). It underscores their 'religious eclecticism' and 'pragmatic concerns', offering a private 'space of their own to practice Islam on their own terms' (Jeldtoft 2012). Moreover, their selective engagement with embodied practices aligns with Davie and Wilson's conceptualisation of 'from obligation to consumption' in the European and British context, where individuals attend religious institutions based on choice rather than obligation (Davie and Wilson 2020).

For those who retained regular practice (including two young single individuals who arrived with their families during adolescence and two mature married individuals), this study highlights the significance of their quotidian interactions and religious identification as pious Muslims in public institutions like schools. In this minority context, where they face inquiries about their ritual practices and religious identifiers (such as the hijab for F948), they emphasise their choice, autonomy, and identity as practicing Muslims. This finding aligns with studies on 'reactive religiosity' among ethnic minority South Asian youth in the UK, who feel compelled to defend their Muslim identity (Khan 2024).

Participants also reconfigured their sources of religious authority post-migration, varying from rejecting institutional religious authority to stressing personal interpretation and utilising digital spaces, parental, and clerical advice. Three participants rejected traditional Marja'-e Taqlid and taqlid, stressing their wisdom, autonomy, education, and personal understanding of religious sources. Only one male participant adhered to taqlid, and four participants sought local clerical assistance for technical religious questions. This varied engagement broadens the scope of scholarship on Shia post-migration patterns in Europe, which often focuses on the retention and adaptation of transnational religious institutions, organisations, and their representatives in local contexts (e.g., Scharbrodt 2020; van den Bos 2020). Furthermore, the usage of digital applications and online spaces signifies the transformation of traditional religious authority by 'Cyber-Islamic-Environments' (Bunt 2018). Four of the six participants who used digital spaces were women, demonstrating how online resources provide an 'easier' option to address religious inquiries (e.g., F725). The younger generation often combines virtual resources with parental guidance, illustrating a pattern of intergenerational transmission of religious knowledge.

The participants' religious identification is multilayered and intersectional, entangled with their minority ethnic/racial and migratory status. Their hyphenated identities as Hazara Shias and Afghan Muslims influence their sense of belonging and identification, both pre- and post-migration. In the UK, their ethno-religious identity as Hazara Shia remains less visible compared to other Muslim communities with larger profiles, such as Sunni or Shia Muslims of South Asian backgrounds. However, their identity assertion becomes more relational, hybrid, and context-dependent, influenced by interactions with non-Muslim majorities, other Muslim minorities, and Afghan diasporic groups. In interactions with the non-Muslim majority, they are primarily identified as 'Muslim' and 'Afghan', with their denomination and ethnic identities becoming less visible. This overarching Muslim identity is especially pronounced for practicing women who wear the hijab, which serves as a visible marker of their religiosity and subjects them to the majority gaze. Conversely, their ethno-religious identities of being Hazara and Shia become more pronounced in minority–minority interactions, facilitating solidarity and networking within minority communities. This diasporic engagement allows Hazara migrants to navigate and assert their ethno-religious identities and cultural values in the everyday minority context, confirming the fluidity and context-dependence of their identity negotiation. This process aligns with Radford and Hetz's findings on Hazara immigrants in Australia, who also navigate multiple identities context-dependently (Radford and Hetz 2021), but further emphasises the intersectionality of these identities (ethnic/racial, gender, religious, and

migratory) in relation to religious identification and religiosity. This engagement in diverse networks highlights the dynamic interplay between agency and adaptation in the religious lives of Muslim minority immigrants in the UK.

6. Conclusions

This article examines the everyday lived Islam practiced, experienced, and expressed by Hazara migrants from Afghanistan who have resettled in Scotland, a less visible ethno-religious minority within the Muslim population in the UK. As an intersectional Muslim minority, Hazara migrants showcase the interplay of non-privileged identities—ethnic/racial (Hazara/Afghan), religious (Shia/Muslim), and migratory—and their agency in reconfiguring religiosity and a sense of belonging. Post-migration, the patterns of everyday religious affiliation and identification became heterogeneous and relational, demonstrating a variety of non-practicing, less practicing, and practicing orientations, facilitated by the dynamics of secularism, pluralism, and marginalisation.

Before migration, in Afghanistan, the religious experiences of this minority were mediated by collectivities such as institutions, traditions, and communities of beliefs, and they were subjected to religious persecution. However, the social and geographical dislocation resulting from migration provided opportunities for change and innovation in religious practice and identity (Knott 2016; Volpi and Turner 2007). While this study confirms that migration allows individuals more space to manoeuvre independently of the norms imposed by the collective, leading to weakened social control and the availability of alternative options for behaviour and outlook (Nielsen 2013), it further emphasises the intersectionality of identities and individual agency in the minority migratory context.

The change is evident in the tendency among participants to live everyday Islam in a more individualised, privatised, and elective manner. This shift includes innovations in transitioning from ritual-centred religiosity to value-centred religiosity, which emphasises spirituality, pragmatism, and personal autonomy. Additionally, participants utilised digital spaces to acquire religious knowledge, highlighting a significant transformation in the sources of religious authority. Post-migration religious identification is a complex and context-dependent process, involving both majority–minority and minority–minority interactions, where participants assert their agency to navigate multiple identities in relation to the non-Muslim majority and other Muslim minorities.

Building on the insights of this article, two areas are suggested for further research. First, a longitudinal study with a larger sample size could provide a more representative understanding of the changes, continuities, and innovations within ethno-religious Muslim minorities in the UK. Second, comparative studies of everyday Muslim religiosity within different Muslim minority groups with varied ethnic and religious backgrounds could offer valuable perspectives on the diversity and dynamics of Muslim practices and identities in multicultural contexts.

Funding: This research was funded by the Alwaleed Centre for the Study of Islam in the Contemporary World, University of Edinburgh. The preparation of this article was supported by a fellowship in partnership with Bard College, and partially funded by a grant from the Open Society Foundations.

Institutional Review Board Statement: This research is part of a project approved by the Research Ethics Committee at the School of Literatures, Languages and Cultures, University of Edinburgh, on 06/04/2022. The University of Edinburgh adheres to the UK Research Integrity Office Code of Practice for Research and the Universities UK Concordat to Support Research Integrity.

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all the subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement: The data are not publicly available to protect the privacy of the research participants.

Acknowledgments: I would like to express my gratitude to all the participants who generously took part in this study and shared their experiences. I also extend my appreciation to the peer reviewers for their constructive comments and feedback.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflicts of interest.

Notes

[1] I use the term 'minority' as defined by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), which refers to a 'group numerically inferior to the rest of the population of a State and/or in a non-dominant position, whose members possess ethnic, religious or linguistic characteristics differing from those of the rest of the population and show, if only implicitly, a sense of solidarity, directed towards preserving their culture, traditions, religion or language' (Sironi et al. 2019).

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