



**A Qualitative Study of How
Irish Drinking Culture Shapes and Challenges the Socialisation Experiences of Irish
Muslims**

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Final Year Project

How Irish drinking culture shapes and challenges the socialisation experiences of Irish Muslims

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, the most gracious, the most merciful

"My success is not but through Allah. Upon Him, I have relied, and to Him, I return."

Quran 11:88

To my father, Salah Missaoui, whom I proudly share my name with. Fleeing his homeland leaving his career as a maths teacher to give me and my sisters all the opportunities he never had. Even as he is being tested will illnesses his sacrifice and love is still being felt. Thank you, Baba.

To my mother, Souad. The woman who carries heaven beneath her feet. The mother who got a second bachelor's degree while being pregnant. The woman who immigrated to Ireland to give me a better life. If I become a fraction of the woman she is, I have succeeded in everything in my life. Thank you, mama.

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To the people of Palestine, Syria, Congo, Afghanistan, Sudan, Iran, and Lebanon,
I dedicate this work for you. May peace and justice be granted for you all.

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Abstract

Background and Aims: The aim of this study is to explore the subjective experience of Irish Muslims and their perceptions of Ireland's drinking culture on their social interactions.

Methods: Employing a qualitative phenomenological approach, twelve semi-structured interviews were conducted with seven females and five males. **Results:** Four overarching themes were

identified: (i) Being the Irish non-drinker in the community; (ii) Pushed towards an alternative community; (iii) The impact of being excluded on the quality of life and (iv) Climbing the social and professional ladder, highlighting the severity of alcohol in friendships, and progressing professionally.

Major implications: The findings have shown important implications for the Irish Muslim population in terms of experiencing exclusions when socialising in academic environments, professional fields and in social events. Increased sensitivity and awareness towards religious minorities in alcohol centric countries should be noted by fostering non-alcoholic work and educational events.

A Qualitative Study of How

Irish Drinking Culture Shapes and Challenges the Socialisation Experiences of Irish Muslims

Alcohol culture has contributed to a progressing work life and social life while simultaneously excluding individuals who don't drink (Bartram et al., 2016; Buvik, 2019; Nesvåg & Duckert, 2017; Sakaranaho et al., 2015). Muslims living in western countries where alcohol is a prominent part of their culture face multiple social exclusions (Bærndt & Kolind, 2021). Ireland, a country where drinking is an important part of their tradition (Nkire et al., 2014) can bring a unique struggle within the Irish Muslim community regarding their cultural adaptations and socialisation experiences. This research will give rise into establishing more support and comprehension between the Irish community, and the Irish Muslim community towards their social experiences and feeling of belonging.

Alcohol in Ireland

Irish alcohol consumption has the 8th highest rate of monthly binge drinking in the world (Davoren et al., 2016; Mongan et al., 2020). It has also been reported as having prominent levels of binge drinking in Europe, as well as having a high per capita alcohol consumption (Davoren et al., 2016; Mongan et al., 2020). Although, recent surveys indicate that there has been a decrease in the prevalence of problematic drinking, alcohol consumption is still significant (Health Research Board, 2024). The consumption of pure alcohol starts at a young age in Ireland, from 15 years, in 2023 the average consumption of alcohol was 9.9 litres (Drinkaware, 2024; Health Research Board, 2024).

Drinking alcohol is common in Ireland, 67% of individuals aged between 15-34 confirmed that they drank alcohol within the last six months and over half of the individuals (52%) confirmed that they drank at least once a week (Ipsos, 2022). Also, a third of the individuals (32%) reported that they drank multiple times a week (Ipsos, 2022). It was also indicated that on average one in five teenagers experienced being drunk at least twice in their

lifetime from 2017 and 2018 (Drinkaware, 2024). In most cases the strongest influences on drinking behaviour and access to drinking come from family members and friends (Drinkaware, 2024; Cruz et al., 2012; Mares et al., 2010; Sudhinaraset et al., 2016; Trucco et al., 2014).

In contrast, around 18-24% of the Irish population abstain from alcohol (AlKalbani & Murrin, 2023; Drinkaware, 2024; O'Dwyer et al., 2019). According to the 2022 Barometer, 11% of Irish adults say that they never drink alcohol and 18% of under 25s said that they never drink (Drinkaware, 2024).

Usually, when individuals abstain from alcohol it is deemed that they are in risk of being excluded from society (Frank et al., 2020). They are also frequently pushed to defend their choices and justify not participating in a “social act”- drinking (Frank et al., 2020). Bartram et al. (2016) suggests that people who do not drink alcohol in the Western World were considered strange or deviant. It has also been determined that a *consequence* of not drinking is experiencing hostile reactions from individuals that do drink such as weird looks, name calling and verbal attempts to make them drink alcohol (Bartram et al., 2016). This can also lead to feelings of embarrassment as well as being excluded from group activities (Bartram et al., 2016). As well as that, when individuals voice their beliefs on not drinking it sometimes results in the deviation from social norms and may lead to a disrupted sense of self (Frank et al., 2020; Pennay et al., 2016).

Islam and Alcohol

Muslims are usually a group that are frequently linked to abstinence (Sakaranaho et al., 2015). Muslims are not allowed to drink alcohol according to their religious textbook (Bouma et al., 2003; Michalak et al., 2009). In Islam it is stated that God curses the one who produces it (alcohol), who drinks it, the one who serves it and the one who buys it (Michalak et al., 2009). Since the 1950s Islam has been the minority religion and now many Muslim

immigrants have Irish citizenships (Health Service Executive, 2024), this suggests that Muslims have had to navigate their life around an alcohol consuming country (Sakaranaho et al., 2015). According to the Central Statistics Office (2023), it is stated that there is approximately 81,930 Muslims in Ireland which accounts for 1.62% of the Irish population.

Irish Muslims

From the information above, it is suggested that the early presence of drinking alcohol in schools' results from the norms of society and parental habits. This might indicate that it may be difficult for the other Muslim school children and youth to fit in and to integrate within the social settings (Sakaranaho et al., 2015). Some Irish individuals felt that they did not know how to interact with Muslims as they were never in "Irish" places such as pubs, sporting events and politics due to alcohol being a central factor in these events (Ciciora, 2010). The lack of Muslim representation in Irish society such as in politics or in power positions limit Muslim's integration within the Irish society. Similarly, this has been seen in other studies where some Irish individuals did not see the compatibility between Muslims and the Irish culture as Muslims don't drink alcohol (Ciciora, 2010). Although Irish schools attempt to advocate for an inclusive and diverse setting for all religions, this has resulted in mixed reactions and feelings of exclusions within Muslims (Sakaranaho et al., 2015). The more typical idea of being Irish and doing Irish activities can sometimes contradict a Muslim's morals and values, which may lead to feelings of exclusion and may result in feeling less connected with Irish friends and classmates (Sakaranaho et al., 2015).

Significance of Alcohol in a Social Context

Drinking is essentially a social behaviour and plays a part in the formation of relationships and familiarity within one's community (Douglas, 2003). Alcohol consumption can contribute to the formation of meaningful bonds and support behaviours that strengthen a person's sense of belonging (Measham & Brain, 2005). Drinking is also seen as a work

culture and has also become a way of progressing in an organisation (Buvik, 2019). Buvik (2019) reported that employees seen drinking with colleagues as a sense of communion and an important sense of togetherness. This was consistent with previous literature, Nesvåg and Duckert (2017) highlighted how the work-related drinking culture may exclude individuals who wish to not participate in drinking. It was suggested that it was challenging for individuals to be in work environments where alcohol is constantly present which may lead them to being marginalised from employee groups or pressured to drink (Buvik & Sagvaag, 2012; Nesvåg & Duckert 2015). Similarly, a Muslim woman described feeling like an “outsider” when living in a western secular country (United Kingdom) (Zaidi, 2024). They also recounted that they often had to miss out on team building activities and work conversations due to the centrality of alcohol in these environments (Zaidi, 2024). This has led them to being excluded from certain opportunities in their work life as well as being pressured by their colleagues to partake in drinking activities. This is consistent with previous research which reported that individuals who do not drink in work settings felt socially excluded (Bartram et al., 2016). Although, Zaidi (2024) was the only study that highlighted the exclusion of how a Muslim non-drinker feels in the social world, the study also lacks generalisability and reliability of data as only one individual was a participant who was also the author of the study. Although, these previous studies highlighted the exclusion of individuals who do not drink, the religious group of Muslims are not addressed. Religious minorities abstaining from alcohol due to their beliefs may face subjective experiences of exclusion and overall different challenges from other individuals who abstain from alcohol. Islam is a minority religion in Ireland, Irish Muslims experience discrimination in their daily lives just from their religion (Fahey et al., 2019). This study will employ multiple Muslim participants to recount their experiences as they may have different challenges than non-religious individuals who choose not to drink. Furthermore, Irish Muslims may feel pressured

by the Muslim community to live up to a certain religious expectation which may not be experienced by non-religious individuals.

Consistently, in the United States of America some Muslim College students stated how they felt that they “do not belong here” and they knew that they were perceived negatively by other non-Muslim individuals because of their lifestyle choices and how they dressed (Douda & Yavuz, 2024). Some participants also felt exhausted having to explain why they do not drink to classmates and roommates which felt excluding. The idea of constantly reminding others also led them to perceiving themselves as being “different” (Douda & Yavuz, 2024). Similar to Zaidi (2024), Douda and Yavuz. (2024) reported that participants also purposely did not attend parties or social events in college which included alcohol to avoid being in uncomfortable situations.

Drawing from the information above, it is likely to suggest that alcohol plays a central role in Irish society within the social context. The drinking culture in western countries such as Ireland represents constant challenges in terms of Muslim’s socialisation experiences, their acceptance, and integration within the Irish society. As alcohol consumption is prohibited in Islam (Bouma et al., 2003), it forces Muslims to choose between sticking to their religious beliefs or questioning their religion and fitting into the Irish social culture. The relationship between alcohol and Islam has not received a lot of focus, even though alcohol consumption is a serious societal issue for both Muslim minorities countries and countries with a majority Muslim population (Michalak & Trocki, 2006). Similarly, Kalema et al., (2016) highlights that there has also been lack of research regarding how religiosity influences alcohol consumption as well as alcohol policy enforcement. Alageel and Alomair (2024) further emphasised that there has been a lack of qualitative studies regarding Muslims perception of alcohol use as it is different among Muslims from various parts of the world and that the relationship between alcohol and Islam has not received a lot of focus.

Challenges Faced

Based on the studies conducted by French et al. (2023), the authors concluded that religiosity is one of the variables which have a significant impact on the way young Muslims in Indonesia use alcohol. French et al. (2023) concluded that being with friends that consume alcohol becomes the mediator between religiosity and alcohol use. This was a core concept for the male population which suggests that the influence of peers is crucial for shaping behaviour. On the other hand, the lack of substantial mediation for girls suggests concerns about the role of gender and social environment in influencing these associations (French et al., 2023). This has also been highlighted by Tomkins et al. (2023) as they have determined that lower levels of alcohol consumption and higher rates of abstinence is linked to religiousness. Although, in predominantly religious/Muslim countries like Indonesia, alcohol consumption is discouraged and uncommon. Tomkins et al. (2023) established that the stronger a person holds on to their religion, there is a decrease in personal consumption. Thus, it is possible to suggest that religion serves as a protective factor in minimising alcohol use.

Although Ireland has a strong drinking culture, the influence of religion on abstinence may be seen as weaker. There is a lack of study directed at discovering the connection of a country with a high alcohol consumption like Ireland. This study may be limited to the generalisability of the data's population sample as Indonesia is a predominately Muslim country (United States Department of State: Office of International Religious Freedom, 2022). Many Muslims would not have the same difficulties as Irish Muslims in terms of the drinking culture as it is not as common in Indonesia as it is in Ireland. Similarly, this same problem has been faced by Al-Ansari et al. (2016), who investigated the extent of alcohol prohibition in Muslim majority countries. This research was in relation to a sample from Muslim countries (Saudi Arabia, Iran, UAE, Malaysia, Indonesia, Turkey, Tunisia, Iraq, and

Libya). Sensitivity may arise on the topic of alcoholism as it is not socially acceptable to consume alcohol in these countries (Al-Ansari et al., 2016). Bias can hinder the data preventing a more thorough understating of alcohol and socialisation patterns. Therefore, this research study will incorporate a socially accepting culture regarding alcohol use in Ireland. This gap promotes this research to focus on a high alcohol consumed country like Ireland and how it can interact with the potential exclusions and disrupt socialisation experiences of Irish Muslims.

Key research has also highlighted the relationships between religiousness and temptation of consuming alcohol in an interfaith country such as Mauritius (Luczak et al., 2014). This research highlighted major strengths such as the utilisation of a longitudinal study as well as an adverse sample of participants from diverse backgrounds. However, some limitations have been established. The reliance on self-reported data may cause biases and incorrect responses from the participants which therefore may hinder the results. Secondly, this quantitative approach's use of a single-item scale may not allow for the full comprehension of the religious variable. These gaps were filled in this study by using a qualitative measured approach to fully comprehend the trends and experiences of Muslims without the implications of potential biases from self-reported scales. This will therefore allow for a more rigorous understanding of the implications Muslims face with alcohol.

Lastly a study conducted in Denmark, inspected Danish Muslim women's experience with a drinking and partying culture. According to Bærndt and Kolind (2021) Young Muslim women in Denmark are vulnerable to several exclusions because of the normalised youth culture of drinking. This includes isolation from their religious and cultural roots as well as exclusion from core Danish youth contexts. However, there is a contrast in the results with the study previously mentioned by French et al. (2023). Peer pressure strongly influenced males to drink alcohol or to abstain, even if they were religious (French et al., 2023). This

suggests that males were more vulnerable to social pressure. Interestingly Bærndt & Kolind (2021) found that Muslim women faced exclusion and social pressure when in an alcohol-based environments. It is likely that although social norms and peer pressure may influence drinking, gendered social roles can be another factor in shaping abstinence from alcohol. Although the population sample only employed females, this allowed for the deviation of results as male Muslims were not included. This aligns with previous research, where young adult Muslim women experienced social pressure to drink alcohol as well as being driven by gender expectations and stereotypes (Mir, 2009). Although these findings are important, they do not address Muslim men's experiences which may prevent the generalisability of results. This study sought to address this gap by investigating both men and women which allowed for a thorough understanding of socialisation experiences within both genders and minimising biased results towards one gender.

Bærndt & Kolind (2021) employed qualitative interviews with Muslim women from many diverse backgrounds which allowed for a more comprehensive and rigorous population sample for a more general applicability. It was further concluded by Bærndt & Kolind (2021) that young Muslim women from ethnic minorities who live in nations where alcohol consumption among young people is highly prevalent may face several exclusions. This can highlight the implications of European countries when it comes to accommodating people with religious requirements i.e., Muslims. It should be noted that although remarkable progress has been made in understanding alcohol use among Muslims, there is yet a lack of study directed at discovering the connection of how the Irish drinking culture shapes and challenges the socialisation experiences of Irish Muslims.

Current study

As a result, this study is to understand the subjective experiences of Irish Muslim's perceptions of the Irish drinking culture in terms of their socialisation experiences and sense

of belonging. There is a gap in promoting better informed interventions; the research also explores health impacts like stress, anxiety or feelings of exclusions that may arise from the socialisation challenges experienced. By examining this connection, the research aims to shed light on how alcohol related norms and alcohol consumption influences interpersonal relationships and socialisation experiences as well as ways of dealing with issues within the community. Through the investigation of these aspects this study aims to enhance our understanding of difficulties experienced by Muslims and guide effort to address major impact of drinking on their socialisation experiences.

Rationale of the current study & aims

The research question of this study is to explore how do Irish Muslims perceive the influence of Ireland's drinking culture on their social experiences and sense of belonging?

Research objectives of this paper are: 1. To explore how Irish drinking culture affects the social interactions and behaviours of Muslims in Ireland, 2. To understand how Irish Muslims see and feel the impact of Ireland's drinking culture on their interpersonal relationships, 3. To explore feelings related with exclusion such as authenticity and not fitting into the Irish drinking culture for Irish Muslims and 4. To examine the psychological health impacts like stress, anxiety or a sense of isolation that could result from social environments challenged by Ireland's drinking culture for Muslims in Ireland.

Muslims face distinct challenges in their lives (Bærndt & Frank, 2022). With also exploring the health impacts such as stress, anxiety or feelings of exclusions that may arise from these social challenges experienced. Alcohol consumption is seen as a key factor in establishing relationships and meeting new people as well as being seen as "mature" (Kolind et al., 2013). Previous research highlights the disconnection Muslims face with the world as they are not able to benefit from the social bonding with others that sometimes brought by the means of alcohol (Valentine et al., 2010).

By examining this disconnection, the research explores how alcohol related influence interpersonal relationships and socialisation experiences as well as ways of dealing with issues within the community. This study aims to explore the subjective experience of Irish Muslims and their perceptions of Irelands drinking culture on their social interactions.

A qualitative approach was most suited for this study as it allowed for the exploration of complex social dynamics and challenges derived from being part of a community where alcohol consumption is a mode of social interaction. This method further enhanced our understanding of the identification of patterns and trends that individuals relate to in relation to the Irish drinking culture. The motivating factors of the individuals driving behaviour could also be displayed by a qualitative approach which was important for this study.

This study adopted a contextualistic design approach which resonated with this research as it focuses on the researcher's background as well as considering the cultural and social context of the environment and how the researchers personal influence can simultaneously help uncover a deeper understanding of the research (Bevir, 2011).

Methodology

Study Design

The research design was incorporated as a qualitative study using a phenomenological approach that framed the interview and research questions to capture the individuals' lived experiences within the Irish social context (Neubauer et al., 2019). The phenomenological approach directed the understanding of the participants' subjective account of their experiences. As mentioned by Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis of the interviews was conducted to identify common themes, codes, and stories that were expressed by the participants (Naeem et al., 2023). The interviews were semi structured and consisted of open-ended questions that were used to explore the participants' perspectives.

Researcher's Position

It is key to mention the positionality of the research, Holmes (2020) highlights the influence of positionality on qualitative data and recognises that researchers are also part of the social world they are researching. I acknowledge my standpoint as a practicing Muslim of North African background. From being born and raised in Ireland my experience navigating both my Irish identity and my religious identity has been both challenging and empowering. My prior understanding of this research has been my first-hand experience of balancing the cultural contrast between drinking and still holding on to a sense of "Irishness". I am mindful, however, that my lived experience with my religious background may influence my interpretations of the data. To avoid speaking for the data or how I interpret the participants responses I made effort to set aside my own existing assumptions, feelings, and biases. To bracket any of my influence on this research the interview guide made every effort to prevent any leading questions (see Appendix C).

Participants

Participants were recruited via convenience sampling. A poster was posted on social media channels such as Instagram and WhatsApp as well as hanging a poster at local

mosques and at National College of Ireland's prayer room (see Appendix G). Posts outlining the nature of the study were placed in various Islamic and Muslim WhatsApp group chats. Inclusion criteria of this study were Muslims from birth or have reverted to Islam, a resident in Ireland, 18 years and over, English speaking and wanting to speak up on their first-hand experiences relating to how the Irish drinking culture has shaped and challenged their socialisation experiences.

All participants ($n=12$) met the inclusion criteria. The richness in sample sizes is often determined by data saturation which is considered the gold standard. It is the stage in which no new themes or information were found in data (Guest et al., 2006). It was also highlighted by Guest et al. (2006) that saturation occurred within the first twelve interviews. These results were like those reported by Braun and Clarke (2013) as a sample size of 8 - 12 participants are accepted, and patterns and themes can be found within the data.

The participants were comprised of five males and seven females from various ethnic backgrounds: Moroccan, Pakistani, Nigerian, Algerian, Syrian, half Irish half Italian, half Irish half Algerian, Libyan, Somali, Indian and Black Sudanese. Participants ages ranged from 18 - 50 years ($M=28.4$). All participants were Irish residents. Eleven participants were raised Muslim while one reverted to Islam. Participants varied in occupation and educational background: one participant was a Leaving Certificate student; seven participants were in third level education and four participants have graduated university and are employed.

There was a relationship prior to the research: two participants were classmates of the researcher. These relationships were acknowledged and possible ethical considerations and advantages were considered. During the interview the interviewer treated their classmates solely as *participants* to facilitate an unbiased and honest environment. Several papers highlight that through having a prior relationship with

participants, feelings of discomfort or conflict to share personal experiences especially with a sensitive topic may arise (Brewis, 2014; Taylor, 2011). To address this, the purpose of the study was clearly explained and that all of their answers and personal information would be kept confidential and that they were completely unidentified. During data collection, to avoid exploitation the classmates were reminded that their participation was voluntary, and they should not feel obliged to participate because of their personal relationship with the researcher. Including the classmates also allowed for the conversation to flow naturally and gave them a sense of familiarity and comfort.

Materials

The researcher recorded all twelve interviews on Microsoft Teams on a MacBook air laptop. The transcription software in Microsoft Teams was used for transcribing the data. The interview guide was developed and shaped by existing literature on Muslims' experiences living in non-Muslim majority countries (see Appendix C). Prior to commencement participants were asked demographic questions such as age, ethnicity, educational/occupational background, gender, residency in Ireland and whether they drink alcohol (see Appendix C). This provided more context and information for the qualitative nature and highlighted the diversity in the participant's subjective experiences.

The implementation of a pilot study has been shown to improve the quality of the research and data collection while also aiding with the later phases of the research process (Malmqvist et al., 2019). A pilot study was applied as this interview guide has not been previously used in regard to identifying themes such as socialisation experiences, interpersonal relationships, isolation, belonging, wellbeing, and feelings of exclusion for Muslims regarding Irish drinking. Three mock interviews were conducted online on Microsoft Teams on a MacBook air laptop prior to the actual interviews to ensure that the data was relevant to the research questions. The pilot study enabled the researcher to verify

the timing of the interviews and allowed time to modify any questions that were not understood by the participants. Following the first two interviews the interview questions were changed slightly, and the third pilot study was successful. The data obtained was not included for the main analysis and the pilot study participants were not used in the actual interviews. All data of the pilot studies were deleted.

Procedures

This study was approved by the National College of Ireland's Psychology Department's Undergraduate Ethics Committee prior to recruiting any participants or any data collections. Fourteen participants were interested in being in this research study. Although due to the time restrictions one participant could not respond in time, and the other withdrew from the study before the scheduled interview.

When the participants showed interest in participating via email, they were forwarded the information sheets, consent form with all relevant details and the interview guide (see Appendix E). Participants provided their written consent for their participation and sent it to the researcher by email or gave it as a physical paper. When the researcher and the participant agreed on a date and time, they were sent a unique video call meeting link via Microsoft Teams. On the day of the interview the participants were each briefed about their consent for their participation and to being recorded. They were also instructed that they could withdraw at any point during the interview and could have a 15-minute break throughout the interview.

When the recording began the researcher built rapport with participants and created a more comfortable environment for them. The researcher then shifted from the demographic questions to the interview questions. The interview schedule was used to guide the conversation between the researcher and the participant (see Appendix C). A flexible approach was used to address the interview questions, in addition, the order of the questions asked were shaped by the participant's responses. At the end of the interview the researcher

thanked the participant for their engagement and their answers and gave them the opportunity to give any suggestions or say anything else that they have not mentioned and would like to discuss. The researcher bid farewell and stopped the recording. A debrief form was sent to the participants after the interview via email for any support (see Appendix F).

Each online interview was individual, semi structured and consisted of open-ended questions. The interview was both video and audio recorded. The interview process took a total of 6 weeks. The interview timings ranged from 13 - 43 minutes ($r = 30$ minutes) and the mean timing of the interviews were 24 minutes and 28 seconds ($M=24.48$). All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis, as described by Braun and Clarke (2006) was selected for the data analysis of this research project. Thematic analysis allowed for the examination and identification of common themes and patterns within qualitative data (Naeem et al., 2023) whilst being suitable for exploring the subjective experiences of Irish Muslims within the Irish drinking culture.

The process of analysing the data was adhering to the six phases of thematic analysis by Braun and Clarke (2006). Firstly, the interview transcripts were read repeatedly and the researcher noted down any ideas as well as being familiar with the data which then led to generating codes which were the subthemes. When grouping specific subthemes together by highlighting them and writing them down manually, they led to identifying the potential main themes. Each theme identified captured a unique relevance to the research question. The main themes were constantly reviewed and checked in relation to the 'subthemes generated. This whole method collaborated into generating a thematic map and a thematic table (see Appendix A & B). The thematic map and table were constantly refined and analysed generating an overall story. Finally selecting the relevant quotes and compiling extract

examples from the participants relating back to the literature and research question which fits the data's overarching narrative.

An inductive thematic analysis was used to analyse responses also known as bottom up (Frith & Gleeson, 2004). Inductive analysis is the process of coding data and themes without being driven by a pre-existing coding frame or concepts (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This process ensured that the participants experiences were more focused.

Results

During the analysis of the interview transcripts following Braun and Clarke (2006), four overarching themes were identified in the data: (i) Being the Irish non-drinker in the community, (ii) Pushed towards an alternative community, (iii) The impact of being excluded on the quality of life, and (iv) Climbing the social and professional ladder (see Appendix A & B).

Theme 1: Being a Non-Drinker in the Irish Community

This theme captures the challenges participants face when being a non-drinker in situations where alcohol is present, which often feels awkward and excluding. The feeling of having to intentionally manage other people's opinions, perceptions and expectations was quite common in this scenario.

Subtheme 1: Feeling like the outsider

Some participants expressed the confusion of having alcohol present in social situations and it causing them to feel an automatic sense of exclusion. As some participants reported "...it almost feels like we're excluding ourselves and we feel like we're being separated just by default" (Participant 6). "If you're not a drinker, then it will be challenging. You might feel alone, or you might be aloof" (Participant 7)

As alcohol is a central part in Irish culture and socialisation, it constantly created an exclusionary environment for some participants and acted as a natural barrier between those who do not drink and those who do drink in social situations. Feelings of exclusion is a common factor experienced by individuals when abstaining from alcohol.

I feel like because it's so central, it stops you from going out with some of the time well a lot for me... I usually ask them like, "oh, will people be drinking and stuff" ... So, I

feel like in a negative way, it's like stops. It's like, do you have to be drinking alcohol?

It's like, does it have to be at every single event? (Participant 12)

Subtheme 2: Awkwardness in a social setting

Being in an awkward situation has been identified with some participants, as being an Irish non-drinker, you are often put in situations where you must justify why you cannot drink. This usually brought discomfort for some participants.

I've gotten peer pressured, or people just not understand and that feeling of not understanding is uncomfortable to deal with frequently...I'd rather not deal with those feelings and not deal with having to explain to someone that I just don't want to drink just simply because I don't want to drink, or I just don't want to party simply because I don't want to party. And then understanding it without it being a back-and-forth world conversation (Participant 6)

The constant questioning of not drinking often leads to situations where the individual would rather not go to events if drinking were involved to alleviate the feeling of awkwardness.

... it's a bit awkward not being able to not drink. I kind of don't really want to go anymore. Like, even my family's kind of traditions. I'm kind of bored now and like I don't attend as many like kind of family meetups because it's kind of it's a bit awkward not being able to not drink (Participant 3)

Subtheme 3: Judged for abstaining

Being judged in a social situation you cannot control has been an experience for many individuals. It clearly demonstrates the significant impact of abstinence on participants' social life. Feeling like an outcast when choosing your own lifestyle has been common within

family and friends. Experiencing judgement has been shown in forms such as facial expressions: “funny, weird, annoyed looks” (Participant 10) when the participant simply responded that they do not drink.

And it made me feel really kind of, you know, demeaning that. Oh, like I just suggested, like, you should look out for everyone. You know... But the looks like from people saying or if I tell someone “Oh drinking is not allowed in my religion” or people in my religion don’t drink. But as I say, “oh, I don’t drink.” I get such funny, weird, annoyed looks (Participant 10)

Similarly, being left out in a family setting has been reflected by Participant 4. The feeling of judgment from family members when abstaining from alcohol even from something small such as the cakes having alcohol in them leads to a sense of exclusion from the individual.

my mother's family, isn't Muslim...family gatherings, there's always alcohol served, and everything like in the cakes and everything. So, I feel a bit like left out sometimes and like a bit judged because like, they're just kind of like looking at you weird, like, "why would you not drink"? (Participant 4)

These quotes simultaneously capture when not adhering to the social cultural norm of drinking has shown to manifest itself in feelings of discomfort, awkwardness, and judgement. The idea of not being seen or understood shows how there is a complex issue of how the Irish drinking culture shaped how the participants navigated being in socially excluding situations.

Theme 2: Pushed to an Alternative Community

Many participants described that they felt the need to navigate between their own social identity of not drinking. Individuals also wanted acceptance and common ground with their own social cultural surroundings - the Irish culture.

Subtheme 1: Isolated with familiar people

Participants reflect on how constantly negotiating why they cannot drink leads to a natural gravitation towards a community or a friendship that consists of Muslims or non-Irish individuals, as they feel less judged and not feeling isolated when around them.

... my Muslim friends obviously don't drink so it would kind of isolate us from the from the Irish people in hindsight like we wouldn't. We wouldn't participate in what they would participate in so it would kind of leave us away from them ... (Participant 1)

I think it's caused me to really ... instead of socialising with the people here I tend to have just like my Muslim friend group and like for example in the university I would be involved with the Islamic Society, and I wouldn't really be involved with much else (Participant 5)

Subtheme 3: Integrating into Irish society

Isolation can be sensed among the participants. The cultural norms such as drinking alcohol impose, a block to integrating socially which can lead to isolations. Participants reflected on how the drinking culture was a barrier to engaging more with the Irish and had shaped their social identity.

I think like without the drinking culture; I would have engaged more with the Irish populates. I would have friends. I would kind of I think I would go more like you know. So, it's really, really shaped a lot of things (Participant 2)

... it does really affect because like everyone in college would be like, “oh, we're all going out for drinks” because, like, you know, like [university name] Christmas is on at the moment and everyone's like, “oh come out for drinks” and like, say, no makes me feel a bit like isolated because obviously I want to be a part of, like what they do to socialise...(Participant 4)

Although, Participant 1 reflected how they needed to make the decision of which community to be part of. Whether it be the Irish drinking community or their Muslim community, the constant negotiation brought a unique struggle for them.

“I kind of had to make that decision where am I going to stick to my religious path or am I going to fall off it” (Participant 1)

Subtheme 3: Restricted in social environments

This sub theme captures how participants experience the feeling of being restricted in social settings. Participants also pointed out that being restricted from drinking prevented them from becoming close to some people. This highlights the restraint of not being able to integrate with others and having to stick to people that are close to their identity. It is also illustrated that there are difficulties that come when trying to be part of a community but are not accommodated by them or felt understood by them.

“I’m kind of restricted around that. I can't really hang out with them” (Participant 10)

... I don't have too many of them that are born Irish because ...most of what they like to do would be something to do with alcohol or just like partying. So, because of that, most of my friends are not Irish, they're from different countries like Pakistan or Algeria or Cameroon, Nigeria, my friends, are kind of from all over... they're actually not really Irish (Participant 6)

Sub Theme 4: Seeking acceptance

Being accepted to a community has been a major factor in the lives of Irish Muslims. These quotes all illustrate the transition in identity, sense of belonging and acceptance throughout their lives. Participants reflected how the feelings of being isolated or seen as an “outcast” should not be the norm when they wanted to stick to their own belief, identity, and values. Participant 6 felt like they had to conform to the Irish drinking to “be accepted” and from the fear of being an “outcast”:

It did bring up feelings of exclusions, and that's why I think I got curious on why I did want to try (trying alcohol) at that time when I was younger because I was thinking, “oh, I feel like I will be more accepted” if I do drink. Because when you're younger. Being accepted is particularly important. You don't want to feel like an outcast. You don't want to feel different. So, because of that, you do sometimes challenge even your own beliefs (Participant 6)

Likewise other participants felt that they did not particularly belong to any community when growing up illuminating the disturbance in their social identity, then being finally pushed towards the Muslim community. As some participants reported: “I would say when I was younger, I definitely belong to both, but nowadays I definitely belong to the Muslim

community” (Participant 1), “And it's like that's the community you grew up in and to feel like you didn't even belong there is, like, for something so small as well”(Participant 10)

Although Participant 3 conflicts with whether they were truly accepted or not. They felt a bit segregated even when they thought they belonged to their community:

Yes and no. cause like a little bit cause like of course like I do have like my Irish family and like their whole community and like we visit them for like birthdays and, like, meet the family and everyone. And I feel like I belong there cause like, that's like my grandparents of course and like but sometimes like, there is a little bit of segregation. So yes and no (Participant 3)

These quotes highlight the challenges participants face to be accepted into a community. There was also a constant theme of participants being pushed to an alternative familiar community close to their values as they felt that they did not fit in the Irish community due to its centrality around alcohol.

Theme 3: The Impact of Being Excluded on the Quality of Life

This theme explores the situations that took place to cause the psychological impacts of being excluded when abstaining from alcohol. It also highlights the severity of feeling different from peers. These social challenges faced by participants from abstaining from alcohol manifested in racial remarks and being verbally abused when choosing to stick to their religious values. These events can therefore lead some individuals to being in a dark place, loneliness, and a lost sense of self.

Subtheme 1: Missing out on life events

Being excluded in social settings has been a prominent theme throughout the participants' quality of life. The decision to abstain from alcohol often meant missing out on key life events including weddings, funerals, Debs, family traditions as well as having to turn down leadership roles when asked to be the Debs chairperson. This is highlighted by Participant 1:

... I tend to miss a lot of the big big events, weddings...funerals are another. Obviously, I have to go pay my respects...But I can't stay for longer because the drinking starts. And even this year, like the Debs, like I was asked to be chairperson and organiser for my school's debs, and actually I had to turn that down. Because debs is essentially a big party (Participant 1)

Similarly Participant 4 sheds light on the limited activities to take part in as a lot of them are alcohol related. The absence of including activities that suit individuals that do not drink reinforced the feeling of loneliness in their life: "Other than that, it's kind of hard to find like much to do, especially without alcohol in Ireland because it's a big part of the culture so". (Participant 4)

Unfortunately, Participant 1 reflected on the mental health consequences when choosing to follow their religious beliefs. They experienced racist remarks as well as being targeted in group chats for turning down being the chairperson for the Debs committee due to its centrality around alcohol. The severity of this situation has led them to be in a dark place in their life as well as being kicked out of a friend group which can lead to loneliness and isolation.

...when I turned that down, a lot of lads actually mocked me and I received a lot of racial slurs behind my back group chats were made and I was slandered, slandered and slagged... I found myself in a very very dark place where I was kind of isolated and I was nearly kicked out of my friends' circle, so I had to start up from a level one again and it was definitely it was definitely a dark time in my life. (Participant 1)

Subtheme 2: Self-perception

Participants were often placed in situations where they felt socially rejected or “cut off from friendships. Another consequence of turning down invitations or attending parties was being further excluded by ignorance.

Again, I would say like when we were when we were graduating from secondary school, we had a little graduation at school and a couple of my friends, they wanted to go out for a drink and I straight up said “no, I cannot go for a drink” and they just cut me off totally from group...(Participant 10)

Participant 9 reflected on how they knew that they were being perceived as different in the Irish drinking culture. This highlights the subtle form of exclusion that even without a direct rejection, the perception knowing you are different by not drinking can create the feeling of being socially rejected which can reinforce feeling of loneliness and being separated.

... I feel like actually sometimes ... when people find out like, oh, like “she can't do this” or like “we can't do this around her.” They might be like inclined to not, you know, spend as much time around you... (Participant 9)

Theme 4: Climbing the social and professional ladder

This theme captures the challenge of maintaining and creating relationships in the social and professional world while abstaining from alcohol. In some cases, alcohol, acted as a means to career advancement, networking and bonding with others, therefore limiting some participants who do not drink to progress socially and professionally.

Subtheme 1: Not having a close relationship with superiors and colleagues

Multiple participants reflected on how they could see others in their company bond socially with the managers as they would go out for drinks together. Missing out on key discussions and socialising with colleagues on a personal level were also discussed by participants. Choosing not to drink caused them to be marginalised from their superiors and with other colleagues. Interestingly, Participant 7 also used the example of being a smoker. Being a smoker facilitated its way to be closer with the superiors during the smoke break, having a similar effect like alcohol.

I'm an occasional smoker...there was designated smoking zones, so we used to interact with a lot of Managers, employees, local, the non-locals ... so I can feel how non-smokers feel I used to say that. "Oh, you guys go out in the night and have drinks with Irish guys" ... and maybe next morning when they say "hi, hello." And so, we just see, OK, that's the reason alcohol may be the reason they are more friendly than they are close to each other than us (Participant 7)

Correspondingly Participant 7 reflected on how establishing work relationships is a lot easier for colleagues that do drink as they can attend certain events. Not being able to attend minimised their ability to get a better insight of the work environment. This allowed for other colleagues improve their performance in work which made it difficult for Participant 8 to ameliorate their career progression:

... colleagues know each other better because they've had these experiences together. ... It makes people come closer. ... If you don't attend the event, you'll notice that people are more familiar with each other. ... It's easier to talk to. ... Work discussions happen in those experiences. ... I was really missing out. You'll get better insight in terms of what's actually happening in the environment you're working on. ... This will definitely help you perform better, or it'll give you a better career (Participant 8)

Another insight is how the alcohol culture is a natural gravitation into larger social and political connections. Participant 7 expressed their subtle annoyance and why they cannot make a relationship or progress with people from a higher council and political community and why others can. Participant 7 acknowledges that alcohol had a power to bring people together and to pull strings for networking.

I run a Cricket Club. It's called [club name] ... there are different other clubs as well which is neighbouring clubs [other club names], and these guys are mostly [ethnicity name] (that drink alcohol) and they have a very strong connection either with the Council people or the politicians, local politicians so. Why do they have a very strong relationship? Why being a head of office club why I can't make that kind of relationship? it's because of the alcohol (Participant 7)

Participant 8 decided to adapt their socialisation and briefly drop by in alcohol-related events at work. Exclusion was still felt. This was described by Participant 8, illustrating a visible divide from being in the same environment as colleagues.

...the way I commute...carpool. Some of the people I was carpooling with would drink so they would be in an event. So, I couldn't just leave even if I wanted to. So in in this

case it was. It was very like it was very hard to like you... even if you're not drinking, just being in that environment is bad, ... I found myself having to do in that case was grab some fizzy drink and then non-alcoholic obviously and then afterwards just go to my desk there would be an exclusion there like very very obvious exclusion.

(Participant 8)

Subtheme 2: Loss of friendships

Participants were often placed in situations where it caused them to lose friends when choosing to abstain from alcohol. It often led to disputes and lack of understanding.

Participant 1 experienced past arguments with friends when choosing their religion than the social norm:

It all started with arguments started like "oh [Participant 1] why aren't you coming out do you think you're better than us" "[Participant 1] oh you're all you're all special everything you don't deserve to hang with us" and look I never want to make an argument of this or any...conflict or anything but it's just difference of opinions between two people one obviously more religious than the other. And the conflicts has between the two is what caused me to have this argument with my "friends" (Participant 1)

Similarly, the weakening of friendships overtime was also highlighted as well. When choosing abstinence, spending less time with family and friends that do drink were common. This created a significant barrier between individuals' friendship which caused it to collapse. As reported by a Participant: "It was kind of just like they stopped talking to me because it was very weird for them that I wasn't able to drink or go out with them in that kind of moment" (Participant 10)

Participant 3 highlights how when they used to drink alcohol, they had a closer bond with family and had multiple friends, but soon after when they became Muslim and stopped drinking alcohol, they felt distanced from them.

No, not at all. Like we might meet up...Very, very rarely, like very rarely, like once in, probably like years and years and years because it would like there's nothing in common anymore...I was much more closer to my family and like I had a lot more friends when I did drink. So it definitely impacted like...Irish culture does impact friendships a lot and relationship with like family because now obviously I don't spend as much time with them or if they are here for like meeting up with us like I'm not drinking...it puts some distance between my family and me and like obviously the loss of friendships then as well (Participant 3)

Betrayal and mistrust in friendships was also highlighted. Participant 9 reflected on how they were deceived by their previous friends switching their drinks together. It was an upsetting experience reflected by Participant 9 which led them to feel alone and wary of who they befriend in the future.

... she was trying to swap my drink with her drink because she spilled half of her half her Fanta lemon and had added alcohol into it ..., "no, this is your one trying to give me the one with the alcohol... I was like actually in actual, like shock. I was like, what the hell? What? Why would they? Why would anyone even do that? I was like, what's going on here? I was so like, like, shocked the whole time the whole like ... that was the last time that I ever went out with them... they knew me for so long, they knew that I don't drink... I couldn't believe it... ever since then, I've just been so wary... really

conscious... if your friends of years and years... who know you so well... "I'm not friends with them at all, actually, at all whatsoever. I cut them off after that. Yeah, yeah
(Participant 9)

Interestingly the strengthening of a friendship was seen by Participant 4. When reflecting on her friend that used to drink, and they could not get closer because of that. Relatively afterwards when her friend became Muslim and stopped drinking their friendship was better.

I'd say I would be missing out because my friend used to not be Muslim, so she used to always be going out drinking and like everything every night always partying and like I didn't really spend much time with her back then because she used to always be like doing that (Participant 4)

Thus, for some Irish Muslims, the Irish drinking culture has had an impact on their work, social events, local communities, birthdays, and graduations. Participants felt as if the alcohol culture shaped them towards another community that they could relate to and be part of as they already perceived that they were different. As well as that, there has been isolation, exclusion and mental health impacts on some participants when recounting past stories on how the Irish drinking culture shaped their socialisation experiences.

Discussion

The focus of this study explored how Irish Muslims perceive the influence of Ireland's drinking culture on their socialisation experiences and feeling of belonging. In addition, the research objectives of this paper were 1. To explore how Irish drinking culture affects the social interactions and behaviours of Muslims in Ireland, 2. To understand how Irish Muslims see and feel the impact of Ireland's drinking culture on their interpersonal relationships, 3. To explore feelings related with exclusion such as authenticity and not fitting into the Irish drinking culture for Irish Muslims and 4. To examine the psychological health impacts like stress, anxiety or a sense of isolation that could result from Muslims in Ireland being challenged by social environments and Ireland's drinking culture. A thematic analysis of the interviews conducted identified four main themes: (i) Being the Irish non-drinker in the community, (ii) Pushed towards an alternative community, (iii) The impact of being excluded on the quality of life, and (iv) Climbing the social and professional ladder.

In the current study, considering the theme "Being the Irish non-drinker in the community," participants often felt awkward and being an outsider when in social situations where alcohol was involved. The term "outsider" was similarly used by a Muslim participant in the previous study by Zaidi (2024) describing how it felt to be a Muslim living in a western secular country. Some participants felt that needing to explain themselves to others on why they cannot attend certain events often felt exhausting and secluding. This is consistent with Doua & Yavuz (2024), who highlighted how Muslim students in university often felt awkward when having to constantly explain why they can't drink alcohol to classmates. As well as that, some individuals felt peer pressured into drinking and felt the need to avoid situations where drinking was involved to alleviate the discomfort of needing to justify their choice. This was consistent by the findings of Bartram et al. (2016) and Pennay et al. (2015) where individuals preferred to avoid situations as a whole if alcohol was involved to alleviate

any pressure to drink while being there. Even though it seemed as if the participants were purposely excluding themselves, they felt the need to manage other people's perceptions of themselves when in environments with alcohol. Participants felt that they were already being separated just by default by others who do drink. This was consistent with the previous research of Bartram et al. (2016) as participants felt a sense of discomfort and awkwardness when choosing not to drink. Participants also felt uncomfortable when being constantly asked why they do not drink, often leading to being embarrassed and feeling excluded in social settings. This highlights how Irish Muslims know that they are being perceived negatively in their socialisation experiences. However, considering the results of Bartram et al. (2016) in a non-drinkers sample and not a Muslim sample highlights the intertwining between both populations. This also adds another layer of the need for awareness and sensitivity around those that identify with a minority religious group — Irish Muslims as they face the same experiences as non-drinkers. Although, their cultural and religious background may enhance the idea of being perceived as an outcast and hinder their socialisation experiences.

Considering the second theme of “Pushed to an Alternative Community.” Irish Muslims often felt pressured to choose between having Irish friends or having Muslim/culturally diverse friends. Participants felt a natural gravitation and belonging towards Muslim/culturally diverse friendships as alcohol was not a central factor in their socialisation. The need of being accepted when having an Irish and Muslim identity, two cultures of different values, caused some individuals to feel isolated. The feeling of being accepted and belonging were important to participants in their younger years. Participants felt that alcohol created a wall hindering their integration with Irish people, often feeling lonesome and excluded. These negative feelings led individuals to seek out friendships with Muslims or non-Irish individuals who share similar values — friendships of Muslim/multicultural form. This also reinforced social segregation which then leads to

miscommunication and lack of understanding and agreement with both communities.

Likewise, Bærndt and Kolind (2021) reported that Muslim Danish women faced several exclusions and pressured to drink in social settings due to the normalised Danish drinking culture. This current study incorporated both Muslim men and women and found that both genders felt pressured to negotiate their identities of being an Irish Muslim. These consistencies suggest a broader implication of how Irish Muslims must negotiate their dual identities which also contribute to how they perceive the Irish drinking culture on their social experiences and being accepted in a community.

The eagerness of wanting to be belonged have even led some individuals to consider drinking alcohol challenging their religious beliefs and highlighting the effect of peer pressure in a social setting. These findings were consistent with previous research as studies suggested the driving force of alcohol use among young adults who were friends (Cruz et al., 2012; Mares et al., 2010; Sudhinaraset et al., 2016; Trucco et al., 2014). Similarly, this was consistent with French et al. (2023) who indicated that pressure from friends that consume alcohol becomes the mediator between religiosity and alcohol use and the influence of a friend group impacts the moulding of behaviour. Previous research sheds light on how alcohol is a driving force for friendships and can also result in social exclusions within a university setting (Trucco et al., 2014). Contrary to this, the current study it highlights feeling socially excluded beyond educational environments and in familial and work settings. This showcases the prevalence of alcohol being in several environments making Irish Muslims that do not drink feeling isolated, segregated and not feeling they belong with their community. Surprisingly some participants felt that although they were not accepted in the Irish community they found more clarity and conformed more towards the Muslim community. This transition has been seen by several participants during their life span, realising that they would not want to be part of a community where they already felt

segregated which led to holding on to a stronger Muslim identity. Unlike previous findings, Mares et al. (2010) suggested that exclusion is a negative factor but lacked findings on how being excluded or not accepted can also serve as a positive factor allowing for a stronger bond with another community like in this study.

The third theme of “The Impact of Being Excluded on the Quality of Life” highlights the psychological impacts of being socially excluded due to not drinking alcohol. Many participants reflected on missing various events such as birthdays, weddings, Debs, and funerals due to its normalisation around alcohol. This raised many difficulties for participants such as feeling disconnected and betrayed when choosing to abstain from alcohol or not attending certain social events. These findings are consistent with Pennay et al. (2015), where it was concluded that individuals who did not conform with social norms as well as voicing their beliefs of not drinking, leads to being marginalised from others. Participants felt that they were invisible in Irish society as there are not many activities to do without having alcohol involved. As a result of missing key life events, participants were faced with racial, derogatory, and hateful language from others and reported being in a dark place because of not attending certain events. It also reinforced a constant cycle of not feeling understood which had an impact on their quality of life. This is consistent with Bartram et al. (2016) as it was determined that the consequence of not drinking can result in hostile reactions from others that do drink such as name calling. Most participants highlighted their loneliness and when missing events as alcohol was usually involved. Having a disrupted sense of self has also been linked to similar result of this study (Pennay et al., 2015).

The final theme was “Climbing the Social and Professional Ladder” which explored the disadvantages Irish Muslims face in interpersonal relationships and at professional work environments. Participants highlighted the weakening of their relationships with friends and families due to their abstinence of alcohol. The loss of friendships has been seen with multiple

individuals which also hindered the progression of interpersonal relationships due to alcohol. These findings are consistent with Pennay et al. (2015), where it was concluded that overtime, when individuals do not conform to the social norms within their friendships, they tend to disrupt their social bonds and eventually lose ties with friends.

Limited professional progression was highlighted with some of the participants. Some acknowledged that they did not have the same relationship with colleagues and managers. Being left out in conversations due to their restriction around alcohol was very common among participants when it came to socialising with colleagues after work hours. These findings expand on previous research as alcohol is not just a social act but can build up one's level in the professional world (Bartram et al., 2016; Buvik & Sagvaag, 2012; Nesvåg & Duckert 2017). Similarly, Zaidi (2024) found that practicing Muslims that do not drink often had to miss out on team building activities and work conversations which has contributed to not excelling in their work life and with their colleagues.

This study does not only suggest the sense of exclusion when alcohol is present in a casual or social situation, but also in a professional setting. This is a crucial factor for employees and policymakers to take into consideration when having work gatherings or activities outside work hours to provide events where alcohol is not present. Therefore, diversity and inclusion training in the work force would allow employees/employers to be aware of the principles of other people's beliefs and have an overall cultural awareness of others.

Participants were able to reflect on initiatives within Muslim communities such as being part of Islamic societies and joining cultural events that included them and their religious values. However, this hindered their integration and socialisation experiences with the Irish population as there seem to be a lack of policies for this matter. The diversity and inclusion Ireland is committed to promoting Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) in the

workplace and in the community. Social policies should promote awareness campaigns informing others on how some drinking practices can lead to feelings of exclusion among individuals with different religious/cultural beliefs. Universities should promote and hold non-alcoholic events for individuals to socialise together as well as having clubs and societies for students where alcohol is not involved to allow people who don't drink to feel more included.

Employing a counsellor or an individual that is part of the diversity and inclusion Ireland committee is recommended to give awareness to students and employees/employers on the severity of being socially excluded. As well as providing mental health services and initiatives to help Muslims that do not drink alcohol how to navigate being in a socially excluding setting.

Contribution

This study has contributed to the existing knowledge by engaging the subjective experiences of how Irish Muslims perceive the influence of Ireland's drinking culture on their social experiences and feeling of belonging. Navigating the contrast and clash between both communities and how their socialisation experiences can be shaped and challenged by these factors. This paper adds to previous research by highlighting the various environments where alcohol is present that can leave Irish Muslims to feeling excluded: work, school, and familial settings. This research also adds to the health psychology field as it highlights the potential exclusions and identity conflicts within various environments that could lead to causing sadness and stress. These findings will help aid interventions related to well-being and to Muslims in the western world for overall mental health and wellbeing research.

Strengths

One of the study's strengths is it's qualitative methodology, which enables a thorough examination of participants' subjective and distinct viewpoints and perceptions on the Irish

drinking culture. Rich data collection was made possible using semi-structured interviews, which allowed for a more complex understanding of how the Irish drinking culture can shape and challenge Irish Muslims socialisation experiences. One major strength of this research was the participant sample that was investigated. Having Irish Muslims from various ages, occupations, and ethnic backgrounds gave rise to the diverse struggles of Irish Muslims and gave a nuanced understanding and insights of the complexity and severity of their unique challenges. The research also addressed an apparent gap within the literature by Bærndt & Kolind (2021) as it only employed females hindered its generalisability as male Muslims were not included. This gap was filled in this research paper as it investigated both Muslim females (N = 7) and males (N = 5). Conducting three pilot studies allowed for the refinement of the interview questions as well as the quality of how the interview was going to be set out.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

This study provides insight into how Irish Muslims perceive the influence of Ireland's drinking culture on their social experiences and feeling of belonging. This can possibly inform and raise awareness to the Irish population and to other heavy drinking countries with religious minorities about the possible exclusions and stressful events they could face.

Although it is vital to acknowledge that this is a qualitative study where the data was rich and insightful to the subjective experiences of Irish Muslims through the twelve individuals, the findings should not generalise the whole Irish Muslim community or the Irish population. A drawback of this study was the positionality of the researcher. Although the researcher took the utmost precaution to reduce bias, their own history, perspective, and internal attitudes may have influenced the data interpretations. In addition, as semi-structured interviews were conducted, some of the Irish Muslim participants may have been uncomfortable or sensitive when speaking about alcohol to the researcher who is visibly Muslim. This may have led to them to feel judged and not-disclose information. Although the researcher-built rapport and

made sure that all the information that they disclosed was confidential and that they would be anonymised, future studies can utilise a mixed method design or a quantitative design. This is to remove any unconscious bias from the researcher and to comfort participants on their confidentiality and anonymity. The use of convenience sampling might have limited the external validity and is not representative of the entire population. As well as that some participants that approached this study may have a passion for this topic which may not be representative to the full population. Another limitation of this study, coincidentally, was that none of the participants were currently drinking alcohol. Some participants reflected that they had alcohol in the past but not in the present moment. The results findings are limited due to the sampling bias as there were only Irish Muslims who do not drink or have transitioned from drinking to not drinking. Past research has suggested that Muslims who do drink alcohol in a Western country are often faced with negative social perception by their Muslim community (Abu-Ras et al., 2010). As well as that Muslims that drank alcohol often felt the need to conceal their alcohol consumption in fear of stigma within their Muslim community (Abu-Ras et al., 2010). By excluding this sample of Muslims, this study lacks full subjective insights and experiences of all Muslims and the differences in alcohol intake in their socialisation experiences and sense of belonging in Ireland. Future studies should include Muslims that do drink alcohol to make sure there is a nuanced understanding among all the levels of alcohol use among Irish Muslims.

In conclusion this study contributes to the limited research surrounding how Irish Muslims perceive the influence of Irelands drinking culture on their social experiences and feeling of belonging. This study also adds to the health psychology field health regarding Muslim minorities potential exclusions within various environments that could lead to negative outcomes like stress. Four overarching themes were identified from the data: i) Being the Irish non-drinker in the community; (ii) Pushed towards an alternative community;

(iii) The impact of being excluded on the quality of life, and (iv) Climbing the social and professional ladder. These findings highlight how Irish Muslims perceive Ireland's drinking culture shaping their socialisation experiences while challenging their sense of belonging leading them to seek other communities for acceptance. Alcohol didn't just hinder their socialisation experiences but also their quality of life regarding maintaining friendships and progressing in their work life.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Thematic Table

Table 1

Themes	Sub- themes	Illustrative quotes
Being the Irish non-drinker in the community	Feeling Like the outsider, Awkwardness in a social setting, and Judged for abstaining	“...it almost feels like we're excluding ourselves and we feel like we're being separated just by default”.(Participant 6) “If you're not a drinker, then it will be challenging. You might feel lone, or you might be aloof”.(Participant 7) “I feel like because it's so central, it stops you from going out with some of the time well a lot for me... I usually ask them like, “oh, will people be drinking and stuff ... So I feel like in a negative way, it's like stops. It's like, do you have to be drinking alcohol? It's like, does it have to be at every single event?” (Participant 12) “I've gotten peer pressured, or people just not understand and that feeling of not understanding is uncomfortable to deal with frequently...I'd rather not deal with those feelings and not deal with having to explain to someone that I just don't want to drink just simply because I don't want to drink, or I just don't want to party simply because I don't want to party. And them understanding it without it being a back-and-forth world conversation” (Participant 6)

		“... it's a bit awkward not being able to not drink. I kind of don't really want to go anymore. Like, even my family's kind of traditions. I'm kind of bored now and like I don't attend as many like kind of family meetups because it's kind of it's a bit awkward not being able to not drink”. (Participant 3) “And it made me feel really kind of, you know, demeaning that. Oh, like I just suggested, like, you should look out for everyone. You know... But the looks like from people saying or if I tell someone “oh drinking is not allowed in my religion” or people in my religion don’t drink. But as I say, “oh, I don't drink”. I get such funny, weird, annoyed looks" (Participant 10) “my mother's family, isn't Muslim...family gatherings, there's always alcohol served and everything like in the cakes and everything. So I feel a bit like left out sometimes and like a bit judged because like, they're just kind of like looking at you weird, like, "why would you not drink"”? (Participant 4)
Pushed to an Alternative Community	Isolated with Familiar People, Integrating into the Irish Society, Restricted in social environments, and Seeking Acceptance	"... my Muslim friends obviously don't drink so it would kind of isolate us from the from the Irish people in hindsight like we wouldn't. We wouldn't participate in what they would participate in so it would kind of leave us away from them ...” (Participant 1) “ I think it's caused me to really ... instead of socialising with the people here I tend to have just like my Muslim friend group and like for example in the university I would be involved with

		the Islamic Society and I wouldn't really be involved with much else" (Participant 5) I think like without the drinking culture, I would have engaged more with the Irish populates. I would have friends. I would kind of I think I would go more like you know. So it's really, really shaped a lot of things. (Participant 2) "... it does really affect because like everyone in college would be like, "oh, we're all going out for drinks" because, like, you know, like [university name] Christmas is on at the moment and everyone's like, "oh come out for drinks" and like, say, no makes me feel a bit like isolated because obviously I want to be a part of, like what they do to socialise..."(Participant 4) "I kind of had to make that decision where am I going to stick to my religious path or am I going to fall off it" (Participant 1) " I'm kind of restricted around that. I can't really hang out with them" (Participant 10) "... I don't have too many of them that are born Irish because ...most of what they like to do would be something to do with alcohol or just like partying. So, because of that, most of my friends are not Irish, they're from different countries like Pakistan or Algeria or Cameroon, Nigeria, my friends, are kind of from all over... they're actually not really Irish" (Participant 6) "It did bring up feelings of exclusions, and that's why I think I got curious on why I did want to try (trying alcohol) at that time when I was younger because I was thinking, "oh, I feel
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		like I will be more accepted” if I do drink. Because when you're younger. Being accepted is very important. You don't want to feel like an outcast. You don't want to feel different. So, because of that, you do sometimes challenge even your own beliefs”. (Participant 6) “I would say when I was younger, I definitely belong to both, but nowadays I definitely belong to the Muslim community” (Participant 1) “And it's like that's the community you grew up in and to feel like you didn't even belong there is, like, for something so small as well” (Participant 10) “Yes and no. cause like a little bit cause like of course like I do have like my Irish family and like their whole community and like we visit them for like birthdays and, like, meet the family and everyone. And I feel like I belong there cause like, that's like my grandparents of course and like but sometimes like, there is a little bit of segregation. So yes and no”. (Participant 3)
The impact of being excluded on the quality of life	Missing out on Life Events, Self-Perception	“... I tend to miss a lot of the big big events, weddings...funerals is another. Obviously I have to go pay my respects...But I can't stay for longer because the drinking starts. And even this year, like the Debs, like I was asked to be chairman and organiser for my school's debs, and actually I had to turn that down. Because debs is essentially a big party” (Participant 1)

		“Other than that, it's kind of hard to find like much to do, especially without alcohol in Ireland because it's a big part of the culture so”.(Participant 4) “...when I turned that down, a lot of lads actually mocked me and I received a lot of racial slurs behind my back group chats were made and I was slandered, slandered and slagged... I found myself in a very very dark place where I was kind of isolated and I was nearly kicked out of my friends circle so I had to start up from a level one again and it was definitely it was definitely a dark time in my life”.(Participant 1) “Again, I would say like when we were when we were graduating from secondary school, we had a little graduation at school and A couple of my friends, they wanted to go out for a drink and I straight up said “no, I cannot go for a drink” and they just cut me off totally from group...”.(Participant 10) “... I feel like actually sometimes ... when people find out like, oh, like “she can't do this” or like “we can't do this around her”. They might be like inclined to not, you know, spend as much time around you...” (Participant 9)
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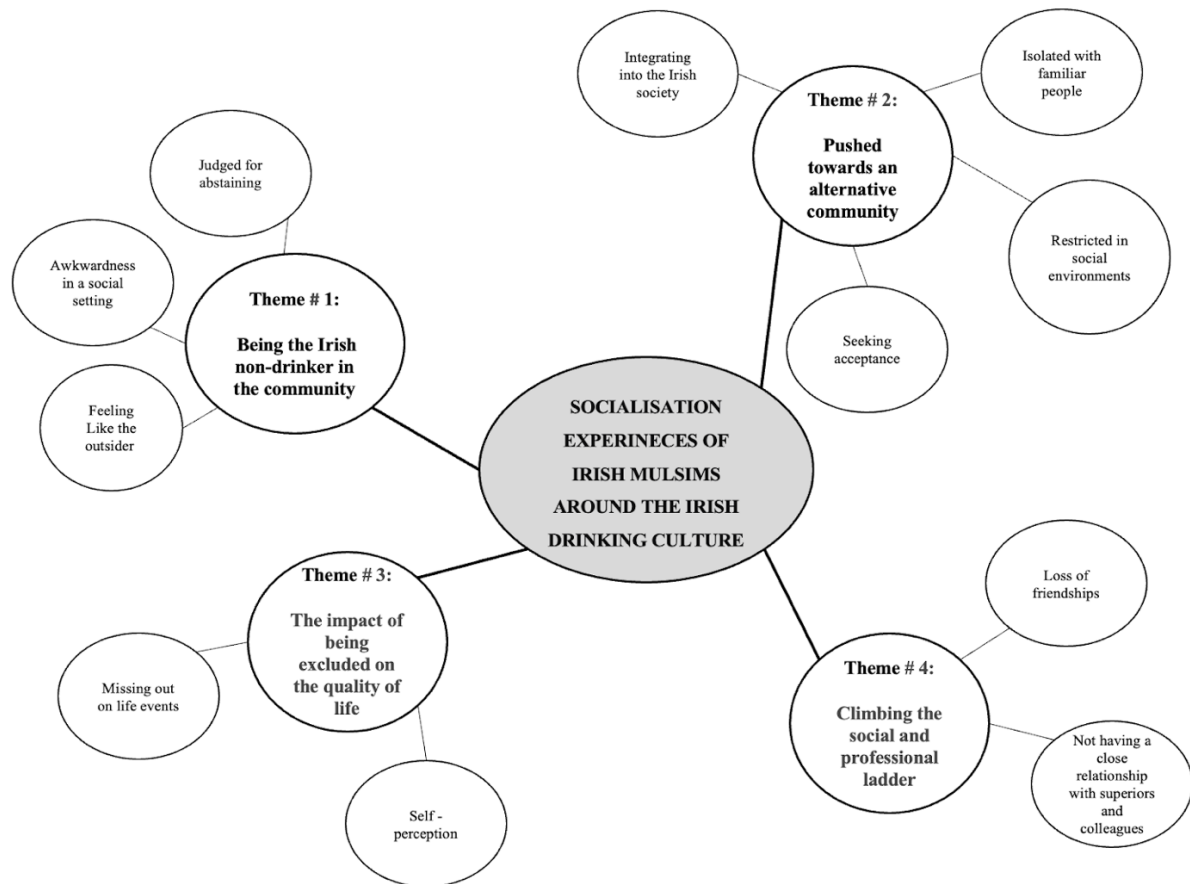
Climbing the Social and Professional Ladder	Not Having a Close Relationship with Superiors and Colleagues and Loss of Friendships	“I’m an occasional smoker...there was designated smoking zones, so we used to interact with a lot of Managers, employees, local, the non-locals ... so I can feel how non-smokers can feel the same thing I've I used to say that. “Oh, you guys go out in the night and have drinks with Irish guys” ... and maybe next morning when they say “hi, hello”. And so, we just see, OK, that's the reason alcohol may be the reason they are more friendly than they are close to each other than us”. (Participant 7) “... colleagues know each other better because they've had these experiences together. ... It makes people come closer. ... If you don't attend the event, you'll notice that people are more familiar with each other. ... It's easier to talk to. ... Work discussions happen in those experiences. ... I was really missing out. You'll get better insight in terms of what's actually happening in the environment you're working on. ... This will definitely help you perform better or it'll give you a better career”. (Participant 8) “I run a Cricket Club. It's called [club name] ... there are different other clubs as well which is neighbouring clubs [other club names], and these guys are mostly [ethnicity name] (that drink alcohol) and they have a very strong connection either with the Council people or the politicians, local politicians so. Why do they have a very strong relationship? Why being a head of office club why I can't make that kind of relationship? it's because of the alcohol” (Participant 7) “...the way I commute...carpool. Some of the people I was carpooling with would drink so they would be in an event. So I
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		couldn't just leave even if I wanted to. So in in this case it was. It was very like it was very hard to like you... even if you're not drinking, just being in that environment is bad, ... I found myself having to do in that case was grab some fizzy drink and then non-alcoholic obviously and then afterwards just go to my desk there would there would be an exclusion there like very very obvious exclusion". (Participant 8) "It all started with arguments started like "oh [participant 1] why aren't you coming out do you think you're better than us" "[participant 1] oh you're all you're all special everything you don't deserve to hang with us" and look I never want to make an argument of this or any...conflict or anything but it's just difference of opinions between two people one obviously more religious than the other. And the conflicts has between the two is what caused me to have this argument with my "friends"". (Participant 1) "No, not at all. Like we might meet up...Very, very rarely, like very rarely, like once in, probably like years and years and years because it would like there's nothing in common anymore...I was much more closer to my family and like I had a lot more friends when I did drink. So it definitely impacted like...Irish culture does impact friendships a lot and relationship with like family because now obviously I don't spend as much time with them or if they are here for like meeting up with us like I'm not drinking...it puts some distance between my family and me and like obviously the loss of friendships then as well." (Participant 3)
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		“It was kind of just like they stopped talking to me because it was very weird for them that I wasn't able to drink or go out with them in that kind of moment”.(Participant 10) “... she was trying to swap my drink with her drink because she spilled half of her half her Fanta lemon and had added alcohol into it ..., “no, this is your one trying to give me the one with the alcohol... I was like actually in actual, like shock. I was like, what the hell? What? Why would they? Why would anyone even do that? I was like, what's going on here? I was so like, like, shocked the whole time the whole like ... that was the last time that I ever went out with them... they knew me for so long, they knew that I don't drink... I couldn't believe it... ever since then, I've just been so wary... really conscious... if your friends of years and years... who know you so well...“I'm not friends with them at all, actually, at all whatsoever. I cut them off after that. Yeah, yeah” (Participant 9) I'd say I would be missing out because my friend used to not be Muslim, so she used to always be going out drinking and like everything every night always partying and like I didn't really spend much time with her back then because she used to always be like doing that. (Participant 4)
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Appendix B

Thematic Map



Appendix C

Interview Questions

Demographic Interview questions (Can refuse to answer)

1. What is your age?
2. What do you identify yourself as: Man, Woman, Non-binary, prefer to self-describe ____.
3. What is your ethnicity or cultural background?
4. What are you currently working as or what are you studying?
5. Do you drink alcohol?
6. Have you ever drunk alcohol in the past?
7. Were you born in Ireland or how long have you been living in Ireland for?

Interview questions (Can refuse to answer)

1. Can you mention what you usually do for fun in your everyday life
2. What role does your religion play in your life?
3. Could you talk a bit about your overall social experiences in the Irish culture?
4. How does your religion influence your socializing and interactions within Irish culture?
5. In your opinion, how does alcohol influence gatherings and social connections in Irish culture?
6. Could you share any thoughts on how cultural differences in alcohol culture have changed or affected your social habits or social life, if at all?
7. How do you think the way the Irish drinking culture has had an impact the relationships you have with your own community, in a good way or a bad way?

8. From the different chapters in your life (whether it be secondary school, starting college, or key moments), how did the Irish drinking culture shape or challenge your social experiences and sense of belonging?
9. From your experience of being a Muslim growing up in an Irish drinking culture, a How has the concept of belonging been influenced by your experiences?
10. In your lifetime was there any cultural differences around alcohol that have created conflicts or brought benefits to your relationships, such as arranging alcohol-free events?
11. Have you ever experienced difficulties exclusions because of alcohol in a social setting?
Tell me more about this and how you navigated these types of situations?
12. Can you describe any experiences in your workplace or professional life where you felt there were missed opportunities, whether it be a promotion or connecting with colleagues?
13. Is there anything else you would like to share that we have not already discussed?

Appendix D

Participant Information Sheet: Guidelines

Project Title: Exploring How the Irish Drinking Culture Shapes and Challenges the Socialisation Experiences of Irish Muslims.

Research invitation: I would like to invite you to take part in my study. Before deciding whether to join, please take the time to read this document, which describes the aim of the study and what it would entail for you. If you have any questions concerning the content offered, do not hesitate to contact me using the details at the conclusion of this article.

What is this study about?

My name is Yamina Missaoui, a third-year student in BA in Psychology programme at National College of Ireland. As part of our degree, we must carry out an independent research project. My project examines How the Irish Drinking Culture Shapes and Challenges the Socialisation Experiences of Irish Muslims.

What will taking part in the study involve?

If you decide to take part in this research questionnaire, you will be asked to attend an interview addressing questions on...

- Your socialisation experiences.
- Potential mental health and exclusion experiences within your community.
- Your relationships within the community and interpersonal relationships.
- This interview will be an online interview, and the video and audio will be recorded.

Who can take part?

- Muslims from birth or have reverted to Islam
- Residency in Ireland (living in Ireland for at least three years)
- Over 18 years of age
- English speaking

- Wanting to speak on their personal experience relating to How the Irish Drinking Culture Shapes and Challenges their own Socialisation Experiences.

Do I have to take part?

It is completely voluntary to participants. You have the right to decline answering any question or withdraw from the study.

What are the possible risks and benefits of taking part?

You will not directly benefit from participating in this study. Nonetheless, the data collected will support studies that advance our understanding the impact of Ireland's drinking culture on the socialisation of Muslim's. There is the chance that you could feel upset when thinking about experiences in your life. You are free to end the interview early or take a break if you become uncomfortable or upset during the process for whatever reason.

Will taking part be confidential and what will happen to my data?

It is true that taking part in the study will remain private. Your information will be handled with the highest anonymity. Interviews will be recorded, and only I and my research supervisors can access your interview. The interviews will be securely stored. After your interview is transcribed and de-identified, and with my supervisor's permission, the audio and video files will be deleted and destroyed. To protect privacy, all identifiable information will be made anonymous. The information will be kept for five years in compliance with the data retention policy of NCI and used exclusively for the objectives of the study. NCI will have responsibility for the data generated by the research. All local copies of data saved on personal password protected devices/laptops will be deleted by NCI graduation date or three months after the student exits the NCI psychology programme. Anonymised data will be stored on NCI servers in line with NCI's data retention policy. It is envisaged that anonymised data will also be uploaded to a secondary data repository to facilitate validation and replication, in line with Open Science best practice and conventions.

What will happen to the results of the study?

The outcomes may be presented at conferences or in academic publications, and they will be incorporated into my dissertation.

Who should you contact for further information?

Yamina Missaoui

3rd year BA Psychology

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Supervisor. Dr. Amanda Kracen, PhD

Email: amanda.kracen@ncirl.ie

Appendix E

Consent Form

Project Title Exploring How the Irish Drinking Culture Shapes and Challenges the Socialisation Experiences of Irish Muslims.

Consent to take part in research

• I..... voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

I meet the following criteria (please check to confirm):

- I am 18 years old or older.
- I am Muslim from birth or have converted to Islam.
- Residency in Ireland (living in Ireland for at least three years).
- Can speak English fluently.
- I am willing to talk about my personal experience relating to the impacts of Ireland's drinking culture on my social life.

In agreeing to participate in this research I understand the following:

- If I have any concerns about participation, I understand that I may refuse to participate or withdraw at any stage before my data is anonymised.
- I understand that once my transcript has been transcribed and de-identified, I cannot withdraw my data as it will be fully anonymised.
- I have been informed as to the general nature of the study and agree voluntarily to participate.
- All data from the study will be treated confidentially. The data from all participants will be compiled, analysed, and submitted in a report to the Psychology Department in the School of Business.

- I understand that my data will be retained and managed in accordance with the NCI data retention policy, and that my anonymised data may be archived on an online data repository and may be used for secondary data analysis. No participants data will be identifiable at any point.
- At the conclusion of my participation, any questions or concerns I have will be fully addressed.
- I understand that signed consent forms and the written transcripts will be held for 5 years.

Yamina Missaoui

3rd year BA Psychology

Email: x22389043@student.ncirl.ie

Supervisor: Dr. Amanda Kracen, PhD

Email: Amanda.Kracen@ncirl.ie

Signature of research participant

----- Date -----

The participant is giving informed consent to participate in this study

Signature of researcher

----- Date -----

Appendix F

Debrief Sheet

Thank you for participating!

We appreciate your participation in our research on the impact of Ireland's drinking culture on the socialisation of Muslims. We value your time, efforts, and opinions very much and have been the most important part of our study. Please use the details below to contact us if you have any more questions regarding the study.

Right to withdraw

You have the right to withdraw your data. However, once the transcript has been transcribed and de-identified, we cannot withdraw your data as it will be fully anonymised.

Support lines

If you found the topic or questions were distressing, we encourage you to seek support. You can reach out to the following organisations.

1. Text About It

- A free, anonymous text support service available 24/7 for anyone in distress.
- **How to Access:** Text *HELLO* to **50808** or visit textaboutit.ie.

2. Samaritans

- A 24/7 helpline providing confidential support for anyone in emotional distress.
- **How to Access:** Call **116 123** (freephone).

3. Aware

- A support service specializing in helping people dealing with anxiety, depression, and bipolar disorder.
- **How to Access:**

Phone Numbers:

- a. General: **01 661 7211**

- b. Support Line: **1800 80 48 48** (Freephone)
- c. Alternative: **01 524 0361**
- d. **Email:** supportmail@aware.ie (responses typically within 48 hours).
- e. **Website:** Visit aware.ie.

Details of Contact:

Yamina Missaoui

3rd year BA Psychology

Email: x22389043@student.ncirl.ie

Supervisor: Dr.Amanda Kracen, PhD

Email: Amanda.Kracen@ncirl.ie

Poster for participation

- 30-60 MINUTES ONLINE INDIVIDUAL TEAMS MEETING.
- RECRUITMENT AND DATA COLLECTION BEGINS ON THE 1ST OF NOVEMBER.

