Inclusion and engagement of Children of Muslim background in creative activities in Ireland¹

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Background

The value of creative activities for children + children's enjoyment of creative activities

Children who have higher participation rates in creative activities, for example art/music classes, experience a range of benefits including better academic and non-academic outcomes including higher levels of wellbeing, self-esteem, and life satisfaction (Broh, 2002; Covay & Carbonaro, 2010; Martin et al., 2013; Metsäpelto & Pulkkinen, 2012). However, participation in creative activities varies greatly among people from different socio-economic backgrounds. For example, individuals who are more highly educated and who have higher incomes are more likely to attend cultural events such as theatre, drama, dance, or visual arts exhibitions than those from less educated or lower income households (Chan & Goldthorpe, 2005, 2007; Lunn & Kelly, 2008). These socio-economic differences in participation have implications for children's experiences. For example, studies reveal that parents of children in more advantaged groups use creative activities to enhance the academic and social development of their children (Bodovski & Farkas, 2008; Kraaykamp & Van Eijck, 2010). Several studies have also found that children of migrant family are less likely to participate in creative activities due to low income, language difficulties, and less familiarity with the educational system of the host society (Camacho & Fuligni, 2015; Coughlan, Doherty, O'Neill, & McGuire, 2014; Simpkins, Delgado, Price, Quach, & Starbuck, 2013).

In Ireland, analysis of the Growing Up in Ireland National Cohort data reflects the international pattern of socioeconomic and gender differentiation in children's participation in creative activities. It also reveals a significant gap between Irish and immigrant children in their engagement in creative activities with even lower levels of engagement among families whose native language is not English (McCoy, Quail, & Smyth, 2012; Smyth, 2016).

Thus, differences in rates of engagement in creative activities may contribute to social inequalities in academic and non-academic outcomes since children of higher socioeconomic status are more exposed to creative activities which in turn will enhance their educational outcomes and wellbeing. Therefore, it is important to investigate the inclusion and engagement of children from different socioeconomic backgrounds in creative activities and ensure the full participation of every child in such activities using national and international best practice.

The Muslim community is one of the fastest growing communities in Ireland. Census data on the number of Muslims in Ireland between 2002 and 2016, show a fast and steady growth. Demographically, this growing community is young, non-White and typically born abroad (McGinnity et al., 2018). Muslims in Ireland are from at least 35 different countries of origin many of them speak English as a second language. Although Muslims in Ireland have above average levels of education, they experience many of the markers of social exclusion. For example, they are at more risk of unemployment in comparison to the entire population and they represent low levels of home ownership (McGinnity, et al., 2018). There is also evidence that attitudes to Muslim immigrants in Ireland are less positive than to other immigrant groups and are lower than average within the EU (McGinnity, Grotti, Russell & Fahey, 2018).

These socio-demographic characteristics mean that children from this community may be at more risk of low engagement in creative activities than other children. Moreover, the prohibition of certain types of creative activities such as music, figurization and representation of living creatures by some groups of Muslims may be an additional barrier for engagement of Muslim children in creative activities.

To date no research has been undertaken to investigate barriers and facilitators to Muslim children engaging in creative activities in Ireland. The aim of this research is to identify and describe these societal, cultural, and psychological factors and highlight national and international best practice for mitigating such issues. The report will identify specific recommendations for future action.

The research involved a series of activities and research methods designed to engage with members of Muslim communities in Ireland and with arts educators. Each part of the research was approved by the UCD Human Research Ethics Committee – Humanities. Written consent was obtained from participants prior to the start of each interview and from parents prior to the children's workshops. Children gave verbal assent.

The projects at a glance:

• Creative writing workshops for Muslim children (in partnership with Poetry Ireland)

Five poetry workshops were organised for children (aged between 8 and 13 years) during July-August 2021. The purpose of the workshops was to give children an opportunity to explore their creativity, enjoy their artistic expression as well as to ensure that the research project included children's voices about the creative activities they most enjoy. The workshops were carried out in close cooperation with Poetry Ireland and facilitated by Debbie Thomas, an experienced writer and workshop facilitator. Each Zoom workshop lasted 1 hour and offered children guided facilitation to develop their poems as well as to reflect on their attitudes to different creative activities. The poems written by the children as well as an account of the nature, purpose and method of the workshops is now archived in the UCD Irish Poetry Archive. For a detailed account of the research questions and method and the children's poems see Appendix 1.

• Parent talks

A series of three online talks was organised for parents to provide information about creative activities for children. The first talk was given by Professor Eilis Hennessy of UCD School of Psychology. In her talk she spoke about the importance of creativity in children's development highlighting the pleasure that children get from taking part in creative activities and practicing their developing skills. The second talk was given by Erika Csibi from DLR Libraries. In her talk she highlighted the role of libraries as community spaces that offer a wide range free creative activities for children. Jenny Siung from Chester Beatty Dublin gave the final talk in which she spoke about museums and their role in supporting children's creativity by providing free spaces to explore new ideas and experiences. The talks were all recorded on Zoom and are now available as a free resource from the Creative Child (creativechild.ucd.ie).

• Interviews with parents and educators

The aim of the qualitative research with educators and Muslim parents was to identify barriers to the engagement of Muslim children in creative activities in Ireland, and to evaluate the role of gender and its interactions with religious practice. Thirteen parents (12 mothers) took part, the majority were born outside Ireland and had lived in Ireland between 10 and 20 years. Seven Arts practitioners and members of the Arts Community who provide creative activities for children of Muslim background formed the 'educator' sample. All interviews took place via Zoom between May and September 2021.

Several themes (lack of resources and lack of information about creative activities) were identified both by parents and by educators as generic barriers that inhibit children's participation in creative activities. In addition, both parents and educators identified different issues specific to the Muslim community that could act as barriers to engagement in creative activities. These include cultural background and lifestyles, different expectations of gender appropriate behaviour and adherence to religious practices.

Parents and educators also identified a variety of ways in which Muslim children might be facilitated to engage in creative activities including, making information on activities more readily available in multiple languages and adapting religious-themed school-based creative activities (e.g. focused on Christmas and Hallow'een) to make them more inclusive of children of Muslim background. For a detailed account of the research questions and method see Appendices 2 and 3.

• Parent survey

Drawing on information from the analysis of interviews with parents and educators, an online survey was designed to gather detailed data on parents' views on the importance of creative activities, the extent to which their children engage in these activities and the factors that limit engagement. In total, 116 parents took part, with the majority (84%) born outside Ireland educated to bachelor degree level or higher. Most were full-time homemakers or were looking for work and indicated that their English was good or fluent. The majority of parents indicated that their children were engaged in creative activities with just 17% indicating either slight involvement or no involvement at all. Children were most likely to engage with drawing or arts and crafts and least likely to engage in dance or theatre/drama. Overall, the survey responses help to provide a more indepth understanding of the nature of the creative activities that Muslim children are engaged in and the factors that limit their engagement to a fuller extent. They also indicate that a minority of children have very limited engagement with any creative activities at all. For a detailed account of the research questions and method see Appendix 4.

• Scoping review

The purpose of the scoping review was to map the research, policy and practice guideline documents that are currently available in relation to facilitating the engagement and inclusion of children of minority background in creative activities. A scoping review aims to discover what publications exist, rather than to synthesise the findings of those publications and to do this systematically across peer reviewed and other publication types (commonly called grey literature). The focus of our review was on children of school age (6 – 17 years old) of ethnic minority, migrant or refugee background. Our search terms included a very wide range of creative activities such as visual arts, music, dance, drama, poetry, creative writing, coding, etc. The literature search was performed in August - September 2021. From an initial total of 5758 journal abstracts, 21 were selected as sufficiently relevant to be reviewed in full and 4 of these were regarded as relevant for the research. The very small number of studies of relevance points to a significant gap in research on evidence-based ways of including school-age children from minority backgrounds in creative activities and highlights the need for further research. Fourteen of the publications identified in the grey literature search were included in the full-text review, 5 documents were included in the final analysis The researchers plan to write up their findings in a peer reviewed journal that has a focus on global childhoods such as <u>Childhood</u> (published by Sage). For a detailed account of the research questions and method see Appendix 5.

What did we find?

What limits children's engagement in creative activities (barriers)?

In this section we consider what we can learn from our workshops, survey and interviews. Although all our research focused specifically on members of the Muslim community in Ireland, many of the findings will also apply to other immigrant groups who differ from the indigenous community in language, culture and religion.

Although many studies cited in the background to this report have noted that the children of immigrants are less likely to engage with creative activities, our research findings indicate that this is not due to parents of these children believing that creative activities are unimportant. Although we had hints of this from interviews with some parents as illustrated by these quotations:

"...arts is not as much important, because, at the end of the day, doesn't get you a good job, to be honest."

"I think the Muslims and our communities would, don't really pay too much importance to it, because a lot of pushing is done in doing learning, academic stuff, English."

However, in our survey, when parents were asked directly to rate the importance of their child engaging in creative activities, 89% said that it was very important or extremely important. Parents also reported that their children regularly engaged in creative activities with 60% of parents saying that their child engaged in these activities either daily or a few times a week. Parents also believed that their children would benefit from engaging in organised creative activities. The benefits they anticipated include improvements in their social skills, opening up more opportunities to develop friendships and an increased sense of inclusion in Irish society.

Our research findings also suggest that lack of engagement with creative activities is not related to children's enthusiasm – they told us that they enjoyed the poetry workshops and their poems spoke about the many creative activities that they loved to engage with. Here are some extracts:

About arts and crafts...

"I cut and glue and feel no more blue"

"When I draw I feel so very creative It's so much fun it makes my heart feel elated."

About drawing ..

"I feel relaxed, calmed but also stressed and determined."

About baking...

"I relax and have a break Relishing every moment it took to bake"

"The flavors made a great team My face lit up with a beam"

About drama

"In the school yeard I'm with my friends It's not that sunny. Excited happy, like it's All about me and I Think I feel a bit Over welm'd"

The perceived cost of creative activities for children

However, parents and educators were able to identify several barriers to children's engagement in creative activities. The cost of taking part in creative activities was mentioned by parents and educators in interviews and confirmed by the fact that 'limited affordable creative activities available in the area I live' was rated as 'very' or 'greatly' limiting by 36% of parents in the survey. This quotation from an interview with a parent is a good example:

"...the price structure, sometimes my daughters, both of them, they love drawing, in fact, my son also loves drawing a lot, but for them to ... I ... I asked about an arts school, but it was extremely expensive, you know. And so, this was what put me off to not enrol them into that."

Some educators put the experience of children of Muslim background into a wider context noting that the cost of creative activities can affect many children:

"We just need to resource everything for all children much more. I don't think this is a case and Muslim children need to be singled out and to be to be given, you know, some kind of different position in terms of access. I think we just don't have enough free cultural activities for kids."

It is also worth noting that although the majority of parents who took part in the survey reported that their children were regularly engaging in creative activities, the activities that they mentioned are ones that can be done free at home such as arts and crafts, drawing, painting, reading and baking.

Although parents and educators in the interviews and parents in the survey noted that cost might be a barrier to many families it is also the case that many families do not go to places such as libraries or museums which are free and which offer potential for creative activities. Thus, 56% of parents reported going to libraries less than once a month or never; 87% reported going to museums less than once a month or never. The latter figure is similar to the percentage of parents who reported going to the cinema rarely (85%) despite the fact that museums are free whereas attending the cinema with children can be costly. This finding suggests that it may not be cost alone that is limiting access to creative activities.

Lack of information about local creative activities

The second most frequently cited factor limiting engagement in creative activities was the lack of information on what was available. The lack of information was mentioned in interviews with both parents and educators and was also confirmed in the parent survey. The quotations from parents are typical:

"...particularly migrant communities when they have a lack of knowing, you know, having information that there are certain activities available for the children and the importance of those."

" So sometimes you don't really know what's going on outside and you need to kind of [...] brochures or leaflets or something."

This was confirmed in the findings of the survey where 46% of parents indicated that 'limited information about free creative activities in the area where I live' rated as 'very' or 'greatly' limiting to their children's participation in creative activities.

The role of gender and faith

In our research we were interested to explore the extent to which faith and gender might act as specific barriers for children of Muslim background to engage in creative activities. Within the Muslim faith some believers interpret Islam as prohibiting certain types of creative activities such as

music, figurization and representation of living creatures and there are clear dress code requirement for girls that may not be consistent with engaging in some types of sporting activities.

It was evident from the types of creative activities that parents reported their children engaged in, that dance, music and theatre/drama were rated as activities that children rarely or never took part in. Within the workshops children were also asked about their favourite and least favourite activities and among the latter the three activities mentioned most often were dance, music and drama. In the survey parents were asked whether dress code requirements associated with activities were limiting children's engagement and only 17% indicated that it was. However, it is likely that parents were not planning to enrol children in dance or drama which is where the dress code might have been unacceptable.

The interviews suggested that parents did have some concerns about creative activities not being consistent with the requirements of their faith. For example, parents noted that religious and cultural traditions place additional constraints in terms of not wishing to have mixed gender classes.

"...a lot of parents will say, 'No my daughter can't do it because boys are allowed in the class', you know."

Parents also mentioned that Muslim dress code for girls may not be consistent with the requirements of dress for artistic or creative activities.

"...dress coding, that really discourages people from different ethnic backgrounds for participating in them together. So that is one barrier that I think as a Muslim girl, the girls generally, face..."

"Unfortunately, she had to leave her passion, because in the secondary school, they have a very strict of wearing those mini shorts. ... and which we requested that she can wear at least tights under it, and then she will wear the mini shorts because she loves playing games. But they were very strict that it has to be those mini shorts with those mini shirts and a bit of jumper which, unfortunately, because of dress code which she had to leave"

Other factors

Prejudice and discrimination: We noted in the introduction to this study that attitudes towards Muslims in Ireland is less positive than towards other immigrant groups. It is not surprising, therefore, that some of the parents who took part in the study mentioned prejudice and discrimination as barriers to engagement in creative activities. Parents mentioned negative representations of the Muslim population in the media as one factor:

" in current situation where Muslims are facing all kinds of different behaviours. Some are, some are pretty all right, some are downright hostile towards Muslim people."

Another parent mentioned the experience of not being included in conversation when other parents accompanied children to take part in activities:

"...when I bring my kids to the football or swimming, you know and there's other mothers there and they're all talking, and they can make friends with each other very

easily. But when I go to, you know, speak with them, they kind of looked say, well, you don't have the same kind of background or the same tradition, so they're not going to bother really."

Because the theme of prejudice did not emerge in many of the parent interviews, it was not specifically listed in the survey as a potential barrier to participation in creative activities, however one parent added a comment in relation to their child's experience in an out-of-school activity:

"My child was treated badly and teased over her clothes by youth who were the group leaders."

This highlights the importance of training in equality and diversity for individuals offering out-ofschool activities for children and providing education on different dress codes required by some cultural and religious groups.

Physically accessing activities: The challenge that many parents experience in physically accessing creative activities with their children was mentioned in several interviews and this included references to lack of available places for children, difficulty getting to the required bus routes or being unable to drive to the venue. Thus, considering that migrant families often do not have relatives in the same country, that both parents might work, or there is only 1 car per household, families will have a limited ability to drive children to the afterschool activities or ask someone to do it instead.

" The school that teaches a creative writing class is in [...] and my daughter would never be able to go to that because I live in [...], I don't drive."

"My younger kids would like an art class to go to, but it's very hard, sometimes because they fill up very quickly."

The absence of locally accessible creative activities was also rated as 'Very' limiting or limiting 'to a great extent' by 36% in the survey.

What factors facilitate children's engagement?

Our research did not focus only on barriers to participation in creative activities, the interviews and survey also asked participants for their views on how engagement could be facilitated. We have already noted that almost all parents (nearly 90%) said that it was very important or extremely important for their child to engage in creative activities so they were clearly motivated to make suggestions about how their children's access to such activities could be increased. The main suggestions made in our interviews with parents and educators as well as the findings of our survey are indicated below.

Ensure that creative activities reflect the traditions of diverse cultures

The factor that parents saw as most important for facilitating their children's engagement was to include content/activities relevant to different cultures in creative activities offered to children. This was evident from the interviews with parents who emphasised the importance of their children feeling part of the wider society.

"True then, promoting the society to be a bit more welcoming and an understanding of the Muslim children's needs and restrictions and all of that and sort of create that the infrastructure for our kids to be a part, a big part of the society."

The survey also asked parents to rate how important they believed certain actions would be to increase the participation of Muslim children in creative activities and 86% indicated that including 'contents related to different cultures in creative activities' would be 'very effective' or 'effective to a great extent'.

Support for this approach also emerged from our interviews with educators:

"So when is it coming around the time of Islamic celebrations and Ramadan and things like this, then these are different kind of like art pieces of artwork that you might be able to do with the Muslim kids. Or if it's in a non-Muslim school, you know if they want to be able to incorporate into the wider class to educate the other kids in the class, as well.. You know 'this is what say Ahmed, or (female name) believe in, and their Ramadan is coming up and these are things that they will do'.. or you know, making lanterns or things like this. But put in, maybe some little projects that the educators can do in order to make their students feel inclusive."

Muslim families in Ireland live in a majority Christian country so the Christian feasts dominate the academic and secular calendars. Most Muslim children will not attend a Muslim faith school (only 20% in our survey) so the findings reflect a view that their sense of inclusion in wider society would be increased if they saw their own cultural traditions were reflected in some of the creative activities organised for children both in school and in out-of-school creative activities.

Support Islamic centres to provide creative activities for children

In interviews parents saw their own community as needing to actively engage in the promotion of Arts activities and that more creative activities offered to children should involve tutors from the Muslim community:

"You know, to encourage more involvement, you need more tutors from participating from our backgrounds, from Muslim Community backgrounds let's say."

"...the schools and the weekend schools, Islamic schools, weekend Quran schools, etc, to have a platform to have these creative activities... the Muslim community, maybe the football, the art for the community, the Muslim's side. Maybe they can, they can, they can be more active. They can put, for example, they can set a set of several classes, okay. Maybe the football, the art for the girls, yeah, it's a, it's a very good to encourage parents, encourage families to participate in such activities."

In the survey parents endorsed a statement about supporting Islamic centres mosques and weekend schools to provide creative activities for children: 83% saw it as 'very effective' or 'greatly effective' at facilitating engagement.

The interviews with educators, however, placed more emphasis on the adaptation of creative activities to be more inclusive of diverse cultural and religious traditions and advocated for more education for teachers on Islamic traditions of creativity:

"So, they should be aware of them [Islamic traditions of creativity] and I think that would take somebody from the Muslim community going into the teacher training colleges collaborating with them."

"I think that should be informing the teachers, you know, because if you if you know you have Muslim children in your school, then you should at least be able to teach us to communicate with them, you know, about the curriculum."

Reduce the cost of creative activities

Analysis of the interviews and the survey indicate that almost all our participants believed that reducing the cost of creative activities would facilitate children's engagement. When asked what would increase children's participation in creative activities, 82% of parents said that reducing cost would be 'very effective' or effective to a 'great extent'. In interviews, parents also spoke about the importance of having affordable activities in the local area:

"I said immigrant families have financial strains which stops them from participating in these activities, so I think that there could be like a assistance program [for families]."

"...it's the financial barrier that they find difficult to overcome. And I think, to have to have kind of such programs in place in Islamic centres as well as in schools, etc, where children are [...] having access to such activities without those [financial] barriers, you know."

Reducing costs was also seen as important by the educators who took part in the interviews:

"We need to seek the funds that will allow us to bring the children to us [art educators], to give them lunch, you know, to allow all of that participation. So it's not just as easy as saying 'we've got a workshop on Sunday'. There is a lot of costs involved, and... and..., but I suppose that because of the nature of arts funding. It tends to be project-based. It's not continual."

"[there needs to be] funding for an extended period of times, so that you can ensure that there is a deeper engagement. And then, perhaps after that period of years that understanding of the value of what you are offering will be there with community, but it can't be anticipated that they were..., that the community would understand, you know, the value or would buy into the value of projects in a shorter period of time over 1 or 2 months. So, it has to [] continue, it has to be sustainable"

More accessible information on creative activities

Several parents mentioned their need for better access to information about creative activities available in their area:

"I know that the national parents, primary school parents Council have a lot of information leaflets out there. But I don't know, you know, how many people from a Muslim background actually access those." "...it's getting the parents to know what's out there, you know, and what, you know. Because if parents not know what's out there, how can they bring their kids and allow them to participate."

The majority of parents who took part in the survey (77%) also emphasised the need to provide parents 'with more information on available creative activities in their area.'

Education and training

The interviews with educators highlighted their views that education and training of teachers and others who work with members of the Muslim community is necessary to foster more inclusive creative activities. Some educators noted their own concern and uncertainty about what creative activities would and would not be allowed when working with children from Muslim backgrounds and wanted to have someone who could answer their questions about what activities would be acceptable.

"I would always question – would I allowed [when working with children from Muslim backgrounds] to do music and feedback was 'they don't do music, they are not allowed' or 'they are not allowed to dance'. And... there wasn't enough clarity is to why, that, you know, that the opportunity, some sort of guidelines were...to, to... for an artist whatever discipline to be able to go with 'this is what I'm planning, does this fit within the cultural kind of realm of something'"

"They [teacher training colleges] should address these issues up front. So, they should be aware of them and I think that would take somebody from the Muslim community going into the teacher training colleges collaborating with them."

In order to facilitate this educational process and to foster greater understanding some of the educators emphasised the importance of establishing relationships between leaders of the Islamic community and the majority community. Educators also expressed the view that the wider community in Ireland needs to know more about Islamic faith and cultures and that all children should be educated about different faiths and cultures. Hall & Thomson (2005) criticise the idea that we should be expecting only immigrant communities to adapt – we can all learn from engagement with other cultures and this should be our aim.

Recommendations

Although our research focused only on the factors that facilitate or limit engagement in creative activities for children from Muslim communities in Ireland, we believe that our recommendations may apply to many other minority groups living in Ireland. We list below a set of recommendations for further inclusion of children of immigrant backgrounds based our findings derived from different elements of this research

- 1. Engage with immigrant groups in order to find out what creative activities children and parents in these communities want.
 - Our research involved speaking to and gathering data from adults and children Ο within Ireland's Muslim community as well with members of the Arts communities who engage with them. Through this process of engagement we learned about the needs of this community. In particular we learned that they are enthusiastic about engaging with creative activities so there is a receptive audience for culturally appropriate activities for children from these communities. We learned also that the creative activities that are offered need to have cultural relevance and this means that some creative activities that have traditionally been offered in Ireland may need to be adapted and new activities may need to be offered in order to meet this community's needs. In addition, it is important to note that our research focused only on the Muslim community in Ireland and there is a need to understand the needs of Ireland's diverse immigrant communities if we are to achieve greater levels of participation of children from these communities in creative activities with all the potential benefits that these have to offer for children's development and sense of belonging.
- 2. Ensure that a diverse range of creative activities is available free or at low cost in all communities.
 - Our research findings point to cost and cultural acceptability as the two key factors limiting the participation of children of Muslim background from participation in creative activities outside the home. Addressing these barriers means that more creative activities will have to be offered at very low or no cost to families to ensure that they can afford to participate. Reducing cost alone, however, will not ensure participation and the activities will need to be culturally acceptable to the communities. For the children of Muslim background in our research, few reported an interest in music or theatre, however they were enthusiastic about poetry, drawing, painting and many other creative activities. Ensuring a wide range of free creative activities are available in communities will increase the chances that children from a range of different backgrounds will be willing and enthusiastic about taking part.
- 3. Ensure that information about creative activities for children is available through a variety of community groups (including different immigrant and faith groups) and in a range of languages.
 - National Museums, Galleries and libraries in Ireland have free entry for the public so should be accessible to all who live here. Many other creative spaces and activities are available at low or no charge to children and families in Ireland, however, unless families are aware of these opportunities they are unable to take advantage of them. Our research suggests that many parents are unaware of what creative activities may be available in their local communities. Language may be a significant barrier to finding out about these activities and because parents are likely to be the

primary organisers of children's activities if they lack fluency in English or do not access places where such activities are advertised (e.g. libraries) they will not get involved. Communicating with immigrant communities about available activities is a challenge and may require that information is available in several languages and/or that targetted information is developed for different cultural groups to increase the chances that they will be aware of what is available. Schools might also serve as a source of information about creative activities as all children attend school so there are links from schools to all families with children.

- 4. Provide additional training and guidelines about different cultural and religious traditions for Arts educators.
 - The educators that were interviewed for this project spoke of their need for additional information about engaging with the Muslim community and in particular on any restrictions related to children's activities. Some local authorities (see Appendix 5 table 1) provide guidelines of this sort and this should be more widely advertised and available to educators. In addition, it is important that the Arts Community develop links to local Muslim community leaders to increase dialogue and understanding of the arts and traditions of each others' communities and to build trust. The findings of the scoping review also point to the importance of developing links with artists from within minority communities as a way to facilitate understanding and engagement.
- 5. Increase community understanding of the different cultural and religious traditions of immigrant groups.
 - Research on public attitudes to migrants in Ireland indicate less acceptance of Muslims than most other groups. This makes it particularly important to increase understanding and promote inclusion and tolerance. Creative activities for children (either in schools or out-of-school classes) drawn from the cultural traditions of Muslim and other migrant groups have potential to increase understanding and promote a positive stories about artistic traditions that are otherwise not well known in communities in Ireland.

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Appendix 1

Creative Writing Workshops with Children of Muslim Background in Ireland

This document reports on a series of creative writing workshops organised by researchers in UCD School of Psychology in partnership with Poetry Ireland. The workshops were part of a larger project entitled **"Inclusion and engagement of children of Muslim background in creative activities in Ireland"** funded by IRC and the Creative Ireland Program. The aims of the project were to: i) identify barriers to engagement of children of Muslim background in creative activities with a focus on cultural, psychological, and structural aspects; ii) develop an evidence-based framework for engagement of Muslim children in Ireland.

The majority of Muslims in Ireland are from a migrant background coming from at least 35 different countries of origin. Analysis of the longitudinal Growing Up in Ireland study revealed a significantly lower level of engagement of migrant children in creative activities in comparison to Irish children (McCoy, Quail, & Smyth, 2012). Although Muslims in Ireland have above average levels of education, they experience many of the markers of social exclusion. For example, they are at more risk of unemployment in comparison to the entire population and they have lower levels of home ownership than the rest of the population (McGinnity, et al.,2018). These socio-demographic characteristics mean that children from this community may be at more risk of low engagement in creative activities than other children. Moreover, the prohibition of certain types of creative activities such as music, dance, figurization and representation of living creatures by some groups of Muslims may be an additional barrier for engagement of Muslim children in creative activities.

Along with other parts of this project (i.e., interview with parents and educators, survey questionnaire with parents, and scoping review of the literature), these workshops were conducted with children of Muslim background to provide them with an opportunity to explore their creativity and enjoy their artistic expression and to give the researchers a chance to hear from children as the main beneficiaries of this research.

Method, participation, and consent

Five creative workshops were conducted with 28 children of Muslim background living in Ireland, aged between 8-13 years. The workshops were held during the months of July and August 2021 via Zoom.

The workshops were carried out in close collaboration between the research team in UCD and Poetry Ireland and facilitated by Debbie Thomas, an experienced writer and professional workshop facilitator. Each workshop lasted 1 hour and offered children guided instruction to write a poem and to reflect on their experience of taking part in creative activities. Approval for the research was granted by UCD Research Ethics Committee – Humanities on June 30th 2021 (HS-21-50-Hennessy)

Parental consent as well as children's assent were obtained online as part of the registration process through the Qualtrics survey platform. In addition to consent for participation, parents and children were asked to consent (assent) for sharing children's work with the research team and archiving it as part of the National Poetry Archive in UCD library.

At the end of the workshops, children had an opportunity to read their poems as well as to have them preserved in the Irish Poetry Reading Archive in UCD Library Special Collections. The collection of children's poems together with the workshop facilitator's reflection were organised in the digital book and preserved in the Irish Poetry Reading Archive in UCD Library Special Collections.

Results

Based on the children's reflection on the activities they enjoy taking part in everyday life it was clear that drawing, painting, and reading were among their most preferred activities. On the other hand, dance, drama, and music were among the least preferred activities for the workshop participants.

Activity	Number of children who mentioned it
Drawing, painting	16
Reading	10
Baking	4
Sketching	3
Writing	2
Drama and acting	1
Coding	1
Modelling with cardboard	1
Dancing	1
Arts and Crafts	1
Origami	1

Activities children enjoy doing

Activities children do not enjoy

Activity	Number of children who mentioned it
Dancing	6
Drama	5
Music	3
Performing	2
Drawing	1
Writing (a book)	1
Origami	1
Singing	1
Writing	1

Despite some connection difficulties and internet disturbances during the workshops, children were eagerly engaged in creative writing activities across all the workshops and their interest and engagement maintained throughout the sessions. This experience showed the potential of successful engagement of children of a relatively young age with online workshops. Additionally, this participatory format allowed children to stay in the safe and protected surroundings of their homes, which might help them to avoid the awkwardness of traveling to an unfamiliar place.

Considering that families sometimes find it challenging to drive or accompany children on a longdistance for a face-to-face workshop, an online workshop can be a great alternative method.

We received great feedback from parents who were present during their children's participation. Thus, offering online workshops for children could be an effective method for building trust with families and provide them with the opportunity to obtain a clear understanding of the type and nature of the activities that their children get engaged in.

References

- McCoy, S., Quail, A. & Smyth, E. (2012). *Growing Up in Ireland: Influences on 9-year-olds' Learning: Home, School and Community*, Growing Up in Ireland Child Cohort Report No. 3. Dublin: Economic and Social Research Institute.
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Children's

POEMS

September, 2021,

UCD, Dublin, Treland

This book contains poems developed during the creative workshops with children of Muslim background living in Ireland. These workshops were organized as a part of the research that investigates cultural, psychological, and structural barriers

of engagement of children of Muslim background in creative activities in Ireland. The research was funded by the Creative Ireland Programme and Irish Research Council, and carried

out by the UCD School of Psychology researchers: Professor Eilis Hennessy, Dr Zahra Farahani, and MSc, PGDip Liliyana Mbeve.

Research background

This research project investigated barriers of engagement of children of Muslim background in creative activities in Ireland, with a focus on cultural, psychological, and structural aspects, and developed a framework to facilitate engagement based on the analysis of the national and international best practices.

These 5 creative workshops were offered to children as part of this research in order to give children an opportunity to explore their creativity, enjoy their arts expression as well as to hear children's voices about the activities they enjoy and that they descried in the poems created during workshops.



Creative workshops took place in Dublin, Ireland in July–August 2021 via Zoom. In total 28 children between 8 and 13 years old took part in 5 creative workshops during this period. The workshops were carried out in close cooperation with Poetry Ireland and facilitated by an experienced writer and workshop facilitator Debbie Thomas, whos reflection on this experience is also included in this book.



A word from the workshop faciltator

I thoroughly enjoyed this workshop, run five times with different groups of children. While some of the content was familiar — I have used the rhyming exercise before — the approach was an interesting departure. My usual role in writing sessions is that of 'undercover agent'; I try to draw out participants' creativity by focusing on anything but the theme of creativity. Instead, using exercises involving metaphor, imagery and different topics, I help participants to build their creative confidence almost unwittingly. (For example, I might ask them to imagine Saturday as a person, or loneliness as a plant, and write a physical description, thus encouraging creativity without naming it; I've found that too direct a gaze can trigger selfconsciousness and harsh self-criticism.)

A word from the workshop faciltator

In this workshop, however, the theme was flagged as creativity. I found that focus challenging when designing the session and was concerned that, by analysing it, we might lose it (just as analysing a joke can lose the laughs: the Heisenberg uncertainty principle of humour!) However, I was delighted by the children's engagement with the exercises and impressed by the poems they shared. Their very participation was impressive. They took part from their homes, in the holidays, with a parent in the background and a strange grown-up on screen asking them to respond to strange prompts while being observed by other strange grown-ups and surrounded by other children, some of whom were also strangers. Working creatively in such a fog of strangeness — and even volunteering to read out their work — were acts of courage and trust.

Debbie Thomas

The Facilitator Does the Exercise she Set her Workshop Participants and Finds she is in Aule of their Talent and Guage as she Tries to Write a Poen from a List of Phyming Words Debie The as

It's tough erough in a room full of rustles and sighs, analytical eyes and the critical ears of teachers and peers.

Butall that on Screen illerea stranger's demanding your dreams? Where a flat face in space is extracting your wonders, expecting your wonders, and plunder the mines of your minds to spill gens on the page, patyour healts on parade and your sails on the stage? An outlongeous request!

As I can attest from this test.

How this book is

organised

Children's poems were organized according to the creative activities children enjoy doing. Arts and crafts, baking, drama, drawing, reading and writing, and sport are the activities reflected in poems in this book.

Chapter 1 ARTS

ARTS AND CRAFTS

Break then Make

Whenever I get bored I sit down with carboard I also take scissors and tape And start making a shape I cut and glue And nomore feel blue It normally doesn't turn out just rig But, I guess that's alright



tractitional Wightad

Pencil

potential

difficult

ar

drawing

i spend my time drawing, even if my pieces turn out appalling.

when I draw, I feel so very creative, its so much fun it makes my heart feel elated.

the most of the time, it can be quite stressFul, but i always try to make my project successful.

when I draw, I like to use a pencil, I may not be the best but I do show potential.

art can be traditional or digital, either way it can be quite difficult

i spend my time drawing, even if my pieces turn out appalling.



creative

elected

draw 140

sign.

drewsing appusiting

stress ful,

Successful

i like 23 ... art - i do it in my room but often move for a change of scenery and watery. lighting. and - i Feel : relaxed, calmed, A but also strassed l - " this looks pretty awful", " yikes",

ne Great Blasker y and ich in love will and ich in

Araw SAW dry stay away AG Pain feint Sau create Laur to draw and use clay But I want give it away unless you give me a drawing Then I will give you a Thing like writing, Art, Ecolball Dutside on a feild or pitch Exited happy or sou

13

1 :tion to rebuild the village as a holiday



I relax and have a break Relishing every moment it took to bake While it rises, I flutter the icing Hoping to have a slice, so enticing assemble it carefully, a Absorbing the heavenly smell Tin Icing Bin Only to enjoy a big bite Baking Enticing (And) Of the flavoursome delight Pour Cake More Shake (Sote (arefully Break Heavenly Baking . Kitchen · Happy, Excited · "Have I measured correctly? When I stand and bake My dream, a chocolate cake First, there are some eggs to break Then slour and cocoa can shake Sugar, butter and milk to pour Combining the mixture some more · I pour all the batter in a tin And empty the packaging in the bin 15

Vanila Cookies Vanila cookies are so sweet Add the flour, Sugar and beat Shape them in hearts neat Put it in the oven heat I odd some sugar and butter for cream Take the cookies and add the cream to make it supreame The Elavors made a great team My face lit up with a beam Bake Lake) flour take tower power Baking cream teom Bite seem light.



A exiting show I feel faring when I eat honny but when I act I act like a bung So that settles it my actions evre in sections deciding en exciting lighting makes a élection the captions about a happy snappy bitting while fighting for a big brang. drama and acting in the school yard I m with my friends its not, that sunny exited, happy, like its all about me. and I think I feel abit. over welmidt spelling is probably 18

Chapter 4

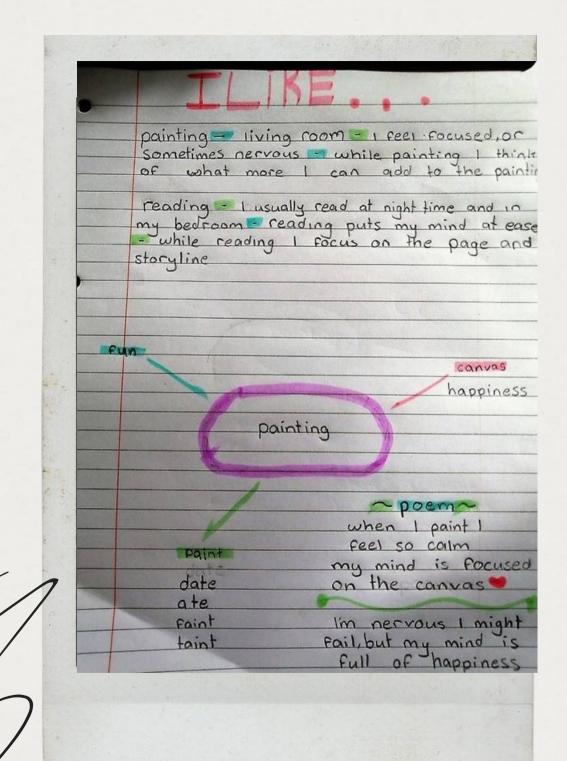
DRAWING

· Drawing is fun, 0 0 恭 Drawing is very fun, making lines one after one, 0 0 影 Detailes and design, making lots of dots align. Colours fill the picture. 20

Drawing I love to sit and draw all day and night. Sometimes my body feels light. I feel calmbau As a tingaling sensation runs dow My palm. I sit down next to the city labors the

Where the world is very pretty. I love into sit out in nature. Where i meet a unew creature.

I love to draw fields. Where a butterfly yields. At night before i go to bed I start drawing as i said.



Chapter 5

READING AND WRITING

I Love to sit and read And I'm very Keen Art is exciting And the pages are inviting My mind's calm Like when you put on bolom Art and Reading are much fun And I'm interested when I'm done. I would Love to continue but with for now its Good by DORMI 24

exsited ignited then. Sgein pen stage page Writing age cage wright the fun Won Sun nísht kíte done 14h ton Citing reading. and Bed room. P Tals 540 Fal the to do more and start righting discribing thig 25

Interest pages biggest distant stages engages Reading Read Calm bomb prom mom Palm seed speed book, When open a see, all seribles scribbles little of bunch is 9 dead tree a on Feel that the feeling 1 It's reading that keeps me calm around my mind ím books assigned like reading olm a park with in big hill a and 9 nico of view the city to at look Feel 01 very calm all 0 | think about

Reading I love to sit and read. When I read I feel freed. Reading is really fun. When I finish the book I feel like I won. Every page I turn it feels like I turned. age.



Reading If the weather is fine, I read outside, otherwise I read in my bedroom. It is quite peacoful and calm. I feel quite content and relaxed all through my bad because I am always comfortable and I like read so it is nice. I have short thoughts when doing this activity. like : I wish I could read all day, or, I w when I will finally get up to go to the bathrass My Poem: Reading always makes me calm, While I hold the book in my palms, I just sit here, looking at the words, And the story becomes quite abourd. I then page after page, notil my mind shouts with rage.

28

Chapter 6 SPORT

ain I Like to play football and people say in Really tall If Joes'nt Really matter beacause It really a laughter. 30

hard Stretygic Fun Football is very fun, I always play in the Sun. In very bard to play the game, it you play for a long line you feel lan 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 • • Fam outside in a sunny day, I was seel tired Foot ball Football and happy. I fed Strategetic. 31

Run When many the When i reun, it's gun, hoppily in the un. When i reas or reace, i try increase my poce. Running is my favourite thing to do, it makes me happy to. 1100 32

4 like running R Queride. Energised in the los. 1 want to be partie. Fart Cart Jact 9 per Dare Running tun Race Run Face Chase Case 33

Poems in this book were put together by Liliyana Mbeve

Appendix 2

PHASE 1. Interviews with parents

Introduction

The qualitative research with Muslim parents was carried out in order to identify barriers to the engagement of Muslim children in creative activities in Ireland, and to identify the roles of gender and and religion in the engagement process. The qualitative research facilitated exploration of the psychological, cultural and structural barriers to engagement as well as providing insights into the strategies that parents believe will assist and support children's engagement.

Ethics approval and participant consent

The research project was approved by the UCD Human Research Ethics Committee – Humanities. Written consent was obtained from participants prior to the start of each interview.

Thirteen adults between 20 and 50 years old took part in this research, 12 of them were mothers. The majority of participants were born outside Ireland and had lived in Ireland between 10 and 20 years at the time of the interview.

Method

A qualitative study was conducted with parents of Muslim background residing in Ireland. All interviews took place in 2021 via Zoom.

Participants were recruited with the assistance of social media and online platforms through community Muslim organisations: - the Irish Muslim Peace and Integration Council (IMPIC) (a partner in the research), Dublin Mosque, Islamic Cultural Centre of Ireland, and Babul-elm Society.

Interviews were conducted by Dr Zahra Farahani in English, and were recorded following the consent obtained from participants, and lasted between 20 and 50 minutes. Despite the opportunity to speak in their native language, (interpretation was provided in Persian, Arabic, and Urdu), all interviewees opted to be interviewed in English.

Recorded interviews were subsequently anonymised and transcribed and prepared for thematic analysis using NVivo.

Analytical strategy

The interviews were transcribed verbatim. The thematic analysis framework by Braun and Clarke's (2006) was applied to analyse the content of interviews. The analysis was conducted with a 'topdown' focus to answer the research questions: i) what are the barriers that prevent or discourage engagement of Muslim children in creative activities Ireland, and ii) what is the role of gender and its interactions with religion in engagement of Muslim children in creative activities?

The interview questions were developed in a way to guide participants through the areas of the research interest. The first stage of analysis involved getting familiarised with the dataset from all interviews and obtaining the first impression about parents' insights into the topic of the interview. This involved careful reading of all transcripts to facilitate familiarity with their content.

At the second stage, the initial codes were generated. Only units that were relevant to the two research questions were coded and recorded in Nvivo, 17 units were identified. At stage three, the

codes were organised in broader themes by combining codes that fit together conceptually. Two broad themes were identified.

Stage four involved the revision of the themes and codes across the data to ensure their validity and consistency. And the final stage was devoted to the final definition

Results

Thematic analysis of parents' interviews identified 9 themes on what parents consider as barriers to the engagement of children in creative activities. The themes were grouped around such topics as finances, lack of information, availability and convenience etc. An additional 7 themes emerged from what parents believe can be done to facilitate the engagement of children in creative activities. All the themes were further organised into 2 overarching themes – the *Irish Society* theme and the *Community and Gender* theme (see Table 1 'Barriers/Factors' and Table 2 'Ways of improvement' in Appendix).

The Irish Society theme describes the structural barriers to engagement as well as ways of improving engagement that parents identified in the Irish context. The following barriers were included in the Irish Society theme: finance (cost), prejudice and discrimination, lack of information, availability and convenience. Additionally, the following ways of improving children's engagement were included in the Irish Society Theme: financial assistance, tolerance and inclusion, informing on creative activities, adaptation of creative activities.

Parents' identified financial concerns that include the high cost of participating in creative activities, summer camps or art schools, which is one of many difficulties that inhibit children's participation in creative activities. These concerns are illustrated by the responses of two parents:

"...the price structure, sometimes my daughters, both of them, they love drawing, in fact, my son also loves drawing a lot, but for them to ... I, I, I asked about an arts school, but it was extremely expensive, you know. And so, this was what put me off to not enrol them into that."

"We obviously do have summer camps, but, as you know, they are usually for ...they cost a lot, they're quite expensive. So some parents just will not - even though they would want to the children to, to join them - it's the financial barrier that they, they find difficult to overcome."

Parents believe that it is essential to offer financial assistance to families specifically in order to facilitate the participation of children in creative activities, or to schools to support the onsite creative activities.

"I said immigrant families have financial strains which stops them from participating in these activities, so I think that they could be like an assistance program."

"...schools, they do work some craft so kids but the very limited because, you know, they don't have the funding, they're like. I know and a lot of parents are asked for money for art supplies, but never pay it to the school. So the schools are limited and what they can order and what they can do with the kids."

In addition to that, parents referred to their lack of access to information about available creative activities for children and especially those that are free of tuition fees as another limitation on children's engagement in creative activities. Their responses suggest that being new to the country migrant families often do not have the necessary knowledge about online and offline resources, advertising boards, where the relevant information on creative activities is published.

"...particularly migrant communities when they have a lack of knowing, you know, having information that there are certain activities available for the children and the importance of those."

"So sometimes you don't really know what's going on outside and you need to kind of you know brochures or leaflets or something."

In parents' opinions additional efforts need to be made to provide information about programmes and new ways of distributing information on creative events, for instance, advertising boards of national organisations, schools, parents' councils.

"Getting into schools is a great way to em... to reach the kinds, em, you know..., if the libraries are doing it then, then get on to the schools with a lot of Muslim kids and say, 'look, this is our program', you know, give it in. They send out the leaflets in so many different languages. I know it costs money to do that but..., you know."

"I know that the national parents, primary school Parents' Council have a lot of information leaflets out there. But I don't know, you know, how many people from a Muslim background actually access those."

Parents also noted that the Muslim community could participate as well in the process of sharing informing about creative activities via community Facebook and social media groups, community groups and organisations.

"Like there's a lot of Facebook groups online like the "Muslim family", like "Muslim sisters" were like the "Muslim sisters" in Dublin there's a lot of different Facebook groups you can join. And maybe they need one to, kind of, promote things like that. Say, 'look here's a.., you know, a day, where there's an activity for free."

Furthermore, parents conclude that prejudices and discrimination toward the Muslim population in Ireland negatively impact on children's engagement. It takes various forms – from negative representations of the Muslim population in the media to the non-inviting children of Muslim background to participate in creative activities.

"... in current situation where Muslims are facing all kinds of different behaviours. Some are, some are pretty all right, some are downright hostile towards Muslim people."

As a consequence parents may not feel that they or their children are welcome to participate in cultural activities:

"...when I bring my kids to the football or swimming, you know and there's other mothers there and they're all talking, and they can make friends with each other very easily. But when I go to, you know, speak with them, they kind of looked say, well, you don't have the same kind of background or the same tradition, so they're not going to bother really."

To overcome this constraint parents referred to promoting tolerance and inclusive attitudes towards Muslim families via television and other media sources, as well as to educating the wider Irish population about Muslim culture and religion. These measures in parents' opinion have potential to shift attitudes in the wider society to more inclusivity.

"So having the government more informed about what the religion is and that children need to grow up together so that everyone has more tolerant society, it is the responsibility of the government to access the right sources. Not just the ones that shout the loudest and get a negative opinion on religion." "True then, promoting the society to be a bit more welcoming and an understanding of the Muslim children's needs and restrictions and all of that and sort of create that the infrastructure for our kids to be a part, a big part of the society. So yeah, so I think it's not necessarily solely down to the society not being able to incorporate our kids. It is a two way street, pretty much, yeah..."

Finally, parents noted that families of Muslim background experience difficulties with accessing creative activities in terms of the number of available places, public transport or driving to the venue. Thus, considering that migrant families often do not have relatives in the same country, both parents might work, or there is only one car per household, families will have a limited ability to drive children to the afterschool activities or ask someone to do it instead.

" The school that teaches a creative writing class is in [...] and my daughter would never be able to go to that because I live in [...], I don't drive."

"My younger kids would like an art class to go to, but it's very hard, sometimes because they fill up very quickly."

Finally, parents were convinced that creative activities that are offered to children at school can be adapted to be more inclusive. For instance, considering that a number of art related activities are organised around Catholic faith traditions, adaptation of those activities is very important. For instance, not only Christmas cards can be created during the Christmas period, but children can also prepare cards for their parents or any other purpose during this time.

"We don't celebrate Christmas, you don't celebrate Easter but, you know, these things can be adapted."

The Community and Gender overarching theme comprises the barriers to engagement together with the ways of increasing the engagement of children in creative activities that parents believe are primarily related to the Muslim community in Ireland or gender and its impact on engagement.

The Community and Gender overarching theme comprises the following sub-themes: language competency, prioritising academic success, different cultural background and lifestyles, impact on identity, religion. Furthermore, the following ways of improvement of the children's engagement were identified by parents under this theme: agency from Muslim community, educate about Muslim religion and diversity, culture-religion separation.

Parents identified that language of the country acts a barrier to getting children engaged in creative activities noting particularly that parents might not have language competencies to search for the relevant information.

'...'it's hard when English is not your first language to actually access all these things. I think that's a big barrier for people as well, because you know it can be hard to... How do you, how do you search specifically online for something, you know, when you don't, when you don't know, you know, when English isn't your first language?"

Besides that, parents spoke about their experiences of being socialised in a different cultural environment and having developed a different lifestyle where creative activities are not such an important part of children's life.

"...for Muslim children, their parents come from a different background so that's kind of the main tank. Their parents grew up living a totally different lifestyle and they come here, and you know they go to schools. I'd say, you know, they wouldn't really be encouraged by their parents to try out different things, and you know as a child, you don't really go out and try things yourself, you need someone to guide you."

"... they don't have this, I think, in part of the culture that you know, to send the children to such activities, because they have never, you know, seeing that happening back home to themselves."

Additionally, in parents' opinion, prioritising the academic success and school subjects over the arts is something that characterises families of Muslim background.

"... arts is not as much important, because, at the end of the day, doesn't get you a good job, to be honest."

"I think the Muslims and our communities would, don't really pay too much importance to it, because a lot of pushing is done in doing learning, academic stuff, English."

Parents expressed the wish for the Muslim community in Ireland to adopt a more proactive role and express more agency to reach out to the wider society about creative activities for children. Thus, for instance, parents believe that Mosques or community organisations can actively promote available creative activities, organise them for children or host creative activities organised by arts organisations.

"The leaders of our society, they could kind of mentioned it and you know, encourage the parents to start off with, to..., you know, get their kids out there and get them involved and also maybe figure any workshops or anything. It would be nice to, you know, come back to the Community and say 'listen there's this workshop going on, it would be good for the kids'."

"... the schools and the weekend schools, Islamic schools, weekend Quran schools, etc, to have a platform to have these creative activities. The Muslim community, may be the football, the art for the community, the Muslim's side. Maybe they can, they can, they can be more active. They can put, for example, they can set a set of several classes, okay. Maybe the football, the art for the girls, yeah, it's a very good to encourage parents, encourage families to participate in such activities."

Parents also spoke about the potential for inviting tutors of the Muslim faith to facilitate creative activities as a means to enhance children's engagement.

"You know, to encourage more involvement, you need, need more tutors from participating from our backgrounds, from Muslim Community backgrounds let's say."

Parents identified that dissemination of knowledge about Islamic faith and traditions in schools, among educators and the general public can help the wider society and educators to be more confident in the ways of involving children of Muslim background in creative activities.

"In creativity your child can get involved in, the child is welcome to, teachers are sometimes nervous as well to include children and fear of offending them like 'Oh, can you make a Christmas card' and 'oh, gosh if you make a Christmas card is it going to offend the family', you know."

Finally, parents referred to the necessity to separate religion and cultural matters for Muslim community in Ireland in order to find a common ground with the wider Irish society. For instance, some of the rules that parents want their children to follow are of a cultural rather than religious nature. Imposing parents' cultural values or traditions on children of the Muslim faith who were born or live most of their life in Ireland can contribute to the internal conflict and identity confusion that a child can experience growing up in Ireland.

"We should encourage our kids more and try not to force our preferences, especially the ones that we have been brought from back home. Because in the end of day, these kids were here, in Ireland, for most, before anything, Irish Muslims and then they will be maybe a Pakistani, or an Indian. So they're not Pakistani Muslims living in Ireland, they are Irish Muslim living in Ireland, so we cannot, as a Muslim community, we cannot instil our ethnic background. This is where I feel the parents really overdo it as a Muslim community. They're forced feeding their own ethnic background values into a kid who's born in Dublin, in Ireland."

Gender and its Intersections

Parents spoke about their wish for their children to adhere to Islamic moral and behavioural standards. They expressed concern that if their children engage in particular creative activities or environments, such as clubs, theatre scenes etc. that they would have negative impact on their adherence to the rules of their faith.

"The intimacy of being in a theatre group or the music environments so they may get performance, a session in a in a bar or a pub, something like that, which, you know, it can, it doesn't have to be negative, but they can create limitations."

Following the religious and cultural principles, parents referred to some creative activities that are not encouraged among the Muslim population. Thus, parents expressed concern about dance, music, and theatre.

"As a Muslim background and Islam, of course, as you know, that, music and dance is generally.. they're very special... - dances of course hundred percent forbidden. Certain set of music... it's allowed."

"I think with, say, music groups and theatre groups, and things like that there's certain boundaries that, you know, my children don't want to cross either."

Parents identified that the gender aspect of the religion and cultural tradition places additional constraints on the engagement in creative activities in terms of separating boys from girls.

"..a lot of parents will say, 'No my daughter can't do it because boys are allowed in the class', you know."

Moreover, parents acknowledge that girls that practice Islam and adhere to the Muslim way of dressing that is often not in line with the requirements of the dressing of the general public during artistic or creative activities.

"dress coding, that really discourages people from different ethnic backgrounds for participating in them together. So that is one barrier that I think as a Muslim girl, the girls generally, face..."

Parents concluded that the specific requirements of the Islamic tradition can conflict with mainstream creative and arts activities in Ireland and may result in concern regarding girls' participation in particular activities, excluding or dropping out from participation.

"...many schools do exclude kids based on their.. because you're wearing hijab or you're dressed in a certain way that's relevant to Islam or a specific culture, you're excluded from music or you're asked: "Do you want to do, music?". Rather than saying: "Okay, we'll all do music and if you're not comfortable, we will find the comfortable area for you". So cultural exclusion of children because...based on what they are dressed does is one big part of it." " Obviously if it was the girl, and maybe she was, you know, going swimming or something, obviously, she would have to choose, you know, the, the Islamic if she wanted to wear the hijab and she would have to choose a Muslim swimwear."

References

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology*, *3*(2), 77-101.

Methodology details

Stimuli: Interview questions for parents

- 1. Would you please let me know what age is/are your child/children and what type of schools they are attending? What does creativity mean to you?
- 2. What type of arts/ creative activities your child/ children are/have been involved in?
- 3. In your view, how important it is for a child to participate in creative activities?
- 4. Do you think that your child/ children are doing enough creative activities? Would you like them to be more/less engaged in art/creative activities?
- 5. Overall, do you think that Muslim children participate in arts/creative activities as much as other kids in the society?
- 6. Are there particular art/creative activities that you would prefer for your child to participate in? Can you elaborate on your reasons for choosing those activities? Does your faith and culture play a role in your preferences?
- 7. In your view, are there particular obstacles/ barriers for children of Muslim background for participation in art/creative activities in Ireland?
- 8. In your view, what are some actions/ solutions that can enhance participation of children in general and Muslim children in particular in creative activities?
- 9. Do you think that participation in art/creative activities can be used to enhance inclusion and diversity in a society?
- 10. Would you like to add anything else in regard to participation of children in creative activities?

Name	Definition	Illustrative quotations
a	Financial factor such as high tuition fees for creative activities	there are barriers, because of the cost of a lot of things
		the price structure, sometimes my daughters, both of them, they love drawing, in fact, my son also loves drawing a lot, but for them to I I asked about an arts school, but it was extremely expensive, you know. And so, this was what put me off to not enrol them into that.
		We obviously do have summer camps, but, as you know, they are usually forthey cost a lot, they're quite expensive. So some parents just will not - even though they would want to the children to to join them - it's the financial barrier that they they find difficult to overcome.
		you know that it's a huge financial burden to pay for horse riding lessons and, you know, to find all of this one is a huge financial burden.
		the most important one is a financial actually. Because, as you mentioned, a lot of Muslim families who are here actually immigrants. It's difficult for them to afford these activities, even if they want to.
Availability and convenience	Availability of creative activities in terms of	my younger kids would like an art class to go to, but it's very hard, sometimes because they feel up very quickly.

Table 1

Barriers/Factors

	time, access, quantity and variety	to be able to find such activities that are also, you could say, and that one can, one has access to. You know, these kind of activities need to be accessible.
		The school that teaches a creative writing class is in and my daughter would never be able to go to that because I live in, I don't drive.
		Not all schools invest in creativity, since they have limited time and they have a curriculum and that's the main area that they concentrate on.
Language competency	Competencies in English language	Like obviously if the, if the parents cannot speak the language, they're going to find, you know, all aspects of living here very, very hard
		it's hard when English is not your first language to actually access all these things. I think that's a big barrier for people as well, because you know it can be hard to How do you how do you search specifically online for something, you know, when you don't, when you don't know, you know, when English isn't your first language.
Prioritising academic success	Priority of academic success over creative activities	arts is not as much important, because, at the end of the day, doesn't get you a good job, to be honest.
		I think the Muslims and our communities would, don't really pay too much importance to it, because a lot of pushing is done in doing learning, academic stuff rocks English.
Lack of information	Limited information on creative activities due to the lack of knowledge of advertising sources, boards or organisation	I think they don't know where to go to look for. You know, maybe they don't know museums are free and that they have summer activities for kids all the time, and. So, I think you know, maybe they need a portal or a group.
		So sometimes you don't really know what's going on outside and you need to kind of you know brochures or leaflets or something
		particularly migrant communities when they have a lack of knowing, you know, having information that there are certain activities available for the children and the importance of those,
Different cultural background and lifestyle	Differences in lifestyles and parents' childhood that impact their views on creative activities	I think if the opportunities are not available from an early age when a kid is in fifth or sixth class, and they say, 'I want to join choir', family will be 'what choir, why choir, where did it come from?', while if it was there earlier, it would have been the norm, or something that everyone does.
		a lot of it is to do with cultural backgrounds. My husband never grew up doing arts and crafts. Because because he grew up in a small town and the wouldn't be money there to buy paint and paper and all. Those things just weren't on the list. And I think, and, you know, a lot, a lot of parents, they don't see any benefits in art,

		for Muslim children, their parents come from a different background so that's kind of the main tank. Their parents grew up living a totally different lifestyle and they come here, and you know they go to schools. I'd say, you know, they wouldn't really be encouraged by their parents to try out different things, and you know as a child, you don't really go out and try things yourself, you need someone to guide you.
		all these countries, one of the things is that education and the academic aspect of the child's education is limited and confined to the school's curriculum. And then there is no culture of having extracurricular activities like art drawing and drama and all these. It's very rare
		they don't have this, I think, in part of the culture that you know, to send the children to such activities, because they have never you know, seeing that happening back home to themselves.
Prejudices and discrimination	Different acts and behaviour based as the result of prejudices and discrimination	when I bring my kids to the football or swimming, you know and there's other mothers there and they're all talking and they can make friends with each other very easily. But when I go to, you know, speak with them, they kind of looked say, well, you don't have the same kind of background or the same tradition, so they're not going to bother really
		So, I think that helps a lot, and children, especially Muslim children, I think they need these outlets and especially in in current situation where Muslims are facing all kinds of different behaviours. Some are some are pretty all right, some are downright hostile towards Muslim people.
Impact on identity	Identity change occur in children as the result of close contact with mainstream culture	They are scared that it will be influential. They've they've said quite blatantly that 'I don't let my child children mix', and I suppose in Dublin, where educate together schools are more strong the things I've observed, are the children of different cultures just stick together. And that's a reflection of parents who only stick with their own cultures in their. Their lives as well. So that has an effect. So then you're kind of creating segregation. And I think that is the biggest fear that if we restrict them mixing, then you reduce that understanding and that education. parents and scholars have that fear that if they stop, you know, ethnic value forcing on the kids, they will lose their route.
		the intimacy of being in a theatre group or the music environments so they may get performance, a session in a in a bar or a pub, something like that, which, you know, it can it doesn't have to be negative but they can create limitations. If it's in a Community Centre or an outdoor activity it's fine, but I just feel that if, once you, once you allow that, then as children get older, the question will they be allowed then where they are allowed to go now so.

	Role of religion and culture in engagement in creative activities	I suppose limitation and other activities is culturally and I think with, say, music groups and theatre groups, and things like that there's certain boundaries that, you know, my children don't want to cross either.
		for some for some families, they would never consider, you know, any kind of music or dancing because they would consider that very, very strongly haram.
		as a Muslim background and Islam, of course, as you know, that, music and dance is generally they're very special dances of course hundred percent forbidden certain set of music it's allowed.
		we would kind of put them into like art lessons, or you know, like karate lessons, or you know, take the Arabic lessons, but we wouldn't really put them into like music or drama.
	Gender as a cultural factor - it's role in dressing code,	dress coding, that really discourages people from different ethnic backgrounds for participating in them together. So that is one barrier that I think as a Muslim girls, the girls generally face
	participation and preferences of creative activities	many schools do exclude kids based on their because you're wearing hijab or you're dressed in a certain way that's relevant to Islam or a specific culture, you're excluded from music or you're asked, 'do you want to do, music?'. Rather than saying, 'okay, we'll all do music and if you're not comfortable, we will find the comfortable area for you'. So cultural exclusion of children because based on what they are dressed does is one big part of it.
		Unfortunately, she had to leave her passion, because in the secondary school, they have a very strict of wearing those mini shorts and which we requested that she can wear at least tights under it, and then she will wear the mini shorts because she loves playing games. But they were very strict that it has to be those mini shorts with those mini shirts and a bit of jumper which, unfortunately, because of dress code which she had to leave
		a lot of parents will say, 'No my daughter can't do it because boys are allowed in the class', you know.'
		Not, not really. Obviously if it was the girl, and maybe she was you know going swimming or something, obviously, she would have to choose, you know. The the Islamic if she wanted to wear the hijab and she would have to choose a Muslim swimwear.

Table 2

Ways of improvement

Financial	Financial assistance	the majority of kids go to school, and I think doing something through
assistance	for families and	the schools and funding things through the schools is a very good way
	creative	to to allow kids to access that kind of stuff and explore what it's
		about.

	programmes for children	schools, they do work some craft so kids but the very limited because, you know, they don't have the funding, they're like. I know and a lot of parents are asked for money for art supplies, but never pay it to the school. So the schools are limited and what they can order and what they can do with the kids.
		it's the financial barrier that they they find difficult to overcome. And I think, to have to have kind of such programs in place in Islamic centres as well as in schools, etc, where children are haven't, having access to such activities without those barriers, you know.
		I said immigrant families have financial strains which stops them from participating in these activities, so I think that they could be like a assistance Program.
Tolerance and Inclusion	Inclusive attitude in Irish society	True then, promoting the society to be a bit more welcoming and an understanding of the Muslim children's needs and restrictions and all of that and sort of create that the infrastructure for our kids to be a part, a big part of the society. So yeah, so I think it's not necessarily solely down to the society not being able to incorporate our kids. It is a two way street, pretty much, yeah.
		So having the government more informed about what the religion is and that children need to grow up together so that everyone has more tolerant society, it is the responsibility of the government to access the right sources. Not just the ones that shout the loudest and get a negative opinion on religion.
Informing on creative activities	Inform families on creative activities via various sources	Like there's a lot of Facebook groups online like the Muslim family, like Muslim sisters were like the Muslim sisters in Dublin there's a lot of different Facebook groups you can join. And maybe they need one, to kind of, promote things like that. Say, 'look here's a you know, a day, where there's an activity for free
		I know that the national parents, primary school parents Council have a lot of information leaflets out there. But I don't know, you know, how many people from a Muslim background actually access those.
		think it's, it's getting the parents to know what's out there, you know, and what, you know. Because if parents not know what's out there, how can they bring their kids and allowed them to participate.
		Getting into schools is a great way to em to reach the kinds, em you know, if the libraries are doing it then, then get on to the schools with a lot of Muslim kids and say, 'look, this is our program', you know, give it in. They send out the leaflets in so many different languages. I know it costs money to do that but, you know.
Educate about Islam and diversity	Disseminating knowledge on Islam tradition in schools,	I think that is a must for our children to be acceptable, right. Then there, you know, they, they will be confident to open up and show their creativity to the entire society.

	among educators and general public	In creativity your child can get involved in, the child is welcome to, teachers are sometimes nervous as well to include children and fear of offending them like 'Oh, can you make a Christmas card' and 'oh, gosh if you make a Christmas card is it going to offend the family', you know.
Agency of Muslim community	Agency of Muslim community in promoting creative activities	promoting art sessions a couple of times a year in the Mosque for kids maybe in the summer, where they get to come in and they get to try sewing machines and they get to come in and they try, you know. Play with the parents or like try creative writing for a day
		The leaders of our society, they could kind of mentioned it and You know, encourage The parents to start off with to, you know, get their kids out there and get them involved and also maybe figure any workshops or anything it would be nice to, you know, come back to the Community and say 'listen there's this workshop going on, it would be good for the kids'
		You know, to encourage more involvement, you need need more tutors from participating from our backgrounds, from Muslim Community backgrounds let's say.
		the schools and the weekend schools, Islamic schools, weekend Quran schools, etc, to have a platform to have these creative activities. the Muslim community, may be the football, the art for the community, the Muslims side. Maybe they can, they can, they can be more active. They can put, for example, they can set a set of. Several classes, okay. Maybe the football, the art for the girls, yeah, it's a, it's a very good to encourage parents, encourage families to participate in such activities
Culture-religion separation	Reaching out more and creating a common ground with mainstream culture	we should encourage our kids more and try not to force our preferences, especially the ones that we have been brought from back home. Because in the end of day, these kids were here, in Ireland. For most, before anything, Irish Muslims and then they will be maybe a Pakistani, or an Indian. So they're not Pakistani Muslims living in Ireland, they are Irish Muslim living in Ireland, so we cannot, as a Muslim community, we cannot instil our ethnic background. This is where I feel the parents really overdo it as a Muslim community. they're forced feeding their own ethnic background values into a kid who's born in Dublin, in Ireland.
		But you can approach different organizations and say 'look, you know. I have an idea, what do you think, is it something you're going to do in the future as well?', you know.
Adaptation of creative activities	Reframing of the religiously oriented school activities to make them more inclusive	We don't celebrate Christmas, you don't celebrate Easter but, you know, these things can be adapted. So parents need to realize that as well. It's up to them to step out there and ask these questions.

Appendix 3

PHASE 2. Interviews with educators

Introduction

The qualitative research with arts practitioners and educators was carried out to answer the research question: what are the barriers to the engagement of Muslim children in creative activities in Ireland, what is the role of gender and its interactions with religion in the engagement of Muslim children in creative activities.

Ethics approval and participant consent.

The research project was approved by the UCD Human Research Ethics Committee – Humanities. Written consent was obtained from participants prior to the start of each interview.

Method

Seven interviews were conducted with educators, art practitioners and members of the Arts Community who provide creative activities for children of Muslim background. Six interviewees out of 7 were females. Interviewees were between 30 and 60 years old with experience of providing creative activities to children and adults from 3 to 30 years.

Interviews were conducted in English by Ms Liliyana Mbeve, MSc, PGDip, recorded following the consent obtained from participants, and lasted between 25 and 50 minutes.

Participants were recruited directly via email invitations to the art practitioners and educators in art organisations and schools.

The interviews were conducted online via Zoom, recorded, anonymised and transcribed for thematic analysis.

Analytical strategy

The thematic analysis framework by Braun and Clarke's (2006) was applied to analyse the content of interviews. The interviews were transcribed verbatim. The first stage of analysis involved getting familiarised with the dataset from all interviews and obtaining the first impression about educators' insights into the topic of the interview. At the second stage, the initial codes were generated. Only units that were relevant to the research question were coded. At stage three, the codes were revised and combined where necessary. Stage four involved the revision of the themes that were identified and codes across the data to ensure their validity. And the final stage was devoted to the final definition.

Results

The thematic analysis identified 8 themes on what educators describe as barriers for the engagement of children in creative activities in Ireland. The themes were grouped around various topics, such as lack of resources (money, time, transport, etc), the organisation of the school curriculum around Christianity; uncertainty about what is allowed for children of Muslim backgrounds and what is not.

Another 8 themes were identified by educators and Arts practitioners as ways to improve the participation and engagement of children in creative activities. All the themes were further

organised into 2 higher-order themes – the Irish Society theme and the Community and Gender theme.

Thus, **the Irish Society theme** includes educators' accounts of perceived barriers for engagement and ways of facilitating engagement with the Arts in Irish society. The barriers that were indentified included: lack of resources (money, time, transport, etc); organisation of the school curriculum around Christianity; uncertainty about what is allowed and what is not, and unfamiliarity and lack of information about available creative activities.

The interviewees also identified the following ways of improvement of children's engagement: providing funding and grants; adapting creative activities for other cultures; providing guidelines for educators; effective communication with parents; including Islamic elements in creative activities for children; involving parents in creative activities; and providing training for educators. Several of these themes were also suggested by parents of Muslim background as ways to facilitate the engagement of children in creative activities (see Appendix 2).

Educators and Arts practitioners noted that parents might experience financial difficulties that would make it difficult to pay fees for creative activities for their children. Additionally, the need to travel to access creative activities can be difficult for families who have limited access to private and public transport.

"Because you know, sometimes they the mothers, for example, maybe don't drive. And then the Dads could be working, or it could just be that they have one car and then there's no way to coordinate being able to bring children to things. So I do find sometimes depending on when things are scheduled, it can be difficult for kids to actually get to them."

"... there are a lot, I suppose, logistical things that are very costly, that can be real barriers for community, if they are not addressed."

"... there's very, very limited opportunity unless the parents can pay, and that's money is a huge barrier for children accessing cultural experiences."

Educators and Arts practitioners believe that financial assistance and grants should be offered to help to overcome financial constraint of families to access and enjoy creative activities. Suggestions included: changing permitted spending of grant money in such a way that it could be used to facilitate getting children to the venue; providing the art materials for children taking part in the projects or even providing lunches for children. The educators also identified the need for new grant opportunities and creative/arts programmes that run for longer periods of time or that are free for those who wish to participate.

"... within the Arts the funding of projects is always really important because we don't have... we are refunded to... to run a certain program. But actually, we want to reach groups, young people. We need to seek the funds that will allow us to bring the children to us, to give them lunch, you know, to allow all of that participation. So it's not just as easy as saying 'we've got a workshop on Sunday'. There is a lot of costs involved, and... and..., but I suppose that because of the nature of arts funding. It tends to be project-based. It's not continual."

"... we are not in the habit of having of free cultural offering for children. So I think we have to change your own culture enough and realise that this must be available. You know, it's should be just, it's just there, you know, it's ok if you just pay 3 euro or something really, they don't have to be absolutely free."

"... the funding for an extended period of times, so that you can ensure that there is a deeper engagement. And then, perhaps after that period of years that understanding of the value of

what you are offering will be there with community, but it can't be anticipated that they were..., that the community would understand, you know, the value or would buy into the value of projects in a shorter period of time over 1 or 2 months. So, it has to be a continue, it has to be sustainable, and, and yes. And then there has to be ways of addressing the access, insuring communities have way in getting to and participating in in projects in a workshop."

A second theme which the educators identified as a barrier is the organisation of the school curriculum around Christianity. They noted that this can result in children of Muslim background not being able to engage in creative activities at the same level as children from Christian backgrounds.

"...when the curriculum was developed it was pretty much pretty much still is 95% Catholic population and so it's very much direct, it's kind of assuming everyone is mm hmm, and that is not good, and like the Department of Education encourage schools not to use textbooks okay. But textbooks are the easiest way for teachers to ensure they cover all the topics on the curriculum. So, the publishers of the textbooks are very much at fault at putting in religion based topics into the books. mm hmm so, for example, it will follow the Christian calendar, which is not necessary, so even the songs that they might do, our Christmas songs, you know."

Arts practitioners and educators believe that the creative activities in schools that are focused on religious events such as Christmas and Hallow'een could be reframed or adapted to make them more inclusive of children of Muslim background.

"... when it's coming up to say Halloween or Valentine's day, they'll all make cards as well, so you know Muslim kids we don't celebrate Valentine's day, but you could say 'well I know you don't celebrate Valentine's day but maybe you'd like to make a card especially for your mom."

Additionally, interviewees expressed concern that educators and Arts practitioners experience uncertainty about what is allowed and what is not allowed to offer regarding the creative activities when working with children of Muslim background. This uncertainty may result in avoiding involving children of Muslim background in creative activities.

"As an artist, I was unsure at times what was accepted and what wasn't, because other artists are worried going in because they're not sure what was allowed or not. And ...that was hard at times, because I was kind of...I did not want to suddenly do something, and I was told that I was insulting somebody."

".. [Educators] are not exactly sure how to interpret the rules. So, it's easier for them not to do it and not to you know not to subconsciously do something that's against the Quran, you know, so they, very careful with this."

Educators and Arts practitioners noted that drawing up guidelines for educators, would help to ease uncertainty and increase confidence when working with children of Muslim backgrounds. For example these guidelines could clearly communicate restrictions around creative activities and art in Islamic traditions, and offer a range of suggestions for alternative activities that would be acceptable to most members of the Islamic community.

"I would always question – would I allowed to do music and feedback was 'they don't do music; they are not allowed' or 'they are not allowed to dance'. And... there wasn't enough clarity is to why, that, you know, that the opportunity, some sort of guidelines were...to, to... for an artist whatever discipline to be able to go with 'this is what I'm planning, does this fit within the cultural kind of realm of something."

"Maybe [provide] some sort of guidelines for artists... There are like the Arts Council has a guideline for artists to go into schools and it is quiet in depth."

Arts practitioners believe that training for educators can be a way to prepare them to be more inclusive in diverse classroom and to take account of various religious traditions in their artistic and creative work with children.

"... and [in] teacher training college teachers should be told that children have certain religious backgrounds, may have a difficulty with [music]."

"I don't know if the teacher training colleges have changed since I've been there, I mean they probably do give them some information about Islam and how certain children may have a different perspective on the curriculum. But it's more of the organization of the actual individual schools, I think that should be informing the teachers, you know, because if you if you know you have Muslim children in your school, then you should at least be able to teach us to communicate with them, you know, about the curriculum. You know."

Unfamiliarity and lack of information about available creative activities is another barrier identified by educators and art practitioners.

"Since I've been teaching there. So, so when I started, which was back in 2002 and the children.... so the parents would have been recently arrived in Ireland, you know, in the last maybe five or six years, and so they tend to not to have Irish citizenship, and it was all new to them and their children, certainly weren't Irish citizens and, and so, and that was very different, and they tended to be more, like say, less assimilated if that's the right word. I don't know if you can use that word, but they were less familiar with the Irish, Irish society and what was available to them. And they kind of expected the everything to be the same as the countries from which they had come. Nowadays there are more involved in Irish society, and they'd be more exposed to the arts definitely."

Educators noted that involving parents in creative activities can facilitate the engagement of children and promote creative activities among other parents.

"So, we've had it is there... a couple of parents who will accompany a larger group of children and take them to museum and will stay. And then will accompany them back. And they could have taken it as a voluntary role, because they see the value of it. And it is, that there is people like that's within the Centre who, who do could take up that role because it makes everything run so much smoother. And it allows us to recruit... I say recruit but to encourage.... at participation levels. I think that those relationships with parents in the centres.... Hm... had been really key for us."

Moreover, educators mentioned that including Islamic elements in creative works may be a way to encourage children of Muslim background to be more involved in creative activities as well as more included in the classroom.

"...encouraging the educators, as well. So, when is it coming around the time of Islamic celebrations and Ramadan and things like this, then these are different kind of like art pieces of artwork that you might be able to do with the Muslim kids. Or if it's in a non-Muslim school, you know if they want to be able to incorporate into the wider class to educate the other kids in the class, as well.. You know 'this is what say Ahmed, or (female name) believe in, and their Ramadan is coming up and these are things that they will do'.. or you know, making lanterns or things like this. But put in, maybe some little projects that the educators can do in order to make their students feel inclusive."

Communication with parents was identified as another way to facilitate children's engagement with creative activities. Thus, educators felt that schools should communicate about the curriculum they

intended to follow, as well as inform parents about specific activities children will be offered and invite parents to discuss them.

"And a lot of the time when you're doing a certain topic or a certain subject. There are, pamphlets that come with the books, you know, it's a lot of it's online now, and you can send it to teach, parent information to tell them what you're going to be covering. So I suppose if there's something that they would find difficult in the arts that's good to raise it at that point, you know, but to be honest with you, apart from the of Muslim school that can't really adapt everything, no.."

"in that school they inform parents up front before the children joined the school. And we know a lot of you are from an Islamic background, and this is how we deal with this, and they do it up front and they say, you know, children are allowed to wear hijab but if they do it must be a certain colour and the girls will be expected to do PE, and you cannot opt out, and then, if there's no misunderstanding about it. I think the same should be done with the arts, so I think they should say we recognize, you may have a difficulty with the way we teach music. And we also recognize that your children. You know I mean no you'd probably just have to say, we will be exposing your children to the visual arts and appreciation of the arts."

Another way to positively impact children's participation in creative activities that was identified by art practitioners and educators was policy implementation. Thus, for example, developing targeted creative activity programmes for families living in small villages and remote areas or reversing the way of targeting people where instead of inviting people the venue to actually bring things and events to people and communities.

"And there is an issue in that regard in Creative Youth - small ...programmes on the pilot stage and it just needs to multiply and it needs to go into every town and village in Ireland."

" in a policy level I'd imagine that it needs to be maybe It's the case that funding is administered, but it has to be kept aside to ensure that actually programs are being delivered. To ensure that...hm... certain communities have access to them. And that funding, it will facilitate that access."

" loads of people don't go to the theatre, loads of people don't go to galleries, and I don't understand why we're still getting them to try and go in, when you can go out and bring things to places where people go."

Different types of collaboration can also greatly facilitate participation of children of Muslim background in creative activities. For instance, inviting representatives of Muslim communities to discussion groups about creative activities or organising collaboration with artists from Muslim communities.

"...a policy level would be.. because there's something called the Arts and Education Charter where. It Is only the last few years when the department of the Arts and the Department of Education have come together to form partnership. Previously, that didn't exist. That's only happened in the last few years. There would be [unclear] the Muslim community and communication to become part of that discussion group. There is a limit, there is a limit of I suppose of expertisewithin the group that that would keep both the schools and the Muslim community for better understanding and reflection on how the system works as such."

"there would be opportunities for like pilot projects to happen and maybe a group of artists of different disciplines could pilot a programme with the Muslim National schools and then would feedback in for the engagement, because it is all about collaboration and trial and error." Finally, educators suggested that public appreciation and dissemination of children's work can help them to be feel appreciated, can maintain their interest in creative activities, as well as to get other children and parents to be interested in participating.

"They see their work displayed on the museum wall, in the city centre location is a, is, is a real, I suppose, boost for young people to feel that they're actually heard, and they are valued."

"And it's very important because it provides that moments of celebration, of celebration of their creativity, their talent. They reckon, I suppose, the fact that the museum, the established Art Museum is recognising their creativity and, and putting it out for the public to see. And so that's a very big moment for the young people, but it's also very moment for their family and your friends. So we try to bring in as much as of their community, they're friends and family for events, exhibition openings to see the exhibition, to celebrate their, their creativity in their artwork."

The Community and Gender theme identified barriers to engagement and ways of improving engagement that Arts practitioners and educators relate to cultural and religious practices of Muslim communities living in Ireland. The barriers that were identified by educators included the following themes: different cultural background and lifestyles; extremely conservative interpretations of Islam; gender expectations; and religious restrictions.

The significance of cultural background and lifestyle factors as inhibitors of children's participation in creative activities is illustrated by the following quotations:

"When it comes to attending plays and that kind of, they have no experience none, not one of them that I've ever taught had ever been to a theatre."

"...they have not been exposed I'd say none of them have that I've ever met have ever been exposed to classical music."

Furthermore, as educators noted, religious restrictions add limitations to how children of Muslim background engage in art and creative activities. For instance, some activities are strongly discouraged for religious reasons.

"I have heard of some teachers and other schools where the Muslim children will say we're not allowed to do music and they opt out."

"I think the parents didn't want them to dance and certainly did not want them to dance in front of others..."

"... there's a bit of an issue with drama when I you know. I don't see Muslim girl, essentially, I don't see Muslim girls going to youth theatre. Theatre is quite tactile. This idea that you are going to be holding hands or like making a human nosh a lot of the things involved."

In addition to that, educators and artists mentioned that when parents adhere to a an extremely conservative interpretation of Islam, it becomes very difficult to involve children in creative activities.

"if you have a child from that family in your class you just cannot do... You basically cannot do music, you would avoid drama and you would turn down your art, you would. You would have to be extremely careful because of the trouble they could cause was horrendous us"

"fundamentalist Muslim parents who do not represent, you know, the Muslim community, but they have been extremely negative. And really ... very negative anyway and very critical of teachers who, who step outside the most fundamentalist and most strict interpretation of the Quran and to the point that if you have a child from this family, a few families, there's probably there are less and less of these families as the years go on, so the last troublesome family, we had left the school. specifically, because of being uncomfortable with the way the teachers were exposing their children to non-Islamic way acceptable things, one of which would be music."

Gender and creative activities

Educators and Arts practitioners noted that there are gender stereotypes among children of a Muslim background that could inhibit participation of boys in some creative activities, for example in art.

"That seems to be a stereotype thing where boys don't like arts or that it's not a good not that it's there's nothing wrong with it, but it's not good for Muslim boys to like art after a certain age."

"It's not cool for the boys, to be in the choir in our school"

Furthermore, gender mixed activities might inhibit participation of girls as they won't feel comfortable being involved in close contact with boys. One of the ways to overcome this limitation is to have gender specific groups for creative activities.

"I think if there is a nervousness or a divide between genders that's just shuts down girls' involvement in particular..."

Overall, two of the themes (lack of resources, and lack of information about creative activities) were identified both by parents and by educators as barriers in the Irish context that inhibit children's participation in creative activities.

Three themes in the community and gender overreaching theme (different cultural background and lifestyles, gender expectations, religious restrictions) overlapped with the barriers identified by the Muslim parents.

References

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology*, *3*(2), 77-101.

Methodology details

Stimuli:

- 1. How would you describe your experience in providing creative activities for children of Muslim (minority background)?
- 2. How this experience was different from the mainstream students? Please, describe the situation to me.
- 3. How much in your experience children of Muslim (minority) background get engaged in creative activities? (Is it in any way different from mainstream children?)
- 4. If you have received feedback from parents, how have parents responded to the creative activities you were offering? What were their expectations?
- 5. In your opinion are there ways we can enhance children's engagement in creative activities?
- 6. Is there anything you feel will be helpful for you to enhance your competencies in working with children of Muslim (minority) background? Please elaborate. (What kind of assistance, help, guidance a young professional would need in this regard?)
- 7. In which way do you think society/organisations/policies can assist to improve children's experience and engagement in creative activities?

Name	Definition	References		
Name Different cultural background and lifestyle	Definition Differences in lifestyles and parents' childhood that impact children's' involvement in creative activities	they have not been exposed I'd say none of them have that I've ever met have ever been exposed to classical music When it comes to attending plays and that kind of that kind of they have no experience none, not one of them that I've ever taught had ever been to a theatre in art galleries you're definitely going to be exposed to nudity and stuff like that so. I don't know whether parents would be uncomfortable with that,		
		but certainly the children are not exposed to so they get very, you know, you got a range of emotions you get the girls being very embarrassed and mortified if they saw something some nudity, you get, the boys thinking it's really bad and loving it because they're doing something they're not supposed to do. there's a nervousness from their parents, because they didn't have it as children.		
		certain things like that they would have thought were not fine before they realize that there's actually nothing wrong with doing it, or are participating in certain things. And you know, maybe that aspect of their culture comes into it, too, because sometimes parents will be kind of emulating what their parents might have been with them, since they were very, very strict and kind of like set in their ways.		
Extremely conservative	Strictest way of Islam	we have some families who would be very strict and can make a lot of trouble for us if we step inside the lines.		

Barriers/Factors

of Islamits impactthe Muslim community, but they have been extremely negr And really very negative anyway and very critical of tear who, who step outside the most fundamentalist and most interpretation of the Quran and to the point that if you ha child from this family, a few families, there's probably ther less and less of these families as the years go on, so the troublesome family. we had left the sc specifically because of being uncomfortable with the way teachers were exposing their children to non-Islamic acceptable things, one of which would be music.if you have a child from that family in your class you just ca do You basically cannot do music, you would avoid drame you would turn down your art, you would. You would have extremely careful because of the trouble they could cause horrendous us with regards to art I know some parents would be kind of str that their children would only only be able to say draw thing say inanimate objects, or you know flowers, nature, bu animals, no people or anything like that 50 there can be that of strictness there with regards to what it is that they incorporate into their artwork.Gender expectationsGender as a cultural factor it's role in dressing code, participation and preferences of creative activitiesHt as seems to be a stereo type thing where boys don't like at that it's not agood for thus im boys to like art after a certain age.No one will understand if you want the girls, maybe to have at distance from the boys, no one will understand if you don't them playing witches or angels or whatever.Ithink if there is a nervousness or a divide between genders t just may be blinked in some of [0:01:63:7] their views, and the te was very supportive in challenging some of these views. My was not to say somebody was ri	interpretations	interpretation and	fundamentalist Muslim parents who do not represent, you know,
Gender expectationsGender as a cultural factor it's role in dressing code, participation and preferences of creative activitiesthat seems to be a stereo type thing where boys don't like and that it's not a good not that it's there's nothing wrong with it it's not good for Muslim boys to like art after a certain age.It's not cool for the boys, to be in the choir in our school participation and preferences of creative activitiesIt's not cool for the boys, to be in the choir in our school they have a girls and boys club, and a lot of the time dran dance classes are multi gender outside the school, you k that's potentially one one change that made the girls be comfortable coming along.No one will understand the prayers, no one will lead them, no will understand if you want the girls, maybe to have a b distance from the boys, no one will understand if you don't them playing witches or angels or whatever.I think if there is a nervousness or a divide between genders t just shuts girls involvement in particular.Because the was times when the boys, not the girls would be may be blinked in some of [00:16:37] their views, and the tea was not to say somebody was right or wrong, that's not what	•		the Muslim community, but they have been extremely negative. And really very negative anyway and very critical of teachers who, who step outside the most fundamentalist and most strict interpretation of the Quran and to the point that if you have a child from this family, a few families, there's probably there are less and less of these families as the years go on, so the last troublesome family, we had left the school. specifically because of being uncomfortable with the way the teachers were exposing their children to non-Islamic way acceptable things, one of which would be music. if you have a child from that family in your class you just cannot do You basically cannot do music, you would avoid drama and you would turn down your art, you would. You would have to be extremely careful because of the trouble they could cause was horrendous us with regards to art I know some parents would be kind of strict in that their children would only only be able to say draw things like say inanimate objects, or you know flowers, nature, but no animals, no people or anything like that So there can be that kind of strictness there with regards to what it is that they can
consider perhaps their perception of something and to be open and and I found the boys probably were more that, the were much more open, in, in, in broadening their horizons other cultures and then the boys were.	expectations	cultural factor - it's role in dressing code, participation and preferences of creative activities	that seems to be a stereo type thing where boys don't like arts or that it's not a good not that it's there's nothing wrong with it, but it's not good for Muslim boys to like art after a certain age. It's not cool for the boys, to be in the choir in our school they have a girls and boys club, and a lot of the time drama or dance classes are multi gender outside the school, you know, that's potentially one one change that made the girls be feel comfortable coming along. No one will understand the prayers, no one will lead them, no one will understand if you want the girls, maybe to have a bit of distance from the boys, no one will understand if you don't want them playing witches or angels or whatever. I think if there is a nervousness or a divide between genders that's just shuts down girls involvement in particular. Because the was times when the boys, not the girls would be very, may be blinked in some of [00:16:37] their views, and the teacher was very supportive in challenging some of these views. My role was not to say somebody was right or wrong, that's not what we did. But it was be able to provide an opportunity for them to consider perhaps their perception of something and to be more open and and I found the boys probably were more that, the girls were much more open, in, in, in broadening their horizons into other cultures and then the boys were.
(money, time, logistics after school and no interest from the parents. You know now	(money, time,	logistics limitations of	I think we tried to do to have a drama after school kind of a club after school and no interest from the parents. You know now that there could have been reasons for that, because our children, mostly come on school buses that could be a factor,

		they're a lot, I suppose, logistical things that are very costly [00:29:20], that can be real barriers for community, if they are not address.
		there's very very limited opportunity unless the parents can pay and that's money is a huge barrier for children accessing cultural experiences.
		A lot of the programs are fee paying, you know. If you are a working class family. Or, if you are an immigrant family are you know who are paying rent and you're not nes you know you might not have a mortgage yet, do you want to pay high fees to send your kids to drama camp? No.
		I think transport would be a big thing.
		Because you know, sometimes they the mothers, for example, maybe don't drive. And then the Dads could be working, or it could just be that they have one car and then there's no way to coordinate being able to bring children to things. So I do find sometimes depending on when things are scheduled, it can be difficult for kids to actually get to them.
		if things cost, if there's a fee on certain things you know some parents, maybe are not able to afford certain fees for you know, different camps or the things that their kids might be invited to.
Organisation of the curriculum around Christianity	Christian tradition in the focus of creative activities and school curriculum	when the curriculum was developed it was pretty much pretty much still is 95% Catholic population and so it's very much direct, it's kind of assuming everyone is mm hmm, and that is not good, and like the Department of Education encourage schools not to use textbooks okay. But textbooks are the easiest way for teachers to ensure they cover all the topics on the curriculum. So the publishers of the textbooks are very much at fault at putting in religion based topics into the books. mm hmm so, for example, it will follow the Christian calendar, which is not necessary, so even the songs that they might do, our Christmas songs, you know, The books, the whole curriculum is based around Christian
Religious restrictions	Role of religion and culture in engagement in creative activities	Christianity. they wouldn't have had very little exposure to music, other than what's allowed under the Quran which would be un-tuned percussion, so you know, drumming and that's kind of thing and unaccompanied voice.
		in order to bring them to something like that, though I had to make direct contact with the producers, the directors of whatever you call the people who put on the play. E24 And I have to ask them about the content, I had to make sure there was no and nudity. And no references to You know. What we call - I'm trying to use the right terminology because it's it's all changed now - so like what we would have caught a broken marriage, you know sort of they were very sensitive about that, they didn't want their children exposed to unusual family situations and definitely no reference to homosexuality, or anything like that. Music appreciation. And it's not something that we're allowed to cover in the curriculum.

		I have heard of some teachers and other schools where the Muslim children will say we're not allowed to do music and they opt out.
		Muslim children don't tend to join the choir.
		And it stand out well, recognizable Muslim girls because of hijab, and only once did I ever seen one playing an instrument, one of them play the violin
		dance is definitely not allowed under the Quran
		I think the parents didn't want them to dance and certainly did not want them to dance in front of others,
		and you want to send your child to a class. No one will understand the prayers, no one will lead them, no one will understand if you want the girls, maybe to have a bit of distance from the boys, no one will understand if you don't want them playing witches or angels or whatever.
		there's a bit of an issue with drama when I you know. I don't see Muslim girl, essentially, I don't see Muslim girls going to youth theatre. Theatre is quite tactile. This idea that you are going to be holding hands or like making a human nosh a lot of the things involved
		I think you probably wouldn't have very many of them taking part in kind of like the music and dance, to be honest.
		you might have some parents that would be very, very strict when it came to doing certain things with regards to art for example, or even to do with drama they mightn't be be as into acting you know, and they don't want their kids doing things like that.
		We couldn't use the word music, but we could use the word rhythm. That's so subtle.
Uncertainty	Teachers'	they're not exactly sure how to interpret the rules. So it's easier
about what is	confusion about	for them not to do it and not to you know not to subconsciously
allowed and	the limitations for	do something that's against the Quran, you know, so they, very
what is not	creative activities for children	careful with this.
		And then teachers will be very worried about it because you'd be afraid that parents would be upset that you expose their children to that.
		As non-Muslim teachers who are working within an Islamic ethos framework which is strict, so we have to, we have to stick with the strictest interpretation of everything. And to navigate that is very difficult, sometimes.
		as an artist, I was unsure at times what was accepted and what wasn't, because other artists are worry going in because they're not sure what was allowed or not. Andthat was hard at times, because I was kind of I did not want to suddenly do something and I was told that I was insulting somebody
		definitely artists sometimes don't know what's allowed or what's not, and they don't know who to ask or they afraid to ask in case of they insult somebody along the way.

Unfamiliarity	Since I've been teaching there. So so when I started, which was
and lack of	back in 2002 and the children so the parents would have been
information	recently arrived in Ireland, you know, in the last maybe five or six
about available	years, and so they tend to not to have Irish citizenship, and it was
creative	all new to them and their children, certainly weren't Irish citizens
activities	and, and so, and that was very different and they tended to be
	more, Alice: like say, less assimilated if that's the right word. I don't
	know if you can use that word, but they were less familiar with the
	Irish Irish society and what was available to them. And they kind
	of expected the everything to be the same as the countries from
	which they had come. Nowadays there are more involved in iris
	society and they'd be more exposed to the arts definitely

Ways of improvement

	A		
A person of	A person from	So we would often look for guidance from our principal or from	
reference from	the Community	the the patron of the school the sheikh, who, he would give us	
Muslim	who can provide	guidance on that.	
community	guidance for the		
	art practitioner	I felt that really good relationship eventually will gonna do with religious teachers there who initially at the beginning was quite resistant to me being there. But after some time she became mine confident, and if I was doing care, she go 'no, you cannot do that' or 'how about you do this way instead' and sort of the relationships there. And it need needs to be kind of, the understanding that everybody, kind of becoming part of it there and that the teachers and staff is always open, and they knew you could come and have a conversation. To have a key individual like in the Muslim national school, it was the religious teacher actually, who became somebody I could go – 'can I do this? Can I not?', Or if I do something she would go – 'Why did you do this instead of this?'. So just little subtleties of things. It is a I suppose it is an establishing habit of a person in the school to bounce off ideas, to go through things, to discuss the wider possible understandings and perceptions that might not be allowed to so this because of this this and this. But other people might see it very differently.	
Adaptation of	Reframing of the	when it's coming up to say Halloween or Valentine's day, they'll	
creative	religiously	all make cards as well, so you know Muslim kids we don't	
activities	oriented activities	celebrate valentine's day, but you could say 'well I know you	
	to make them	don't celebrate valentine's day but maybe you'd like to make a	
	more inclusive	/e card especially for your mom'	

C	In the second second				
Communication	Inviting parents in	in that school they inform parents up front before the children			
with parents	the dialogue	joined the school. And we know a lot of you are from an Islamic			
	about the	background, and this is how we deal with this, and they do it up			
	creative activities	front and they say, you know, children are allowed to wear hijab			
	they can be	but if they do it must be a certain colour and the girls will be			
	exposed to	expected to do PE, and you cannot opt out, and then, if there's			
		no misunderstanding about it. I think the same should be done			
		with the arts, so I think they should say we recognize, you may			
		have a difficulty with the way we teach music. And we also			
		recognize that your children. You know I mean no you'd probably			
		just have to say, we will be exposing your children to the visual			
		arts and appreciation of the arts			
		they should say to parents in the beginning, this is what is			
		covered in the curriculum.			
		And maybe things that will not be in line with your religious			
		beliefs. But it won't happen, because this is a, you know,			
		whatever, this is not a Muslim school, You know, and then they			
		find their own solutions to it			
		And a lot of the time when you're doing a certain topic or a			
		certain certain subject. There are, there are pamphlets that			
		come with the books, you know, it's a lot of its online now, and			
		you can send it to teach, parent information to tell them what			
		you're going to be covering. So I suppose if there's something			
		that they would find difficult in the arts that's good raise it at that			
		point, you know, but to be honest with you, apart from the of			
		Muslim school that can't really adapt everything, no.			
		encouraging them the parents to get involved in things their			
		children are involved in, you know in school get the parents to			
		become involved in things like parents associations or parents			
		groups.			
		When it comes to something like drama or music or choir, and I			
		think that's the question needs to be handled with the parents.			
		So you know if you don't want your child partaking in this we			
		don't want them to feel left out so is there anything that we can			
		don't want them to feel left out so is there anything that we can do you know from school for the child, so that they will feel			
		included. Or is there something else that they can do during that			
		time that we can facilitate, so they don't feel that they are being			
		left out or that they're so different from the other children in the			
		class. So I think communication is really important,			
Funding and	Various financial				
grants	support for	when it comes to public funding I don't think there's any huge			
0	creative activities	issue for the arts. I think if if the Islamic community, and you			
		know, if there are arts organizations looked for funding, which I			
		think they do, and I think they were quite successful. Because I			
		think there is money there towards diversity.			

within the Arts the funding of projects is always really important because we don't have we are refunded to to run a certain program. But actually we want to reach groups, young people. We need to seek the funds that will allow us to bring the children to us, to give them lunch, you know, to allow all of that participation. So it's not just as easy as saying 'we've got a workshop on Sunday'. There is a lot of costs involved, and and, but I suppose that because of the nature of arts funding. It tends to be project-based. It's not continual. for other organization, they might not have that funding, and so it's about how do you enable an organisation in Waterford or Limerick or Dublin to reach out to their communities and support their communities and support participation. So I suppose, the way funding is administered and maybe not maybe it's not done in the way that actually enables greater participation or easier participation So, how do you get a community living in rural setting or an isolated setting into an open area to actually participate. So, so that it is, it is not so easy as just saying like I said 'there's an event or there's a program'
happening. But actually we have to facilitate that and organise that as well. So, they're a lot, I suppose, logistical things that are very costly, that can be real barriers for community, if they are not address.
the funding for an extended period of times, so that you can ensure that there is a deeper engagement. And then, perhaps after that period of years that understanding of the value of what you are offering will be there with community, but it can't be anticipated that they were, that the community would understand, you know, the value or would buy into the value of projects in a shorter period of time over 1 or 2 months. So, it has to be a continue, it has to be sustainable, and and yes. And then there has to be ways of addressing the access, insuring communities have way in getting to and participating in in projects in a workshop.
a lot a lot that can be done in terms of investment in social programs that offer Arts just as Sport is offered, you know, what. You know, it's Saturday I suppose free to children, I think, you know, creative activities should be offered in the same way.
we are not in the habit of having of free cultural offering for children. So I think we have to change your own culture enough and realise that this must be available. You know, it should be just, it's just there, you know, it's ok if you just pay 3 euro or something really, they don't have to be absolutely free.
We just need to resource everything for all children much more. I don't think this is a case and Muslim children need to be single out and to be to be given, you know, some kind of different position in terms of access. I think we just don't have enough free cultural activities for kids

		funding opportunities would provide, yes they need to, yeah it
		would be better if that happened at policy level and that would be key areas for that.
		Maybe more grants or something
Guidelines for	Guidance for art	
educators	practitioners on cultural preferences of art practice	I think that that idea thatMay be some sort of guidelines for artists There are like the Arts Council has a guideline for artists to go into schools and it is quiet in depths. I would always question – would I allowed to do music and feedback was 'they don't do music, they are not allowed' or 'they are not allowed to dance'. And there wasn't enough clarity is to why, that, you know, that the opportunity, some sort of guidelines wereto, to for an artist whatever discipline to be able to go with 'this is what I'm planning, does this fit within the cultural kind of realm of something',
		just to kind know exactly what Islam says about certain things, or what it might say about music or instruments, is it okay is it not, are certain songs allowed You know things like this. I think it's a really good idea, just to have something there, a checklist in writing, that they can refer to. like you know, drawing, artwork, music and then maybe you know cultural perspectives. So you'd have your religious perspectives, and then you might have like another section on differences of opinion. You know, because there will be differences in opinion coming from different [Muslims?] with regards to certain things.
Including Islamic elements in creative works	Islamic elements in creative art practice	encouraging the educators, as well So when is it coming around the time of Islamic celebrations and Ramadan and things like this, then these are different kind of like art pieces of artwork that you might be able to do with the Muslim kids. Or if it's in a non- Muslim school, you know if they want to be able to incorporate into the wider class to educate the other kids in the class, as well You know 'this is what say Ahmed, or (female name) believe in, and their Ramadan is coming up and these are things that they will do' or you know, making lanterns or things like this. But put in, maybe some little projects that the educators can do in order to make their students feel inclusive. when it comes to artwork there's an easy ways to get around it, because let's say it's coming up to Christmas time and the kids are all making Christmas cards, as an educated than they should know, okay this child doesn't celebrate Christmas, so therefore you don't need to make a Christmas card but you can use the artwork you can use the card to make something else. Maybe you would like to make an [early Eid(?)] card or something.

Involving parents	Parents	think our program is being so successful is because of the			
in creative activities	involvement in creative activities and its positive impact	think our program is being so successful, is because of the parents who will accompany So we've had it is there a couple of parents who will accompany a larger group of children and take them to museum and will sta. And then will accompany them back. And they could have taken it as a voluntary role, because they see the value of it. And it is, that there is people like that's within the Centre who, who do could take up that role because it makes everything run so much smoother. And it allows us to recruit. I say recruit but to encourage at participation levels. I think that those relationships with parents in the centres Hm had been really key for us.			
Policy implementation	Policies supporting and promoting the	And there is an issue in that regard in Creative Youth - smallprogrammes on the pilot stage and it just needs to multiply and it needs to go into every town and village in Ireland.			
	engagement of communities in the creative activities	loads of people don't go to the theatre, loads of people don't go to galleries, and I don't understand why we're still getting them to try and go in, when you can go out and bring things to places where people go. a policy level would be because there's something called the Arts and Education Charter where. It Is only the last few years when the department of the Arts and the Department of Education have come together to form partnership. Previously, that didn't exist. That's only happened in the last few years. There would be [unclear] the Muslim community and communication to become part of that discussion group. There is a limit, there is a limit of I suppose of expertisewithin the group that that would keep both the schools and the Muslim community for better understanding and reflection on how the system works as such. there would be opportunities for like pilot projects to happen and maybe a group of artists of different disciplines could pilot a programme with the Muslim National schools and then would feedback in for the engagement, because it is all about collaboration and trial and error. in a policy level I'd imagine that it needs to be may be It's the case that funding is administered, but it has to be kept aside to			
		ensure that actually programs are being delivered. To ensure thathm certain communities have access to them. And that funding, it will facilitate that access.			
Public recognition/diss emination	Public recognition of the children's' engagement in creative activities	And it's very important because it provides that moments of celebration, of celebration of their creativity, their talent. They reckon, I suppose, the fact that the museum, the established Art Museum is recognising their creativity and, and putting it out for the public to see. And so that's a very big moment for the young people, but it's also very moment for their family and your friends. So we try to bring in as much as of their community, they're friends and family for events, exhibition openings to see the exhibition, to celebrate their, their creativity in their artwork.			

		They see their work displayed on the museum wall, in the city centre location is a, is, is a real, I suppose, boost for young people to feel that they're actually heard and they are valued.
Training for educators	Work in diversity groups training as part of the arts training	in teacher training college. They should address these issues up front. So, they should be aware of them and I think that would take somebody from the Muslim community going into the teacher training colleges collaborating with them. with music, I think. That you know they should say you should. and teacher training college teachers should be told that children have certain religious backgrounds, may have a difficulty with this. I don't know if the teacher training colleges have changed since I've been there, I mean they probably do give them some information about Islam and how certain children may have a different perspective on the curriculum. But it's more of the organization of the actual individual schools, I think that should be informing the teachers, you know, because if you if you know you have Muslim children in your school, then you should at least be able to teach us to communicate with them, you know, about the curriculum. You know.



SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE DUBLIN

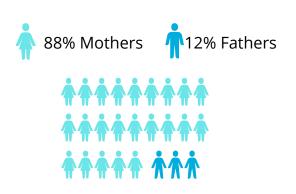
Engagement in creative activities among Muslim Children in Ireland: A survey with their parents.



WHO TOOK PART

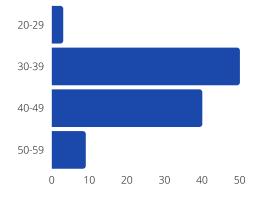
Information about the Parents

102 parents aged between 20 and 59 completed this survey. 88% of the sample identified as the child's mother, with only 12% of participants being fathers. See below for a breakdown of participant demographics, including details about employment status, education level and financial situation.

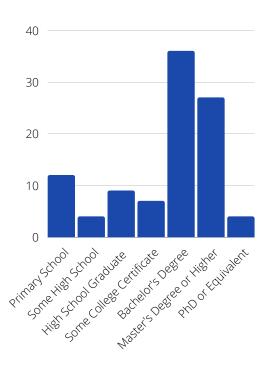


Gender Breakdown

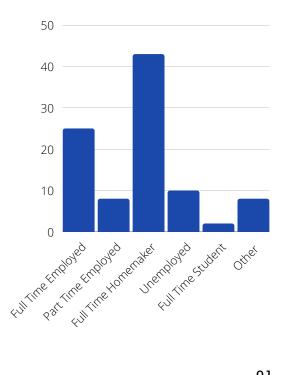
Age Breakdown



Education Level



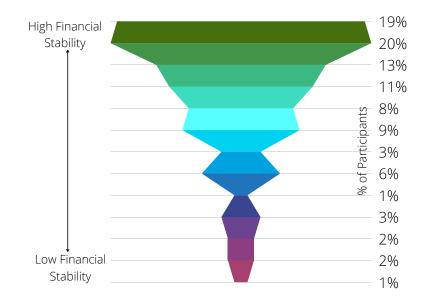
Employment Status



Financial Status

Participants answered questions such as "Can you provide enough nutritious food for your children and family" on a scale of 1-5 (1 being 'never', 5 being 'always')

The majority of participants reported relatively high levels of financial stability.

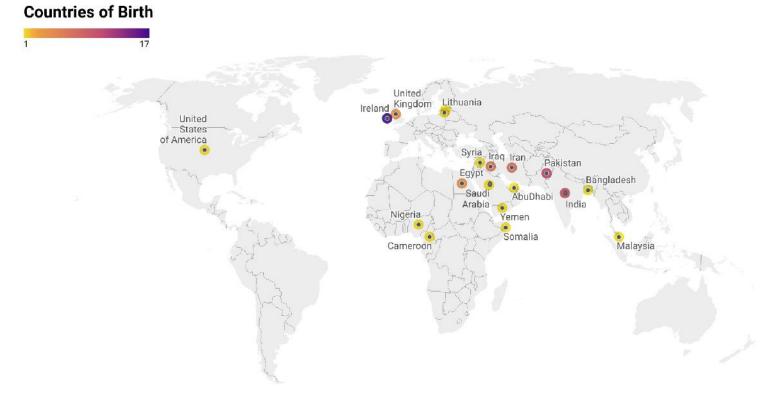


Culture, Ethnicity, Language of Participants

Only 16% of participants were born in Ireland.

The 84% who were born outside of Ireland shared their countries of birth.

The majority came from Pakistan, Iran, Iraq, India, and Egypt, and have lived in Ireland for more than 15 years



Created with Datawrapper

Language

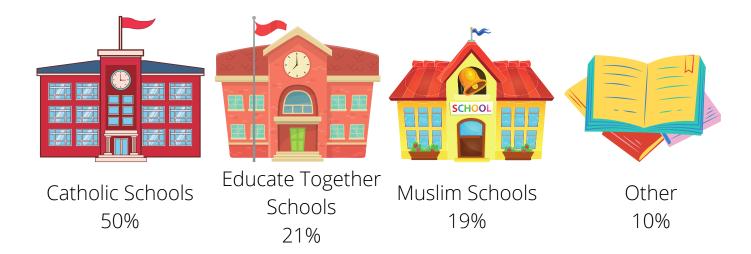
While only 24% reported English as their first language, a language fluency scale measuring self-reported conversation, reading and writing abilities displayed high levels of confidence with the English language. With a potential range of 3-15 (no ability-fluent), the average language fluency score among participants was 12.66.

Information about the Children

Participants shared demographic details about their children. The study called for information about children between the ages of 5-13 years. While some participants had multiple children between these ages, they were asked to complete the survey with just one child in mind (the child closest to age 9).

The children reported on in the study were 56% girls and 44% boys, with a recorded age range of 5-13.

Types of schools attended by children varied:



Current Participation in Creative Activities

Participants were asked to report how often their child engages in a range of creative activities. Parents rated this on a scale of 1-5 (1 being never, 5 being everyday). Below is a summary of the findings.

Least Common Activities

Below is a list of the least common activities. These activities were most commonly never engaged with, or engaged with less than once a month.

	Never	Less than once a month
Dance	74%	10%
Singing	65%	11%
Sewing, Embroidery	66%	18%
Theatre, Drama	64%	17%
Music, Playing Instrument	64%	9%
Coding	63%	15%
Attending Museums, Art Exhibitions, Galleries	49%	38%
Baking	23%	32%
Attending Library	27%	29%
Going to the Clnema	36%	49%

Most Common Activities

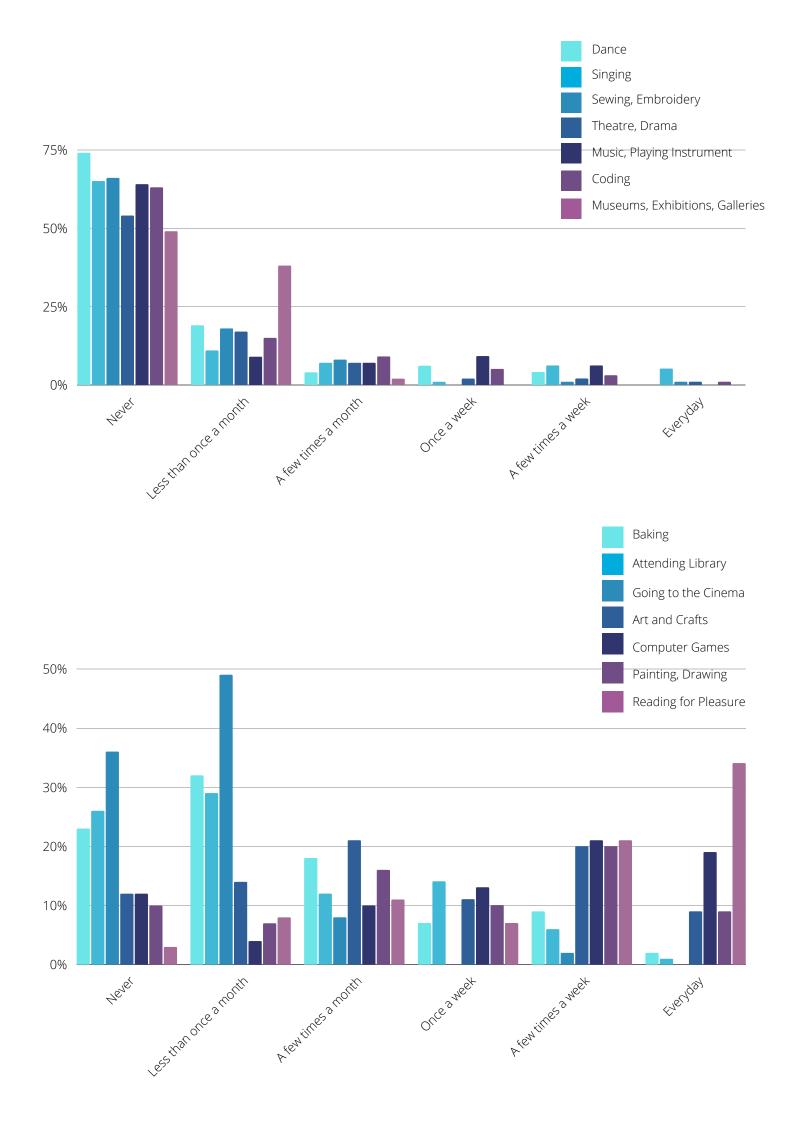
Below are the most common activities. This includes the activities which were most commonly engaged with a few times a week, or everyday.

	A few times a week	Everyday
Reading for Pleasure	21%	34%
Painting, Drawing	23%	16%
Computer Games	21%	19%

Moderately Common Activity

Arts and Crafts displayed a range of engagement levels. Most common was a few times a month, to once a week

	A few times a	
	month	Once a week
Arts and Crafts	21%	11%%



Barriers to Participation in Creative Activities

Participants were asked about the barriers which limits their children's engagement in creative activities. Parents rated this on a scale of 1-5 (1 being not limiting at all, 5 being limiting to a great extent). Below is a summary of the findings.

Barriers in School

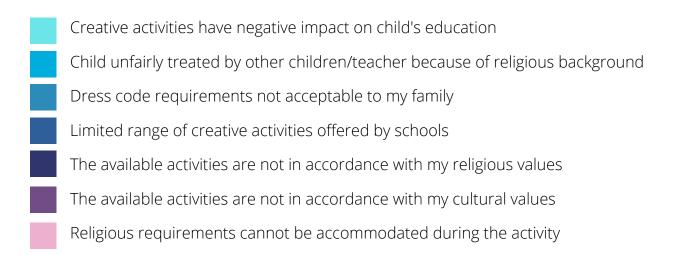
- The most common response to every barrier was 'not limiting at all'
- Very few barriers were noted as very-extremely limiting

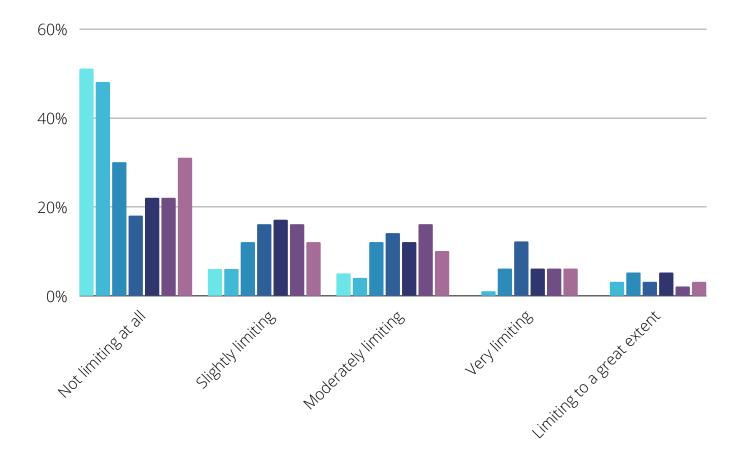
- The below were noted as slightly-moderately limiting by a moderate proportion of participants

- Limited range of creative activities offered in school
- Available activities are not in accordance with religious values
- Available activities are not in accordance with cultural values

- The below were noted as not limiting at all by large proportions of participants

- Dress code requirements not acceptable to my family
- Creative activities have negative impact on child's education
- Child not fairly treated by others because of religious background





Barriers outside of School

- The below barrier was most commonly reported as very-extremely limiting

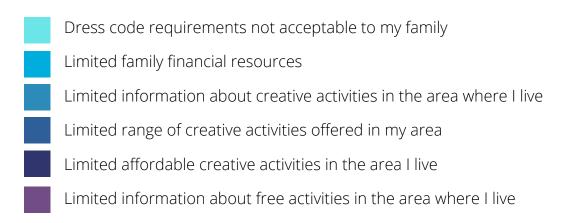
Limited information about free activities in the area where I live

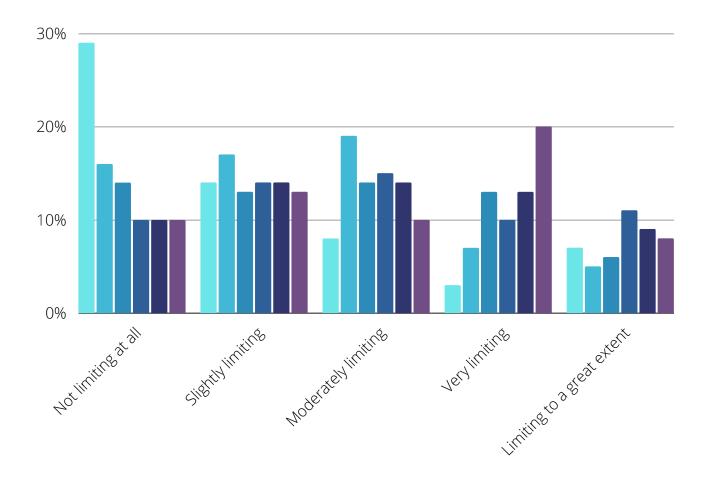
- The below were noted as slightly-moderately limiting by many participants

Limited affordable creative activities in the area I live Limited family financial resources Limited range of creative activities offered in my area

- The below was noted as not limiting at all by large proportions of participants

Dress code requirements not acceptable to my family Limited information about creative activities in the area where I live

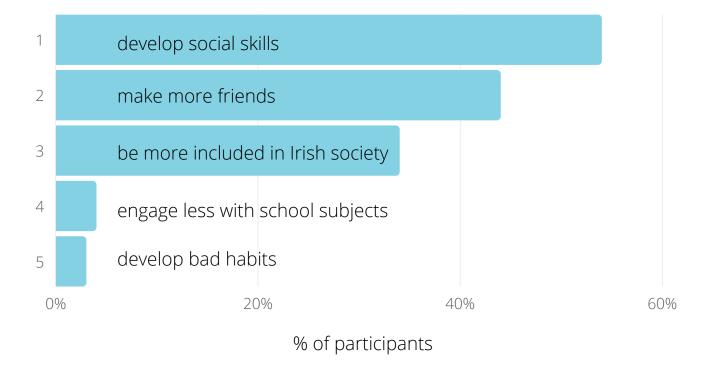




Impacts of Participation in Creative Activities

Participants were asked to note which of the below impacts were true in relation to their child.

Developing social skills was the most common impact of engagement in creative activities, developing bad habits was the least common.



If my child engaged in more creative activities, s/he would ..

How to increase Participation in Creative Activities

All suggestions listed in the survey were reported as effective ways of increasing participation, particularly those relating to cost, providing parents with more info, and providing more support for their culture to provide more creative activities



