

CRISIS OF IDENTITY

The most pressing challenges faced by Shia' parents and their children

A series of interviews were carried out with Shia families in the summer of 2020 to find out their challenges, needs and expectations regarding religious upbringing and education for their children.

Here are the findings from these interviews.



01 Inferiority Complex and lack of confidence

Shia children often feel inferior to their peers at school because of their differences. Parents say that lack of confidence has been a subsequent result of children having issues with their identity.

"In school, she feels she's different, she feels she is not like other kids."

"...I have concerns whether he could carry on with her religious practices while living in the UK and be confident."

"It's about whether she will fit in the society. I want her to be able to adapt her lifestyle and be confident in her religion."

02 Not fitting in

Being accepted and fitting in at school remains one of the main challenges for children and their parents.

"It's about her fitting in the society."

"...what surprised me was when she (a 9 year old) told us that she does not 'fit in'. The peer pressure on my daughter is pretty high because she would be different to others"

"I have concerns for his future, like bullying."

03 Lack of friends and role models

Parents feel their children do not have good friends to bond with or people to look up to and learn from. This is known to be one of the main pillars of identity building for children.

"...the right sort of friends: someone that has the same values as us, same mindset, same kind of akhlaq and manners, Islamic traditions and way of life..."

"Our children don't have close friends or family members in the west to be their role models."

"They go to an Islamic school but don't have Islamic friends, not the kind of friends I would like them to have."

04 Challenges of wearing Hijab

The issue of Hijab has been repeatedly mentioned by parents of girls as one of the most challenging family topics they have at home.

"Hijab is a challenge as she is not that interested."

"Mainly because they're girls, i'm worried about their hijab"

05 Parent-Child communication problems

The generational gap and the lightening speed of cultural change have left parents with a lot to catch up on, resulting in difficulties in communicating with their children. The issue of puberty is another challenging area for parents to communicate with their children about.

"How to communicate with them as a parent is a concern"

"It's difficult to keep our family rules that are different to that of classmates or school friends."

"...the fact that she is becoming baligh next year, so she is becoming a little bit weird about it."

06 Internet, TV and Social Media

Parents are greatly concerned about the content their children are exposed to on the internet, on TV and on social media.

"...(some of our major concerns are) Media and exposing to content online, social media and tv."

"With all the media, social media and peer pressure, the problems are increasing."

07 Influence of the West and RSE

This is by far the most recurring theme. Parents feel they are surrounded by non-Islamic values and a culture that threatens children's beliefs and changes the core pillars of their identity.

"The new RSE education is my concern for her."

"...British education system, RSE and what they learn at school... the values they learn... they are very secular based and are normalising many issue for the children."

"Influence of the west (over our children is the challenge), eg music."

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