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Lived Experiences of Introverted South Asian Women Working in New Zealand

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Mariam Tayyab

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Abstract

This qualitative study seeks to magnify the voices of introverted people by exploring the complex interaction of introversion, cultural identity, and work experiences among South Asian women in New Zealand. It seeks an in-depth understanding of the distinctive challenges and opportunities these professionals face throughout their careers. It focuses on attributes frequently ignored in an extroverted-centric society, particularly those linked with being introverted. This study unravels a complicated tapestry of experiences via in-depth interviews with eight introverted South Asian women. The narratives vividly illustrate the profound influence that societal expectations, cultural norms, and beliefs have on work environments. The study reveals vital themes, including a deep desire for solitude and personal space, the need to unwind after social interactions, and feelings of stress in extroverted environments.

The study sheds light on participants' coping mechanisms for dealing with the deeply ingrained cultural norms of modesty and respect in South Asian countries.

Additionally, it highlights the difficulties introverted South Asian women experience in environments where extroversion is highly valued and where they are frequently viewed as quiet or uninterested. The findings of this study have important implications for organizations and managers to create work cultures that recognize and capitalize on the talents of introverted people. Workplaces should actively encourage diversity, equity, and inclusion by identifying the value of introverted characteristics and understanding prevalent cultural intricacies.

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Table of Contents

Abstract	2
Acknowledgements	3
Chapter 1: Introduction	7
1:1 Scope of Research.....	8
1:2 Research questions.....	12
1:3 Gaps in the Literature	12
1:4 Summary	15
Chapter 2: Literature Review	17
2:1 What is personality?	17
2:2 Definition and history of introversion	20
2:3 The Extrovert Ideal	23
2:4 South Asian Culture.....	25
2:5 Measurement of Introversion.....	26
2:6 Shyness and Introversion.....	29
2:7 Solitude and Introversion.....	30
2:8 New Zealand culture and workplace expectations	31
2:9 Theoretical Framework.....	34
2:9:1 Ambivalent Sexism.....	34
2:9:2 Benevolent Sexism	35
2:9:3 Hostile Sexism	36
2:9:4 Benevolent Sexism and Patriarchy	36
2:9:5 Impact of Benevolent Sexism on Women	37
2:10 Winnicott's Conceptualization of the True Self and False Self: Balancing Authenticity and Defense	38
2:10:1 Introduction	38
2:10:2 The Nature of the False Self	38
2:10:3 The Essence of the True Self.....	38
2:10:4 Understanding the False Self.....	39
2:10:5 Pressure to Conform and the False Self	39
2:10:6 Implications of Winnicott's Theory	40
2:11 Summary.....	40
Chapter 3: Research Methodology	42
3:1 Introduction.....	42

3:2 Research Paradigm.....	42
3:3 Qualitative Research Design.....	44
3:4 Phenomenology	47
3:5 Descriptive Phenomenology.....	48
3:6 Research setting and Participant Selection.....	50
3:6:1 Demographics.....	51
3:6:2 Sample size	51
3:6:3 Semi-structured interview.....	52
3:6:4 Ethical Issues Related to Interview Process	53
3:6:5 Data Recording	54
3:6:6 The Screening Form	54
3:7 Ethics Committee Approval Process	55
3:8 Ethical Considerations.....	56
3:8:1 Informed consent	56
3:8:2 Anonymity and Confidentiality	57
3:9 Summary.....	58
Chapter 4: Analysis and Findings	59
4:1 Data Analysis.....	60
4:2 Theme: Perceptions of Introversion.....	63
4:2:1 Sub-theme: Reserved and Inward-Focused Nature.....	63
4:3 Theme: Cultural Influence on Introversion.....	65
4:3:1 Sub-theme: South Asian Cultural Norms.....	65
4:3:2 Sub-theme: Impact of Cultural Upbringing	66
4:3:3 Sub-theme: Cross-Cultural Introvert Perceptions.....	67
4:4 Theme: Workplace Challenges	70
4:4:1 Sub-theme: Pressure to Appear Extroverted.....	70
4:4:2 Sub-theme: Career Choices and Societal Expectations.....	71
4:5 Theme: Advice and coping strategies.....	74
4:5:1 Sub-Theme: Recharging and Coping Strategies.....	74
4:5:2 Sub-Theme: Resources and Support.....	76
4:5:3 Sub-Theme: Advice for Introverted South Asian Women facing challenges	78
4:6 Summary.....	80
Chapter 5: Discussion.....	81
5:1 Findings for Research Question 1	81
5:1:1 Perceptions of Introversion and Self-Identification	81
5:1:2 Social Stereotypes and Misconceptions.....	85
5:2 Findings for Research Question 2	85
5:3 Findings for Research Question 3	89

5:4 Findings for Research Question 4	92
5:5 Findings for Research Question 5	99
5:6 Revisiting the theoretical frameworks	102
5:6:1 Winnicott's Conceptualization of the True Self and False Self	102
5:6:2 Ambivalent Sexism	103
5.7 Summary	105
Chapter 6: Conclusion	106
6:1 Outcomes of the Research	106
6:2 Strengths of the Study	110
6:3 Limitations of the Study	112
6:4 Implications for future research	114
References	115
Appendices	124
Appendix: A Participant Information Sheet	124
Appendix: B Informed Consent Form	127
Appendix: C Ethics Approval Letter	129
Appendix: D Screening Questions	130
Appendix: E Demographic Questions	131
Appendix: F Interview Questions	132

Chapter 1: Introduction

“In an extroverted society, the difference between an introvert and an extrovert is that an introvert is often unconsciously deemed guilty until proven innocent.”

— Criss Jami, Venus in Arms

The global migration of people has expanded in the twenty-first century, and it has become more complex than one could have possibly envisioned even five years ago (Lantz, 2013). Geographical limits are being rapidly removed by advances in communication and transportation technologies, and people are also bridging cultural barriers (Radjuni, 2021). Building a world community that can coexist peacefully will continue to be a major challenge of our lives in this century as migrating populations look for employment opportunities, business possibilities, and new geographic locations to live in safety and peace. New Zealand, a melting pot of cultures, has become a popular choice for skilled professionals (Hawthorne, 2014), revealing that it has more ethnic groups than there are nations in the world ("2013 census | Stats NZ," n.d.). A more well-rounded and efficient team can result from having a diverse group of people with a range of personality types, skills, and interests in the workplace (Sackett & Walmsley, 2014).

Understanding human nature is essential for managing, directing, convincing, or recruiting people as well as for comprehending a group's economic, political, and social behavior (Hogan & Robert, 2001). One of the important personality traits that might influence how employees behave at work is how a person relates to the world or whether they are an extrovert or an introvert (Bakhsh, 2020). When managers are adept at identifying their employees' needs and motivation, they can provide the resources necessary to meet those requirements and stimulate them, which is

especially necessary for introverted workers (Bakhsh, 2020). Beyond just numerical representation, fostering an inclusive work environment where all employees feel inspired to reach their full potential requires encouraging and supporting diversity of behavior. Individuals can flourish in environments that value diversity of behavior, which improves performance in the long run (Kharroubi, 2021). Combining individuals from various backgrounds and with various viewpoints results in a dynamic synergy that improves the productivity and innovation of the organisation. Organisations might capitalise on each person's abilities by embracing diversity, creating a more cohesive and productive workplace (Kharroubi, 2021).

1:1 Scope of Research

Due to the growing importance of dynamism and adaptation in contemporary organisations, research on introversion in the workplace is becoming more and more significant (Huang et al., 2014). Individuals often need to change their behavior in order to handle different tasks and unique situations as job positions and career pathways become more complex and diverse (Rothbard, 2001). For introverts, this environment can have a variety of effects; some might thrive while others might feel mentally tired and overwhelmed in the face of a constant pressure of adaptiveness (Balsari-Palsule & Little, 2020). Such strain can have implications for the well-being and health of introverted South Asian women working in New Zealand. South Asia includes the following eight countries: Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Afghanistan (The Countries of South Asia, 2021). We can gain a better understanding of how demands at work affect employees' mental and physical health as well as their overall work performance by analyzing existing and new evidence.

Research on introversion in the workplace is crucial due to the amplified demands placed on introverts to display extraverted behaviors (Balsari-Palsule & Little, 2020). In some countries, extraversion has long been related to various work outcomes, professional success, and certain motivations and attitudes (Wilmot et al., 2019). Extraverted behavior has a high normative value in Western society and is often regarded as socially acceptable (Dunlop, 2015). In Western culture, an "extrovert ideal" dominates, encouraging the concept that the ideal self is assertive, outgoing, and at ease in the spotlight (Cain, 2012). Westerners are socialised from a young age to value extraverted behaviors, which can lead to biases in a variety of situations, from classrooms to workplaces. For example, the open-plan office settings and organizations insisting to work in teams encourage extraverted behavior by providing numerous possibilities for interaction during the workday (Cain, 2012). Understanding how these societal expectations affect introverted individuals, particularly South Asian women in New Zealand workplaces, is critical for improving their well-being and performance.

Unlike in Western cultures, where introversion is often regarded negatively, many other cultures regard it as a valued attribute (Osborn, 2015). According to the psychologist Robert McCrae's research, cultural views about introversion and extraversion differ greatly among countries. His map of aggregate personality qualities across 51 nations found that Asian cultures are more introverted, whilst most European civilisations are more extraverted (McCrae & Terracciano, 2005). As compared to 51 different cultures, India scores high on emotional stability, conscientiousness, and agreeableness but low on extraversion (high in introversion) and openness to experience. Of course, extroverts can be found in Asian countries just as easily as in America, but the difference is that Asian cultures not only accept,

but also celebrate and admire introverted personality types (Cain, 2012). While Asians appreciate quietness, humility, and sensitivity to others, Americans value attributes that promote individualism, such as aggressiveness and verbal skills (Osborn, 2015). Thus, cultural values have a strong influence on the personality styles preferred by each society.

Dual professional challenges are faced by the introverted women in the workplace (Marfo, 2017). To conform to societal expectations of success, both introverts and women are pressured to exhibit opposite attributes. Due to this, they are underrepresented in the workforce, especially in leadership positions. There are presumptions about introverted women and the contributions they're willing to make in a work setting (Marfo, 2017). In a meeting, for instance, if an introverted woman is overly quiet, it might be assumed that she has nothing to contribute (Kahnweiler, 2009). Similarly, she might be labelled as uncommitted to role if she skips an official event (Marfo, 2017). Sophia Dembling (2012) calls this as "the filling of a vacuum" due to the lack of proper explanation by introverted women. In his book Kahnweiler (2009) mentions that an introverted female might come off as "fumbling, high-voiced silly girl" despite her inner strengths. Despite its recent rise in the media, the topic's sensitivity and intricacy might be blamed for its lack of direct scholarly investigation (McCord & Joseph, 2020). One of the main causes of this reluctance is the debate over whether these negative reactions to introverted behavior are legitimate responses to introversion or whether they merely represent mistreatment (McCord & Joseph, 2020).

Finally, the cultural difference between South Asian and Western society emphasises the importance of analysing introverted South Asian women's experiences in the workplace in New Zealand. As Cain points out, Westerners subscribe to the

“Extrovert Ideal”, yet in most of Asia (at least prior to the recent Westernisation), “silence is golden” (Cain, 2012). Individualist cultures (like New Zealand) find silence uncomfortable, whereas collectivist societies (like South Asia) view it as a sign of strength (Iwao 1993). In South Asian culture, shyness is regarded as a feminine attribute, and if a woman lacks modesty and exhibits a more masculine personality, she is regarded as a brash, bold and non-feminine being (Afshan et al., 2015). Sinha (2011) indicated that the self-conscious and constrained behaviors found in shy individuals are influenced by cultural factors (Afshan et al., 2015). Some traditional classrooms in Asian countries prohibit students from speaking freely in class through reprimanding or other means, preventing extroverted students from functioning in accordance with their inborn traits (Wijewickrama et al., 2020).

From a Western viewpoint, it can be challenging to understand what is so appealing about surrendering to the will of others. But to many Asians, what appears to a Westerner to be subjugation is simply common courtesy (Cain, 2012). While Asians appreciate quietness, humility, and sensitivity, which develop social cohesion, Westerners value boldness and verbal skills, qualities that encourage individualism. Western respect for individual freedom, self-expression, and personal destiny is just as great and lovely as Eastern relationship-honouring. Further Cain (2012) argues, the thing is not that one is better than the other, but rather that there is a significant difference between cultural values and the preferred personality types within each country. The differences in culture between South Asian and Western societies emphasise the value of researching the experiences of introverted South Asian women working in New Zealand. As Cain (2012) emphasises, Western societies generally adhere to the "Extrovert Ideal," rewarding boldness and vocal assertiveness. Contrarily, many Asian civilisations, particularly traditional South Asian

contexts, have long embraced the idea that "silence is golden" and valued qualities like quietness, humility, and sensitivity.

1:2 Research questions

The overarching research question guiding this study is: "What are the lived experiences of South Asian women working in New Zealand who identify as introverts, and how do their introverted nature and cultural background intersect and influence their workplace experiences?" The additional following research questions are addressed by this study using qualitative research techniques:

RQ: 1. What are the workplace experiences of introverted South Asian women working in New Zealand?

RQ: 2. What challenges do introverted South Asian women in New Zealand encounter at work, and how do these challenges affect their wellbeing? What coping mechanisms do introverted South Asian women employ to deal with specific challenges they encounter at workplace?

RQ: 3. How do introverted South Asian women in New Zealand negotiate their cultural identity and values at work, and how does this impact their professional experiences?

RQ: 4. What can organizations do to create more inclusive work environments for introverted South Asian women?

RQ: 5. How can workplace cultural competence training be implemented to improve the working conditions for introverted South Asian women?

1:3 Gaps in the Literature

Trait extraversion and introversion have been extensively studied since their introduction more than a century ago. However, the majority of studies have focused on extroverts, whereas introverts have been overlooked (Blevins et al., 2021). The

positive and desirable perception of having more extroverted people in organisations is supported by studies concentrating on individual-level workplace outcomes (Blevins et al., 2021). The positive valenced aspects of extraversion have long been the emphasis of many personality scales used to measure traits in the workplace, which might have contributed to the continued undervaluing of introversion outcomes (Blevins et al., 2021). The majority of studies looked at how interactions with introverts might hurt or negatively affect extraverts (Erez et al., 2015; Lanaj et al., 2016; Plopa et al., 2017). This line of thinking implies that one of the primary reasons for studying introversion is to examine the negative impact it has on performance in the workplace. According to Erez et al.'s (2015) study, introverts may be more prone to harshly evaluate extraverts' performance because their own personal characteristics aren't given the same initial high status as extraversion does (Blevins et al., 2021). Combining the strengths of the two personality types should result in a workforce that is complimentary, diverse, and adaptable and is willing to take on the challenges associated with achieving positive performance in a highly unpredictable environment (e.g. COVID-19) (Blevins et al., 2021). This first step has already been taken by Zhang et al (2017), who discovered that introverted people might be more creative at work due to their internal capacity to recharge when not working, stimulating higher levels of creativity within the organisational environment. Separation and time away from work might provide introverts a different perspective on the workplace than their extroverted coworkers, particularly in more creative settings where their ideas may be more easily enacted.

There aren't many recent studies on introversion with large sample sizes and robust methodology (Herbert et al., 2023). The studies on introverted women (Marfo, 2017; Miller et al., 2006; Thorne, 1987) explore different aspects of introversion and

its implications in various contexts. However, none of them have investigated the specific experiences of introverted South Asian women in professional settings. Even though there are numerous studies on introversion in New Zealand, none of them specifically targets introverted South Asian women. For example, an investigation into the relationship between extraversion and introversion and social competence was conducted with New Zealand dairy farmers (Neil, 2019). Also, a study aimed to investigate the impact of extroversion and introversion on the writing ability of English as a foreign language (EFL) learner (Morimoto, 2006). Moreover, a study published in the Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry found that depression and introversion were associated with increased mortality following stroke (Morris et al., 1993).

The existing research on introversion at work (Herbert et al., 2023; Kahnweiler, 2018; Lebin et al., 2019; Liu et al., 2018; Morgenstern et al., 1974) provides insightful information on unfavourable responses (McCord & Joseph, 2020), misconceptions (Marfo, 2017), and practical implications. While studies explore introversion in general (Afshan et al., 2015; Briggs, 1988; Cain, 2012; Hills & Argyle, 2001; Morris et al., 1993), but US and other individualistic nations have received most of the attention from a cultural perspective (McCord & Joseph, 2020). For introverted South Asian women, little is known about how societal standards, cultural expectations, and workplace dynamics interplay. As a result, there is a significant gap in the research regarding the difficulties faced by introverted South Asian women in New Zealand's workplace, as well as the cultural dynamics that affect their careers. Thus, this qualitative study is very helpful in bridging a research gap and adding to existing literature on diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace by focusing on the trait introversion.

Overall, the advantages of introversion in the workplace have been largely ignored by academics, whereas those of extraversion have received a lot of attention. Since introverts are thought to make up as much as two-thirds of the workforce in some countries (Cain, 2012; Zhang et al., 2017), it's important to learn when and how they might contribute most effectively to businesses. However, this requires a more direct recognition of the numerous unseen and unheard contributions made by introverted individuals.

1:4 Summary

This study delves into the real-life experiences of introverted South Asian women who work in New Zealand. An overview of the literature on the historical development of introversion within the context of Jungian psychology is provided in the second chapter. The influence of Susan Cain's concept of the "Extrovert Ideal" on the societal perception of introversion is also covered. Further, I compared literature regarding perception of introversion in New Zealand and South Asia.

Moving on, chapter 3 focuses on the research methodology used to understand the experiences of South Asian women in New Zealand workplaces. This section provides the details of the research design, data collection methods, and any challenges faced during the process. This chapter plays a vital role in this research project as it gives valuable insights into how data was gathered and analyzed.

Chapter 4 presents the findings from this research as insights shared by participants. It sheds light on the experiences, challenges, and perspectives of South Asian women employed in New Zealand.

Chapter 5 provides a detailed discussion of research findings as they are related to the literature review and revisits research frameworks. Finally, chapter 6 examines

how these research findings have implications for workplaces. It also discusses the outcomes of the study along with potential avenues for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2:1 What is personality?

The study of personality can be traced back to the Greek philosopher Hippocrates, who initially proposed the four-factor personality theory in 400 BC (Merenda, 1987).

The Hippocratic model suggests that a person's body dominates blood fluid or humor, determining their personality. A surplus of blood was considered a sign of "sanguinity" or happiness and optimism. "Phlegmatic" (calm or emotionless) was the term used to describe those with an excess of phlegm. "Choleric" refers to someone who is easily agitated and irritable and has an excess of yellow bile. Lastly, humans with excess black bile were considered "melancholics" or dejected and sad

(Merenda, 1987). Plato (350 BCE) expanded on this early perception of personality by viewing it as a manifestation of the soul. Plato (350 BCE) divided the soul into three parts which correspond to different aspects of human behavior and

personality: *logistikon* (reason) being the first part of the tripartite

soul, *thymoeides* (spirit) the second, and *epithymetikon* (appetite), the third (Hamilton & Cairns, 1961). In Plato's view, an individual's primary soul attribute determines their general personality and behavior. For instance, those with a strong sense of reason are sensible and wise, whereas people with a strong sense of spirit are motivated and competitive. Those with a dominant appetite are materialistic and motivated by their basic desires.

One of Plato's pupils, Aristotle (384–322 BCE), viewed the psyche as the basis of personality, emerging from biological processes. He distinguished three faculties: the nutritive, present in plants, animals, and humans, satisfying physiological demands; the perceptive, present in animals and humans, analyzing sensory input; and the

intellectual, present only in humans, the highest and last faculty (Ellis & Abrams, 2009). On the other hand, a French philosopher, Descartes (1596–1650), believed that human personality results from the interaction between the immortal soul and the physical body, with the pineal gland acting as the point of contact. Cartesian dualism became the prevailing theory in the Christian West to explain free will and consciousness. Neurologists and cognitive psychologists disagree with this viewpoint (Ellis & Abrams, 2009).

In contrast, Niccolò Machiavelli (1469–1527), a Florentine diplomat, believed that social circumstances shape personality and that humans are essentially egocentric, greedy, ungrateful, and vindictive. He defined two primary forces that shape human character: *virtù*—a combination of boldness, fearlessness, and self-assurance—and *fortuna*, or luck. Machiavelli believed that leaders who act benevolently and have faith in the goodwill of the people will ultimately fail (Ellis & Abrams, 2009).

In modern psychology, Sigmund Freud's (1914) work can be seen as building upon the ideas put forth by Plato (Freud, 2014). According to Freud's theory, the mind is divided into the id (basic, instinctual drives), the ego (which acts as a bridge between the id and the outside world), and the superego (internalized moral norms).

Additionally, he believed that childhood experiences, especially those involving attachment and bonding with carers, can have a long-lasting effect on a person's psychological growth (Freud, 1914). Carl Jung initially backed Freud due to their similar interest in the unconscious. However, in 1912, Jung publicly criticized the Oedipus complex theory, which resulted in an irreparable rift between the two (Glover, 1991). Jung created his psychoanalytic theory, emphasizing the importance of both past and present events in determining one's personality (Jung, 1971).

Gordon Allport's (1937) idea of a dynamic organization is congruent with Jung's focus on the importance of past and current events in forming personality, as they believe personality is constantly changing. Allport (1937) defined personality as the dynamic organization of a person's psychophysical systems that determine his responses to his environment. Although there is a structure or system that connects and organizes the various dimensions of personality, the phrase "dynamic organization" emphasizes how personality is continually evolving and changing. Because no two individuals adapt to their environment in precisely the same ways, no two people have the same personality (Siegman, 1963). Genetics do have an impact on personality, although the exact amount depends on the trait. Studies on twins and adoption suggest that between 30% and 60% of human personality is inherited (Zwir et al., 2020), and genetic variables account for about 40–60% of the variation in introversion and extroversion (Bouchard & Loehlin, 2001).

Personality differences can be attributed to hereditary and cultural factors (Triandis & Suh, 2002). McCrae (2000) argues that neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness are among the fundamental traits unaffected by culture. For instance, animal psychologists have discovered basic personality traits, such as extroversion and dominance, notably in higher animals (Triandis & Suh, 2002). On the contrary, Shweder (1991) argued that individual differences in behavior are narrowly context-dependent and do not generalize across environments, indicating that global traits do not exist. Thus, culture strongly influences personality (Triandis & Suh, 2002). Although a cross-cultural perspective on personality acknowledges the universality of characteristics like introversion/extroversion, it also contends that culture affects behavioral patterns, including the structure and function of personality (Triandis & Suh, 2002). According

to twin personality studies, most personality diversity is ascribed to environmental factors that cause individuals from the same family to have distinct personalities (Krueger et al., 2008).

Furthermore, genetic studies provide evidence that the heritability of the Big Five traits is in the range of 0.50 ± 0.10 , supporting personality stability (Bouchard & Loehlin, 2001). According to a longitudinal research, personality traits are generally stable over time, while some traits are more likely to change than others (Damian et al., 2018). On the other hand, free trait theory suggests that personality traits are flexible (Little, 2008). If we are pursuing something we love, we might be able to temporarily switch to the opposite end of the personality trait spectrum.

2:2 Definition and history of introversion

The concept of introversion has a long and complex history in personality psychology. Carl Jung is generally credited with coining terms like extraversion and introversion and discovering the personality traits they reflect, but that is not true (Eysenck, 1967). The idea of a personality dimension dates back to the time of the ancient Greeks, and Jung's assertion is just one among many. It is also untrue that Jung came up with the terms extraversion and introversion; these concepts predate Jung by several hundred years in Europe (Eysenck, 1967). The definition of introversion provided by Carl Jung is still extensively used. Early in the 20th century, he used the term "introversion" to describe a personality orientation that focuses on the individual's inner world. Jung (1921) proposed two basic personality types: the extrovert, whose life is predominantly object-oriented, and the introvert, whose life is subject-oriented. According to Jung's theory, personality types are the outcome of directing one's libido, psychic energy, or the way one holds onto their values in connection to what they do for themselves or others. Jung (1971) observed

conflicting sorts of response systems in the hysteric and the dementia praecox patient, with the former being characterized by a centrifugal and the latter by a centripetal tendency of the libido, or the person's energy store. He argued that normal people exhibit some degree of these pathological excessive reaction systems, albeit to a lesser amount, and all individuals tend to be either introverted or extroverted. According to Jung (1971, pp.427,452),

“Extraversion means an outward turning of the libido. A person tends to be extroverted when he gives his fundamental interest to the outer or objective world and attributes an all-important and essential value to it.”

"Introversion means a turning inwards of the libido. A person tends to be introverted when the objective world suffers a sort of depreciation, or want of consideration, for the sake of the exaltation of the individual himself, who then monopolizes all the interest, grows to believe no one but himself worthy of consideration.”

As per Jung (1971), while extroverts are generally influenced by the objective (environmental/external), introverts are primarily impacted by the subjective (instinctive/internal). Introverts rely on their instincts to guide them, whereas extroverts depend more on their environment. Thus, as extroverts are more influenced by their environment, introverts are more or less controlled by their own intrinsic preferences.

Personality traits associated with introversion can vary widely among individuals. However, introverts generally tend to be reflective, contemplative, and self-aware and are more interested in their own thoughts, feelings, and experiences than in the outside world (Jung, 1971). Jung (1971) asserts that introverts frequently require alone time to reenergize and are drawn to creative endeavors like writing, art, and

music. According to Freyd (1924), individuals with introverted tendencies may also have difficulty with public speaking, prefer working independently, and be more sensitive to personal remarks. They may also be easily embarrassed, prefer a few close friends over many acquaintances, and exhibit a greater degree of risk aversion, which can make decision-making more challenging. Despite these tendencies, introverts are often motivated by praise, rely on rationalization rather than impulse, and can be competitive, particularly in intellectual and creative endeavors (Allport & Allport, 1921). These traits and tendencies have important implications for understanding an individual's behavior and decision-making processes.

The concept of introversion gained further attention in the mid-20th century as the two psychologists—Hans Eysenck and Jerome Kagan—built on Carl Jung's theories regarding extraversion and introversion. The similarities in their work suggest that common underlying mechanisms drive introverted behavior. For example, they both proposed that introverts are more sensitive to novelty and unfamiliar stimuli than extroverts (Eysenck, 1967; Kagan, 1994). Eysenck stated that introverts had a higher level of cortical arousal, and Kagan suggested that introverts are more sensitive to unfamiliar stimuli. Also, both claimed that introversion is linked to a person's level of inhibition and introverts exhibit higher levels of behavioral inhibition, which means they are more cautious and less likely to take risks than extraverts (Eysenck, 1967; Kagan & Snidman, 1991). Despite similarities, their theories diverged in some important respects. Eysenck primarily focused on the biological component of personality and proposed that introversion was related to differences in cortical arousal levels (Eysenck, 1967). Kagan (1994), on the other hand, put more emphasis on temperament and proposed a link between introversion and innate sensitivity to stimuli.

The advancement of neuroscientific research to date has supported biological theories by revealing that the relationship between introversion and anxiety, or poor impulsivity, is explained by variations in blood flow in the brain (Stenberg et al., 1993) and introverts' involvement in the cerebral activities of remembering, thinking and planning (Johnson et al., 1999). Research has also shown that extraverts have more active brain regions, which may help explain why they have a great need for sensory and emotional stimulation (Aron & Aron, 1997).

The concept of introversion has been incorporated into the Five-Factor Model of personality, a widely accepted framework for understanding personality traits.

Introversion and extraversion are not polar opposites in the FFM but rather two ends of a continuum (Widiger et al., 2002). Talkative, sociable, and person-oriented, with an active lifestyle, optimistic outlook, fun-loving, and affectionate are characteristics of extraverted behavior at the high end of the spectrum. At the other end of the spectrum, low extraversion (introversion) is characterized by low warmth, low gregariousness, low assertiveness, low activity, and low excitement-seeking (Widiger et al., 2002; Widiger & Costa Jr, 2013). Although introverts do not tend to be gloomy or pessimistic, they lack the exuberant high spirits that extroverts exhibit (Widiger & Costa Jr, 2013). Research has discovered that introverts' brains process information in a unique way. Due to their need to "recharge" after social interaction, they continue to be a misunderstood social group (Lebin et al., 2019).

2:3 The Extrovert Ideal

Susan Cain's (2012) bestseller, "Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking," helped to bring the concept of introversion to a broader audience.

According to Cain (2012), introverts "prefer quiet, minimally stimulating environments "and are more reflective and thoughtful than their extroverted counterparts. Cain's

book has helped raise awareness of introverts, their contributions to society, and their qualities. She asserts that introverts possess special abilities that are sometimes neglected in extrovert-centric environments, such as empathy, creativity, and deep thinking).

In her book, Susan Cain introduced the concept of “The Extrovert Ideal” for the first time. She discusses how sociability, confidence, and a polished verbal style have been viewed as desirable qualities to foster in students and professionals since Dale Carnegie's time. Being quiet, shy, or reserved is not often seen as a positive trait. According to Cain (2012), the roots of the extrovert ideal may be found in early 20th-century industrialization and urbanization, which gave rise to the "Culture of Personality." This culture valued charismatic, outgoing behavior and highlighted the value of social skills and self-promotion in gaining success and prestige. As a result, the Extrovert Ideal creates a situation where introverted individuals often feel pressure to conform to the standards of extraversion to be accepted and successful in their personal and professional lives. Research suggests that introverts are often overlooked for leadership positions and promotions as they do not conform to the extrovert ideal (Campbell et al., 2003; Grant, 2013). Also, extroverted people are more successful in the mating market (Nettle, 2005) and have greater cooperative networks than introverts (Lebin et al., 2019).

According to a global study of more than 200,000 employees, only 40% of executives, top executives, and senior managers prefer introversion. It varies depending on the nation, as 40% of executives in the US and 38% of executives in India prefer introversion, compared to 32% of executives in Mexico and 30% of executives in the UK (The Myers-Briggs Company, n.d.). This idea of an extraverted ideal is supported throughout cultures (McCord & Joseph, 2020). For instance, the

ideal partner in Brazil and the Czech Republic has a somewhat high trait extraversion score (Varella Valentova et al., 2016), as do the ideal personalities in the US, Russia, and China (Lynch et al., 2009). This is especially intriguing for China, which has been perceived as being ethnically introverted (Seo & Takekawa, 2006). Hence, extraversion continues to be the "ideal" personality trait, even in collectivistic countries or those that seem to encourage introversion (McCord & Joseph, 2020).

2:4 South Asian Culture

The South Asian culture is commonly recognized as collectivist (Triandis & Suh, 2002), where individuals prioritize the objectives of their in-groups, such as family, tribe, or nation, over their individual aspirations (Mills & Clark, 1982). They tend to exhibit communal behavior and conform to in-group norms (Mills & Clark, 1982). This culture is marked by traits like attentiveness, respectfulness, humility, and cooperativeness (Grimm et al., 1999). It is worth noting that in many Asian cultures, teamwork is highly valued, but the concept of a team differs from what is typically seen in the Western world (Triandis & Suh, 2002). According to Cain (2012), Asians see themselves as part of a greater whole, such as their family, corporation, or community, and place great importance on maintaining harmony within their group. They tend to prioritize their group's interests over their own desires and accept their place within its hierarchy.

In contrast, Western culture is centered around the individual (Cain, 2012). The behavior of Asians is usually determined by their role rather than by their own choices, and personal choices are often restricted by their prescribed roles (Cheng, 1990). Therefore, values like independence, individualism, and self-assertion, which are more extroverted characteristics, might be irrelevant and unsuitable for the priorities of Asians (Cheng, 1990).

Asians are often characterized by their unassertive and deferential attitudes in interpersonal transactions, which can be linked to their introverted nature (Triandis & Suh, 2002). They view assertiveness as a form of aggression, and most Asians find it difficult to differentiate between assertive and aggressive behavior, which can lead to misunderstandings in cross-cultural settings (Cheng, 1990). Furthermore, when Asian individuals work in Western settings, there might be a mismatch in communication styles due to their cultural predispositions. They might avoid addressing issues directly (Triandis & Suh, 2002), even when they feel offended or have concerns. This tendency is related to the supreme importance of interpersonal harmony in Asian culture, which is often prioritized over individual goals and desires (Cheng, 1990). Therefore, to avoid misunderstandings and improve communication in cross-cultural settings, it is essential to understand and acknowledge the cultural differences in communication styles and preferences.

2:5 Measurement of Introversion

There are various tools available to test introversion, which has been extensively explored in psychology. There is, however, ongoing discussion regarding the validity and reliability of these measurements and whether they reflect entirely introversion as a multidimensional entity.

It is harder to identify individual differences in more complex traits. This is due to both the difficulties in creating tests and the challenges in evaluating them once they have been developed (Gilliland & Morgan, 1931). Edmund S. Conklin, an American psychologist, offered a test of 40 proposals that was found to be statistically significant for both extroversion and introversion. He hypothesizes that extroverts have a wider range of likes and dislikes than introverts and that extroverts prefer social activities to solitary pursuits. He gave the test to 200 college students as a

sample and discovered a correlation between the number of likes and dislikes and the level of introversion or extraversion. Conklin's test was criticized by Gilliland and Morgan in 1931. They discovered that although the test did exhibit some connection with other measures of extraversion and introversion, it was not a viable or reliable way to gauge these traits. They argued that there was no factual evidence to back Conklin's assertion that introverted people had a more limited range of likes and dislikes than extroverted people.

Woodworth was the first to study personality traits using "abnormal individuals" (Gilliland & Morgan, 1931). Woodworth thoroughly studied 'symptoms' as described in the literature of psychopathology. He developed his psychoneurotic inventory from the list of characteristics that are included in these symptoms. Questions about psychoneurotic symptoms are answered with a "yes" or "no" on the Woodworth's Inventory. A person would be seen as generally stable if they had some traits that psychoneurotic patients exhibit in extreme forms. He might be regarded as more unstable if he exhibited many of these traits. Attempts to verify the accuracy of these inventories have been made, and it has been discovered that they are flawed.

Hoitsma (1925) conducted research on the validity, reliability, and correlations of the Colgate test. In general, he believed that the schedules were trustworthy enough to be used for group comparisons, but several of the questions were seriously flawed and required revision.

The Northwestern University Introversion-Extraversion Test, which Gilliland and Morgan (1931) referred to as an "objective" measure, was then put to the test by being given to Northwestern undergraduates. The researchers gave the test to a sample of Northwestern students to see if it gave consistent findings across different administrations. Due to students' projected tendency to be more extroverted, they

acknowledged that their sample of students could not have been representative of the broader population (Gilliland & Morgan, 1931). Second, the use of assessments to validate the test by members of fraternities and sororities who were familiar with one another raises concerns about the reliability of the ratings because they may have biases or social dynamics at play that could affect the scores. Moreover, the use of yes-or-no questions in the Introversion-Extraversion Test casts doubt on its validity. Despite the researchers' claims that they have validated an objective measure of introversion and extroversion, Gilliland and Morgan's (1931) work reveals some of the difficulties and shortcomings of early research on introversion.

The Eysenck Personality Inventory (EPI) is another widely used scale for measuring introversion (Eysenck, 1975). EPI is a self-report questionnaire that assesses personality on three dimensions, including extraversion-introversion. Eysenck (1947) believed that the distinction between extroverts and introverts was related to cerebral arousal. He suggested that because extroverts have a far lower arousal rate than introverts, they need to engage in more exciting activities to reach an average level of arousal. On the other hand, introverts seek out less stimulating situations to lessen external stimulation because they have a greater baseline level of arousal in the ascending reticular activating system (ARAS). To support Eysenck's idea and verify the electric activity at higher levels of the brainstem auditory circuits, Bullock and Gilliland (1993) used brainstem auditory evoked responses (BAER). They argued that prior attempts to measure introversion based on variations in the I/E arousal system relied far too heavily on primitive psychophysiological methods (Bullock & Gilliland, 1993). Thus, they proposed a study design that combined physiological, behavioral, and psychometric measurement methods with theoretically

significant psychophysiological measures and experimental manipulation of central nervous system arousal.

NEO-FFI is one of the most commonly used Five-Factor Model measures (Zillig et al., 2002). The 60-item NEO Five-Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI) was developed to quickly evaluate the five core personality traits of neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness (Costa & McCrae, 1992). A five-point Likert scale is used in the instrument. However, the NEO-FFI was recently subjected to an item factor analysis using a British sample that includes farmers, doctors, and clinical referrals (Egan et al., 2000). They discovered evidence in favour of the Neuroticism, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness factors. They also observed that some of the Extraversion factor's items did not accurately measure extraversion, and some of the Openness factor's items measured attributes other than openness to new experiences. They concluded that the NEO-FFI could be modified to make it more reliable in precisely evaluating extraversion and openness (Egan et al., 2000; Parker & Stumpf, 1998).

2:6 Shyness and Introversion

Introversion and shyness are often used interchangeably in ordinary English (Briggs, 1988). As introverts tend to minimize arousal and avoid social situations (Eysenck et al., 1985), they are recognized as shy (Briggs, 1988). However, shyness differs conceptually from introversion (Crozier, 1995). Shyness is a typical behavioral response to social situations and is characterized by feelings of discomfort or anxiety in the presence of others (Cheek & Melchior, 1990). Typical reactions of shy people during social interactions are global feelings of tension, specific physiological symptoms (e.g., blushing, sweating, pounding heart, or upset stomach), acute public self-consciousness, worry about being negatively evaluated by others, awkwardness,

inhibition, and hesitancy (Briggs et al., 1986). People who are shy often feel uncomfortable, especially in social settings (Afshan et al., 2015). However, introverts are confident in their silence and are unconcerned with what others might think of them (Coplan et al., 2013). However, introversion is one of the five traits in the five-factor personality inventory (McCrae & Costa, 1987). The other four are extraversion, agreeableness, openness, conscientiousness, and neuroticism. Introversion is positioned at the extreme of the introversion-extraversion spectrum and is characterized by attributes such as being reserved, quiet, and introspective (McCrae & Costa, 1987). However, early shy and fearful temperament has been associated with later introversion and cautiousness (Kagan & Moss, 1983), depression, unassertiveness, and fewer social support sources as a young adult (Caspi, 2000). Shy individuals may share some common episodic experiences with dispositional introverts, such as triggers of social discomfort in the workplace, from situations requiring assertive action and behavior, unstructured social settings such as networking events (D'Souza et al., 2006), and evaluative contexts such as performance reviews (Russell et al., 1986).

2:7 Solitude and Introversion

Increased experience of solitude is a key conceptual trait of introversion (Zelenski et al., 2013). Solitude refers to the absence of social interaction. Most of the times, it means physical isolation from others (Burger, 1995). For instance, when people want alone time, they head to areas like parks or private rooms. Individuals can also keep their isolation while surrounded by others by choosing not to communicate with them. People can maintain their sense of solitude by keeping to themselves even when others might be nearby and available for conversation, as in a crowded park or a doctor's waiting room (Burger, 1995). Although introversion might be related to a

general preference for solitude (Burger, 1995), introversion is a considerably larger concept that includes a variety of characteristics, such as low levels of positive affect, assertiveness, activity, excitement seeking, and sociability (Walker, 2020). As introverts prefer to spend more time alone for whatever reason, including a sincere appreciation for solitude, it differs from a strong desire for solitude in that it is linked to positive and negative solitary experiences (Zelenski et al., 2013). Although contextual and situational circumstances might have an impact on shyness and solitude, introversion is believed to have a biological basis related to variations in brain reactivity and the levels of stimulation (Derryberry & Rothbart, 1988).

2:8 New Zealand culture and workplace expectations

New Zealand is a relatively individualistic culture (Rinne & Fairweather, 2011) that values self-expression, independence, pleasure-seeking, and assertiveness, traits that are often associated with extraversion (Grimm et al., 1999). Compared to individuals from other cultures, a study indicated that New Zealanders scored higher on assertiveness, a key component of extroverted behavior (Fetvadjev et al., 2020). This indicates that communication norms in New Zealand encourage extroverted behavior at work. A variety of personality traits were measured using the South African Personality Inventory (SAPI), including assertiveness, emotional stability, conscientiousness, socialization, and personal culture. Assertiveness scores among New Zealanders were higher than those of the normative group, indicating that these people are more likely to be outgoing and assertive, which are the two main characteristics of extraversion (Cain, 2012).

The Confucian Dynamism scale gauges how much a society emphasizes perseverance, long-term orientation, and upholding traditional social and cultural norms. In contrast to other cultures, New Zealand scores relatively poorly on this

dimension, reflecting a higher emphasis on individualism and personal fulfillment (Hofstede, 2009). This focus on autonomy in culture encourages an assertive and outgoing communication style consistent with extraverted behavior (Chan & Cheung, 2016). Due to its emphasis on immediate gratification and personal fulfillment rather than traditional values and long-term planning, New Zealand's culture may be better suited to encouraging extraverted behavior.

New Zealand has been shaped by its British colonial past, which has influenced its social, political, and economic systems (Hawke, 1985). British society places a high importance on extroverted characteristics, including individualism, assertiveness, and self-expression (Bagherian & Mojambari, 2016; Chan & Cheung, 2016). As a result, this impact has influenced New Zealand's communication norms, which emphasize directness, assertiveness, and the open expression of ideas and opinions. Another study examining the differences in communication between New Zealanders and Chinese people revealed that New Zealanders are more likely to be assertive and direct in their communication than Chinese people, who are more likely to be indirect and courteous (Holmes, 2005). Chinese students were disadvantaged by this interpersonal communication style in individualist cultures that value assertiveness and verbosity (Holmes, 2005).

The workplace culture in New Zealand strongly values cooperation and teamwork. New Zealanders' strong sense of community and social responsibility translates into a cooperative work ethic where people are expected to cooperate to accomplish common goals (Kennedy, 2007). New Zealand managers' leadership style is characterized by a strong emphasis on teamwork, with a tendency to place a greater value on collaboration and consensus building than on individual success (Kennedy, 2007). This creates a culture where extroverted behavior is highly appreciated

because extraversion is the most significant personality determinant of positive interpersonal interactions in teams (Barrick et al., 1998), and it is positively correlated to practical teamwork abilities (Curşeu et al., 2019).

Industry-specific factors contribute to the promotion of extraversion in New Zealand work culture. For example, tourism is a major part of New Zealand's economy (The Guardian, 2021). The hospitality sector relies heavily on its human resources, particularly staff members who engage with clients directly (Hwang et al., 2014).

Extraversion is a personality attribute preferred by the hospitality sector because it tends to have more favorable job outcomes, such as higher job satisfaction and lower turnover intentions (Grobelna, 2015). Personality (including a significant role of extraversion) drives customer service behaviors as it involves interacting with people and calls for a high level of communication skills (Hwang et al., 2014)

New Zealand is known for its innovation, ranked as the world's 15th most innovative economy in the world (The Business Growth Agenda Progress Report, 2015). New Zealand has a rich tradition of innovation and pioneering (Alves, 2023), which reflects a culture that values risk-taking and boldness. These traits are often associated with extraversion (Costa et al., 1984). Extraverted individuals, positively correlated with risk-taking behaviors, tend to thrive in environments that encourage innovative thinking and entrepreneurial ventures (Costa et al., 1984). New Zealand has led innovation in various industries, such as technology and agriculture, producing successful entrepreneurs. Extraversion is positively associated with entrepreneurial intentions and success, as extroverts tend to be more assertive, outgoing, and comfortable taking risks (Caliendo & Kritikos, 2008). The New Zealand government has implemented policies and initiatives that promote entrepreneurship and innovation, such as the Business Growth Agenda and the New Zealand Innovation

Council (NZTE, 2017). In New Zealand, networking is essential to business culture, and extraversion is vital for developing external networks and support (Chandler & Jansen, 1992). More extroverted entrepreneurs tend to win investor support (Zhao & Seibert, 2006). According to Caliendo and Kritikos (2008), extroversion supports the personality by powering intuition and using the charismatic visualization of the entrepreneur. This suggests that the culture of innovation and entrepreneurship in New Zealand values and rewards individuals with strong communication skills and the ability to network and build relationships (Zhao & Seibert, 2006).

2:9 Theoretical Framework

Using ambivalent sexism theory and Winnicott's concept of True and False Self, this study seeks to understand the lived experiences of introverted South Asian women employed in New Zealand. The interplay of these two frameworks will clarify the complex relationships among societal attitudes, personal traits, and workplace dynamics, ultimately guiding strategies to support an accepting and supportive workplace for introverted South Asian women working in New Zealand.

2:9:1 Ambivalent Sexism

The ambivalent sexism theory challenges the conventional view of sexism as being entirely motivated by animosity towards women (Glick et al., 2000). Instead, it suggests that to preserve the existing social structure, sexism is a complex construct comprising both hostile and friendly attitudes shared by both genders globally. Men's social dominance supports these gender ideas, reflected in their higher status roles and income (United Nations Development Programme, 2005). To comprehend the intricacies of how societal attitudes affect women's experiences in various circumstances, it is crucial to understand the interaction between hostile and benevolent sexism (Glick et al., 2000).

2:9:2 Benevolent Sexism

The term "benevolent sexism" refers to a network of attitudes towards women that, despite being perceived as favorable by the perceiver, are fundamentally sexist since they support conventional and constrained roles for women (Glick & Fiske, 1996).

Prosocial and intimacy-seeking behaviors tend to be induced by these attitudes.

Benevolent sexism is not regarded favorably since it is based on outdated gender norms and male domination. It depicts men as providers and women as dependents, despite the positive emotions they might elicit in the perceiver (Glick & Fiske, 1996).

As a result, the effects of benevolent sexism can be negative, maintaining unequal power dynamics and suffering. It is vital to understand that the recipients do not always perceive these attitudes' purported generosity in that way. For instance, seemingly innocent remarks made to female coworkers by men, such as calling them "cute," might unintentionally damage their professional reputation and prevent them from being regarded seriously at work (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Included in the categories of benevolent sexism are Protective Paternalism, which emphasizes women's need for male protection; Complementary Gender Differentiation, which perpetuates gender binaries; and Heterosexual Intimacy, which suggests that romantic involvement with the opposing sex is necessary for true happiness (Glick & Fiske, 1996). The idea that men should act honorably and protectively towards women is promoted by benevolent sexism, which is strongly related to traditional courtship rituals that foster chivalry and paternalism in males (Abrams et al., 2003). The idea that males should show affection to their spouses in partnerships is also an element of this belief system (Lee et al., 2010).

Sexual reproduction grants women "dyadic power" in societies (Walker et al., 1985) where men are dependent on women as bearers of children and for the fulfillment of

sexual needs (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Cross-cultural and historical data demonstrate that, in patriarchal societies, women's dyadic power is mirrored in a certain type of social ideology: protective attitudes towards women, reverence for the role of women as spouses and mothers, and an idealization of women as romantic love objects (Glick & Fiske, 1996). These attitudes define the characteristics of benevolent sexism precisely.

2:9:3 Hostile Sexism

Societies' attitudes towards sexism, from those in which women are held as chattel to those dominated by an idea of chivalry, can vary significantly in terms of how hostile or benevolent they are, depending on things like sex ratios (Walker et al., 1985). In contrast to benevolent sexism, which offers a convenient justification for restricting women to home responsibilities, hostile sexism views women as unsuitable for controlling economic, legal, and political institutions (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Research has shown that sexism exists in all societies, both hostile and benevolent, and there is a positive correlation between these two types of sexism (Glick et al., 2000).

Negative stereotypes of women were linked to hostile sexism, while positive stereotypes of women were associated with benevolent sexism (Maitner & Henry, 2018).

2:9:4 Benevolent Sexism and Patriarchy

According to Glick and Fiske (1996), benevolent sexism may develop as a compensating attitude that aids in both justification and explanation of women's inferior position, particularly in a patriarchal society (Maitner & Henry, 2018). The lack of economic and political power that women experience in traditional patriarchal systems forces them to trade independence for security and stability, leading them to accept the idea that they are inferior but deserve protection. Nearly all institutions,

structures, and relationships in South Asian society are influenced by patriarchy, characterized by male domination, identification, and centrality (Tarar & Pulla, 2014; Nainar, 2013). Cultural norms and traditions and state laws and regulations have been known to promote patriarchy in South Asia, supporting gender roles that prioritize male dominance and control (Nainar, 2013). Practises like dowry and customs around honor and shame limit women's autonomy and strengthen patriarchal power structures. Furthermore, research suggests that hostile and benevolent sexism might have conservative political ideology at its core and be connected to religion, particularly conventional, traditional, or fundamentalist religious beliefs (Maitner & Henry, 2018).

2:9:5 Impact of Benevolent Sexism on Women

The pervasiveness of benevolent sexism in society can cause women to feel inadequate and dependent, as shown by research indicating that exposure to benevolent attitudes dramatically lowered women's performance on a task involving problem-solving (Dardenne et al., 2007). Glick et al. (2000) examined the prevalence of both hostile and benevolent sexism, as well as stereotypes about women, across 19 countries. The results showed that hostile and benevolent sexism was more prevalent in Latin American and sub-Saharan African countries than in Western ones. Exposure to benevolent sexism triggers feelings of incompetence, increases memories of being incompetent, and disrupts women's performance on cognitive tasks (Dardenne et al., 2007; Dumont et al., 2008). Dependency-oriented support can undermine women's sense of competence while meeting men's intimacy needs.

2:10 Winnicott's Conceptualization of the True Self and False Self: Balancing Authenticity and Defense

2:10:1 Introduction

A well-known psychoanalyst named Donald Winnicott explored the complexities of individual identity through his concept of the True Self and False Self (Bodin, 1994). Winnicott tried to comprehend how people negotiate societal expectations while maintaining their authenticity, which was inspired by Freud's idea of the dual nature of the Self (Bodin, 1994).

2:10:2 The Nature of the False Self

Each person has an internal conflict between their True Self and False Self, according to Winnicott (2018). Inspired by Freud's theories, the False Self acts as a safeguard against the improbable exploitation of the True Self, which might result in its destruction (Winnicott, 2018). To manage societal expectations and external constraints, this defensive structure takes the form of mannered and polite social attitudes, which can subsequently become internalized (Winnicott, 2018). To avoid the outside world's demands, people retreat into their minds and form various "False Self organizations" (Winnicott, 2018; Abram, 2018).

2:10:3 The Essence of the True Self

The True Self, on the other hand, stands for a person's genuine, impulsive, and artistic qualities that come from their natural potential (Ehrlich, 2021). For Winnicott (2018), this is the theoretical stance from which one's own original, unfiltered actions and thoughts emerge. This is a developmental success that involves a sense of feeling "creative" and "real," a sense that can only emerge after the newborn has established the physiological and cognitive abilities that serve as a basis for the organization of the mind (Winnicott, 2018).

2:10:4 Understanding the False Self

Winnicott defined the False Self as a "defense against the unthinkable, the exploitation of the True Self which would result in its annihilation" (Winnicott, 2018). In other words, the False Self protects the True Self from being exploited. In reaction to environmental pressures, the False Self forms as a protective structure (Winnicott, 2018). According to Winnicott (2018), it is characterized by conformity, compliance, and adaptability to satisfy external demands and societal norms. For example, people who are struggling financially and are frequently criticised in our society for not being wealthy and successful tend to remain quiet and conceal their true selves by acting and speaking too cautiously. The right to live as Deaf people with pride has been something that Deaf people have had to battle for. For example, using sign language instead of lip-reading to appear "hearing" (Berzoff et al., 2011, p. 101). The False Self serves as a defense mechanism that enables people to endure circumstances where their genuine selves can be in danger or rejected (Winnicott, 2018). However, relying too much on the False Self can result in a feeling of hollowness, a lack of vitality, and a separation from oneself (Winnicott, 2018).

2:10:5 Pressure to Conform and the False Self

Winnicott observed that the pressure to display oneself favorably in the eyes of others might contribute to the formation of a False Self (Winnicott, 2018). He stressed the importance of psychological health and voiced concern that trying to meet social expectations could stifle one's authenticity. As a result, a pervasive False Self can develop, which is distinguished by its tendency to conform and adjust to external demands rather than exhibiting genuine spontaneity. People lose their own unique selves and their intense connection to others when they feel the pressure to fit in.

2:10:6 Implications of Winnicott's Theory

The concept of the True Self and False Self offered by Winnicott provides important insights into human identity as well as psychological development (Winnicott, 2018). Individuals can overcome societal pressures while maintaining their authentic identity by understanding the interplay between various aspects of the self (Winnicott, 2018). There is a possibility that South Asian women might be unable to fully develop their True Self because of the prevalence of benevolent sexism and inflexible gender norms in their culture.

The True Self comprises an individual's genuine desires and creative potential. However, when women are restricted to traditional caring roles and their desires are not fully acknowledged, their True Self might be hampered (Martin et al., 1976; Johnson & Dinnerstein, 1977). The pressure to fit in with societal standards might stifle their ability to express themselves authentically and limit the fulfillment of their full potential (Martin et al., 1976; Johnson & Dinnerstein, 1977). Asian women are praised for having introverted traits such as being quiet, considerate, and humble (Lo, 2018). However, if they have an outgoing attitude, the societal expectations and gender standards placed on them might complicate their lives (Lo, 2018). The emphasis placed on adopting personas such as the obedient daughter or the charming wife can support stereotypes that hinder assertiveness and career ambition (Lo, 2018). Instead, women are encouraged to prioritize family responsibilities and relationships over personal goals (Lo, 2018).

2:11 Summary

I will be trying to learn more about the sense of self that adult self-identified South Asian introverts have by interviewing them about their experiences at work, as well

as if they have developed something akin to a False Self to deal with social, cultural, and professional demands.

I also assume that individuals who exhibited introverted tendencies during childhood remain introverted throughout their lives. This assumption aligns with Jung's (1953) conceptualization and writings on introversion, as well as with the findings of personality research conducted by Little (2014). One of the objectives of this study is to investigate the coping mechanisms employed by adult South Asian women who self-identify as introverts in response to the extroverted workplace culture prevalent in New Zealand. Benevolent sexism can impact the self-perception of South Asian women, which in turn might influence their attitudes and behaviors in the workplace and their expectations of themselves and others. Winnicott's theory of the True Self and the False Self provides a valuable framework for understanding how individuals handle the outside world's demands while maintaining their True sense of Self. The study will examine whether introverted South Asian women working in New Zealand create a False Self as a coping strategy to fit in with extroverted workplace standards. The study will advance our understanding of how introverted South Asian women maintain their sense of self in somewhat different extroverted working cultures by examining the interplay of these factors.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3:1 Introduction

This chapter describes the research methods used to investigate the lived experiences of introverted South Asian women working in New Zealand. The chapter discusses the research processes and procedures used to collect data from participants, including the recruitment process, data collection methods, and ethical considerations to ensure the privacy and confidentiality of the participants. Overall, this chapter provides a detailed review of the research methodology used in this study. It emphasizes the significance of comprehending introverted South Asian women's experiences at work and the necessity of using suitable methods to gather and examine these experiences.

3:2 Research Paradigm

According to Guba and Lincoln (1989), a research paradigm is a worldview that reflects the researchers' presumptions on reality, technique, ethics, and epistemology. This research project examines the lived experiences of introverted South Asian women employed in New Zealand using an interpretive research approach. According to Walsham (1995), interpretivism refers to methods that emphasize the significance of a person's personality and engagement in both social and cultural life. It indicates that the research methodologies that take the stance that people's perceptions of reality are social constructions by human actors are not appropriate (McIntosh, 1997). Its origins can be traced back to the philosophical traditions of hermeneutics and phenomenology, and Max Weber, a German sociologist, is widely regarded as having had the most influence (McIntosh, 1997). Interpretivists investigate the meanings and motivations underlying human behavior,

including interpersonal interactions and attitudes (Whitley, 1984). Similarly, cultures can be explored by looking at the beliefs, meanings, and concepts that matter to particular individuals (Chowdhury, 2014).

The fact that interpretivism lays a major emphasis on understanding the subjective nature of knowledge and the social and cultural elements that affect how people see the world is one reason why interpretivism would be a good fit for this study. It acknowledges that each person has a unique experience that is shaped by a variety of elements, such as their cultural background, social environment, and personal views (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). Therefore, this paradigm is especially helpful when examining the experiences of introverted South Asian women working in New Zealand, as interpretivism is more sensitive towards individual meanings and contributions (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). Moreover, with regard to every aspect of qualitative research, the interpretive position offers a pervasive lens or perspective (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Participants in interpretive studies reflect underrepresented or marginalized groups, regardless of how the disparities show in terms of gender, race, class, religion, sexual orientation, geography, or some combination of these (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Even though introversion is not often associated with marginalization or underrepresentation, it can provide particular challenges for introverted persons in the job, particularly in societies that place a high emphasis on extroverted behaviors.

Additionally, the interpretive paradigm emphasizes the significance of the researcher's own subjectivity and positionality (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). My own experiences and background as a South Asian woman are likely to shape my understanding of the experiences of the participants in my study. This emphasizes the need for reflexivity in interpretative research, which is being aware of and

reflecting on how my background and preconceptions might affect the research process and data interpretation (Finlay, 2002). By engaging in reflexivity, I aim to reduce potential biases and ensure that the findings truly reflect the participants' experiences.

3:3 Qualitative Research Design

The primary research question for this study is focused on exploring the lived experiences of introverted South Asian women working in New Zealand and the meaning they attach to these experiences. This calls for a qualitative research approach since it enables a deeper understanding of the experiences of the participants. The best hope for understanding how people navigate and enact their social and professional environments is through qualitative approaches, which emphasize that enactment is largely about taking action in the world (Lincoln, 2005). Qualitative research investigates a situation, considers difficult-to-measure elements, and "hear silenced voices" (Creswell, 2007). It results in a more thorough understanding of the issue than can be achieved with an honest, open conversation in a natural environment. It could be used as a follow-up and an explanation for quantitative research, which has difficulty grasping the intricacies of the problem, the uniqueness of each person, and the reasons behind people's behaviors (Creswell, 2007).

Qualitative research in the social sciences began in the late 1960s (Bogdan & Biklen, 1997). The phrase "qualitative research" is used to describe a number of research techniques that have certain traits in common (Bogdan & Biklen, 1997). The data acquired via qualitative research is often exploratory and is referred to as "soft data," which is rich in descriptions of people, places, and conversations. Instead of being framed by operationalizing variables, research questions are framed for analyzing

subjects in all their complexity in context. The goal of qualitative research is to understand behavior from the perspective of the subject. External factors are of secondary importance (Bogdan & Biklen, 1997).

According to Bogdan and Biklen (1997), there are five main features of qualitative research. One of the characteristics of qualitative research is that it is naturalistic. The researcher is the key instrument, and actual situations serve as the direct source of data. The researcher spends extensive time in the field learning about and observing the phenomena under investigation. Secondly, qualitative research is descriptive, presenting the data collected as words or images. This research requires that the world be explored under the presumption that nothing is insignificant and that everything has the potential to be a clue that might reveal a more thorough understanding of what is being studied. Thirdly, qualitative research examines how individuals negotiate meaning and how particular ideas become part of common sense. Thus, qualitative research looks at the natural history of the activities and events under study to create rich representations of daily interactions.

Moreover, qualitative researchers analyze their data inductively to construct abstractions from the data they collect rather than attempting to confirm or refute their predetermined theories. The theory that emerges is grounded in the data. Data analysis is like a funnel, with an open beginning and more focused and specific as it moves toward the end. Lastly, qualitative research focuses on “meaning.” The researcher is interested in participants’ perspectives and how various individuals make sense of their experiences. In qualitative research, subjects and the researchers converse or interact, and the researchers build plans to consider experiences from the informants' viewpoints (Bogdan & Biklen, 1997).

Qualitative research can develop new theories and understandings by generating rich, detailed data (Creswell, 2007). Therefore, the qualitative method is well suited to investigate the unexplored areas of research (Creswell, 2007), such as the experiences of introverted South Asian women employed in New Zealand. There is a lack of study on the actual experiences of South Asian women working in New Zealand, with a particular emphasis on the trait of introversion. However, some research has been done on the experiences of South Asian diaspora women working in New Zealand social enterprises (Baloch, 2017). In addition, a study examined the employment experiences of Asian immigrants in the broader Auckland area and their views on work and family well-being. However, the voices of introverted South Asian women remain unheard (Sobrun et al., 2010). Moreover, another study based on the voices and narratives of Asian students provides useful insights into their learning experiences but nothing related to the trait introversion (Campbell & Li, 2008). Given the complexity and diversity of this subject, a qualitative approach is required to investigate and fully comprehend the experiences of introverted South Asian women working in New Zealand. Through a qualitative methodology, the phenomenon of interest can unfold naturally (Patton, 2023), giving the chance to delve deeply into the experiences of participants and gain a more nuanced understanding of their lived experiences (Cypress, 2015).

The trustworthiness of qualitative research is frequently evaluated using four criteria: credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Prolonged engagement, the analysis of negative (divergent) cases, and triangulation (of sources and researchers) increase the likelihood that research will lead to trustworthy conclusions. Credibility can be investigated by peer debriefing with other researchers and member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

3:4 Phenomenology

Phenomenology is the most inductive of all qualitative methods (Morse, 2012).

Research into the real-world experiences of introverted South Asian women working in New Zealand is best understood by a phenomenological approach. The phenomenological approach is appropriate for this study as it describes the meaning of several individuals' lived experiences of a phenomenon (Cresswell, 2012). The study of people's lived experiences, the belief that these experiences are conscious, and the emergence of descriptions of the essences of these experiences are some of the common foundations upon which phenomenology bases its philosophical presumptions (Cresswell, 2012).

The Greek roots of "phenomenology" are *phainómenon*, which means "that which appears," and *lógos*, which means "study" (VanScoy & Evenstad, 2015).

Phenomenology means "from the point of view of the behaving organism itself" (Snygg, 1941, p. 406). Phenomenology, a method of enquiry that strives to delve into the core and significance of human experiences (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003), is used in this study to elucidate the distinctive viewpoints and insights of introverted South Asian women in the context of their professional experiences in New Zealand.

Phenomenology, known to explore "lived experience," aims to comprehend the nature of experience from the viewpoint of the people experiencing a phenomenon themselves (Connelly, 2010). Phenomenological analysis is comprised of investigating what appears to the subject and how it appears, with the objective of explaining the nature of the phenomenon as an essential experience (Munhall, 2007). The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study is to explore and gain an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of introverted South Asian women who are working in New Zealand.

Martin Heidegger (1962) defined phenomenology as “letting something be seen” or “to let that which shows itself be seen from itself in the very way in which it shows itself from itself” (Husserl & Heidegger, 2014). Phenomenology is considered an essential methodological tool within the interpretive paradigm (Denzin, 2008). This is because the interpretive paradigm places great importance on understanding the subjective nature of human experiences and the meanings that individuals attach to them (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). A participant's perception is not questioned in phenomenology because it is seen as a main source of knowledge (Moustakas, 1994). This kind of study is self-reflective for both the participants and the researcher, as phenomenology is the lived experiences of everyone (Moustakas, 1994). A researcher engages in "extensive and prolonged engagement" with a few participants. To develop a "universal essence" of those events, the researcher then integrates all similar experiences (Creswell, 2007).

In this study, phenomenology is used to examine how introverted women deal with their cultural identity at work, how they engage and communicate with colleagues from various cultural backgrounds, and how introversion affects their professional and personal lives. The results of this phenomenological research can guide the development of policies and procedures that will better support the learning and professional experiences of introverted South Asian women in New Zealand.

3:5 Descriptive Phenomenology

Two main phenomenological approaches that can be used in research are descriptive and interpretive (Connelly, 2010). The most effective approach for exploring the subjective experiences of introverted South Asian women working in New Zealand is descriptive phenomenology. This method enables a thorough and comprehensive account of the participants' experiences while avoiding the imposition

of any biases or previous notions (Lopez & Willis, 2004). German philosopher and mathematician Edmund Husserl (1859–1938) is regarded as the founder of phenomenology as a philosophy and the descriptive (eidetic) method of enquiry (Draucker, 1999; LeVassueur, 2003). One of Husserl's students, Heidegger, introduced interpretive phenomenology, also known as hermeneutic (Wojnar & Swanson, 2007). The notion that one-on-one interaction between the researcher and the study subjects were the only way to understand the importance of lived experiences was a core premise of the Husserlian approach to science. To construct a representation of reality that is more sophisticated than prior understandings, these interactions must involve attentive listening, interaction, and observation (Husserl, 1970).

One of the differences between the two types of phenomenology is the handling of bracketing. Before starting the study, qualitative researchers try to become aware of any assumptions they might have about the phenomenon (Wojnar & Swanson, 2007). These assumptions are attempted to be bracketed or set aside by descriptive phenomenologists so they do not influence the study. Husserl (1970) believed that the process of bracketing, which entails deliberately and consciously attempting to strip away prior experiential information and personal prejudice not to impact the description of the reality at hand, might be used to achieve the state of transcendental subjectivity. In order to ensure that the researcher holds all preconceived notions in check while hearing, interacting with, and analyzing the stories of the participants, the process of bracketing has been described as (a) removing the phenomenon from the world and inspecting it; (b) dissecting the phenomenon to unravel the structure, define it, and analyze it; and (c) suspending all preconceptions regarding the phenomenon and confronting the subject matter on its

own terms (Giorgi, 2000; LeVasseur, 2003). According to interpretive phenomenologists, these concepts are ingrained in a person. They cannot be disregarded, and the researcher can only be aware of them and how they might affect the study (Wojnar & Swanson, 2007). In studying the lived experiences of introverted South Asian women working in New Zealand, descriptive phenomenology would involve a careful and detailed analysis of the participants' experiences in their own words, with an emphasis on identifying their essential features. Instead of interpreting or analyzing them in light of any ideas or conceptions from outside sources, the emphasis would be on describing the structures of individual experiences.

3:6 Research setting and Participant Selection

Individuals who self-identified as introverted and expressed a desire to engage in this study were chosen as participants. In my study, I used the snowball sampling to recruit introverted South Asian women. It started with conversations with friends from various organizations in which I introduced my study topic and objectives. During these discussions, I enquired if they knew of any colleagues from the South Asian ethnic community who could be interested in participating. Through this initial network, I was able to identify potential participants. I then asked those potential participants whether they knew of any additional introverted people who would be able to participate in the study. This iterative strategy enabled me to access a larger and more diversified group of introverted South Asian women. A participant information sheet (Appendix: A) was given to my friends for distribution when potential participants were identified. Participants who identified as introverts and were interested in the study subsequently got in touch with me. The potential

participants were evaluated using screening questions (Appendix: D) to determine whether they conform to Carl Jung's (1971) conceptualization of introversion.

I then analyzed the responses after receiving the screening forms. I next gave the participants a consent form (Appendix: B). I asked for demographic data from those who had responded affirmatively to at least three of the five screening questions (Appendix: D), indicating agreement or strong agreement. Participants returned the consent and demographic forms through email after completion. After receiving the completed documents, the participants and I mutually decided on the interview time and day. Interviews were conducted in quiet areas in different public libraries near the participants' homes or places of employment.

3:6:1 Demographics

This study aimed to capture a diverse range of perspectives from introverted South Asian women working in New Zealand. Several important questions were asked to comprehend the participant demographics. The participants ranged from 35 to 40 years old, with an average age of 38, showing a wide range of life experiences. This age diversity ensures that the study encompasses a wide range of generational experiences among South Asian women in the workforce. Participants self-identified as being of South Asian ethnicity, with three identifying as Indian and five as Pakistani.

3:6:2 Sample size

In conducting my phenomenological study with eight participants, I considered various factors that influenced the estimation of the participant number required to reach data saturation. In line with phenomenological research principles, the sample size was purposefully small, aligning with the emphasis on in-depth exploration (Connelly, 2010).

3:6:3 Semi-structured interview

To collect my data, I conducted semi-structured interviews with my participants using a series of open-ended questions to collect narrative data from them. Semi-structured interviews allow for flexibility in question-wording, allowing the interviewer to use a range of words and provide clarifications (Berg & Lune, 2011).

In order to give the interviewee power over the interview process, I conducted one-on-one interviews with open-ended questions and probes. The exploratory interview is based on the idea that individuals perceive the world in varying subjective ways (Ryan et al., 2009). Consequently, issues are investigated from an individualistic viewpoint. I created a 'spine' of themes to guide the interview process and reflect the interviewee's personal experiences with the topic (Bridges et al., 2008). For example, to explore the experiences of introverted South Asian women when it comes to cross-cultural communication in the New Zealand workplace, the question was asked:

Have you experienced any intersections between your introversion and your identity as a South Asian woman at work? How has this influenced your interactions with colleagues or superiors?

Thematic framework enabled the capture of richer, more detailed data from the participants than was possible through formally structured scheduled questions (Bridges et al., 2008).

The most common data collection method in qualitative research is one-to-one interviews (Sandelowski, 2002). All the interviews were conducted face-to-face. This permitted me to delve deeper and look for hidden meanings and insights. To save time, demographic questions (Appendix: E) were distributed and submitted by the participants through email before the in-person interviews. The interview started with

the initial introduction to the study and verification of consent. This was then followed by non-threatening, factual questions to continue the interview in a relaxed, sensitive manner prior to the critical interview questions (Ryan et al., 2009). My first interview question (Appendix: F) was:

What are the three words that come to your mind when you hear the word “introversion”?

The more sensitive questions came later, like:

Have you ever felt pressured to be more extroverted or conform to societal expectations?

The downsides of conducting face-to-face interviews were their relatively higher cost as I sometimes needed to travel and the length of time required to complete them

3:6:4 Ethical Issues Related to Interview Process

According to DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006), there are four ethical issues related to the interview process. All these issues were effectively addressed and resolved in my research to protect the rights and well-being of the participants.

1. ***Reducing the risk of unanticipated harm:*** Five participants acknowledged that they had never previously discussed the difficulties they encountered as introverts. This newfound discourse promoted introspection, providing them with a better understanding of their experiences. While there was little inbuilt risk in the research, this experience could have resulted in unexpected harm to participants. As a result, I was ready to offer help if the interview caused undue stress or caused psychological issues.
2. ***Protecting the interviewee’s information:*** The second concern is that the interviewee's anonymity with respect to the information provided must be maintained. Some participants stated that the interview allowed them to vent

their frustrations and share their experiences. Interviewees were assured that their anonymity would be safeguarded first and foremost.

3. ***Effectively informing interviewees about the nature of the study:*** There was adequate communication of the intent of the research study. Interviewees consented to participate in ongoing interviews several times during the research process. Also, participants were allowed to reconsider their participation and disengage from the research study until a specified time.
4. ***Reducing the risk of exploitation:*** Interviewees should not be exploited for personal gain. I consistently acknowledged and expressed gratitude to the interviewees for their invaluable contributions to the research process (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006).

3:6:5 Data Recording

Data from qualitative interviews is often recorded, transcribed, and examined for prominent themes (Al-Yateem, 2012). All audio-recorded interviews were transcribed within the next two days using Microsoft Word. I also kept a paper diary in which I recorded my observations and the guiding questions I used during interviews.

3:6:6 The Screening Form

Even though my participants did self-identify as introverts, I also used screening questions (Appendix: D) to make sure that my participants fell under Cain's (2012) conceptual framework for introversion. Screening questions are based on the characteristics of introversion devised by Susan Cain (2011). Additionally, it served as a basis for some of the interview questions (Appendix: F). Participants were asked to rate how strongly they agreed or disagreed with various characteristics often associated with introversion. Using a Likert scale rather than a checklist allowed more flexibility for participants. Interestingly, seven out of eight participants strongly

agreed or agreed with all the screening questions (Appendix: D) related to introverted traits.

3:7 Ethics Committee Approval Process

This research project followed strict ethical standards and was subject to evaluation and approval by the Massey University Human Ethics Otu Matatika 3 (Application OM3 23/30). The application was submitted on June 24, 2023, and on September 11, 2023, the Ethics Committee formally approved it.

Several key conversations happened while the Ethics Committee was reviewing my research. The need to prioritize participants' privacy and comfort during interviews was highlighted. The solution I provided was interview pauses, maintaining anonymity, and allowing participants to withhold some facts. Concerns about participant recruiting were highlighted, particularly about the exploitation of personal and professional networks that can jeopardize confidentiality. I made it clear that although personal networks would be used to find possible participants, people from my own contacts would not be included in them.

The committee requested references for the screening questions (Appendix: D) because they were taken from online sources, and screening procedures and questions were carefully examined. Another factor was ensuring that participants were aware of the concept of introversion. The committee advised using simpler terminology in information sheets and interviews to define introversion, such as "quiet," "shy," and "enjoying isolation." Moreover, concerns regarding potential harm caused by labeling people as introverted were among the ethical observations. I highlighted that from a cultural perspective, introversion is not viewed negatively in South Asia; it is frequently linked to civility and humility. Lastly, it was recommended that intermediaries (my network) might offer information sheets to handle the

recruitment issues effectively. If participants were interested, they could then get in touch with me directly.

The research application was given provisional approval by the ethics committee, subject to specific requirements being met. Once amendments were done, final approval was given on 11/09/2023, which is valid for three years. I considered and diligently followed all recommendations by the Ethics Committee throughout the research process.

3:8 Ethical Considerations

According to Orb et al. (2001), ethical concerns are evident in all types of study. By using observations and interviews, qualitative investigations aim to characterize a phenomenon from the viewpoints of the participants. An interview is typically associated with privacy, informed consent, confidentiality, and the reappearance of "old wounds" (Orb et al., 2001).

3:8:1 Informed consent

Consent consists of the following elements: consent must be freely provided (voluntary), participants must comprehend what is being asked of them, and all participants must be competent to consent (Connelly, 2014). All participants were approached individually and given a thorough explanation of the objectives of the study and the data collection procedure. Participants were given an information sheet to ensure they were well-informed about the study. They had sufficient time to read the information and make a well-informed choice about their involvement. They had plenty of time to ask questions and voice any concerns they might had. It was made clear to participants that participation was voluntary, and they were given two weeks after receiving the transcript to withdraw if they changed their minds. Participants had to complete an informed consent form (Appendix: B) before the interview to confirm

they were willing to take part in the study. They were also asked for permission to audiotape the interview.

3:8:2 Anonymity and Confidentiality

Pseudonyms were used for all participants whose data has been included in this research study. The recordings of the interviews were transcribed promptly within the next two days of the interview, and the original recordings were securely destroyed. Participants' numbers rather than names were used to identify transcripts to maintain confidentiality. The study team was the only one with access to the cloud storage where electronic transcripts were kept. Transcripts will be permanently deleted after a period of two years. To maintain confidentiality, the data used in publications will not be associated with participants' names except when using pseudonyms when necessary. The data and consent forms were kept in Massey University's safe cloud storage system. Additionally, all documents, including the consent forms and data, were password-protected.

There was an extremely low risk that a participant might experience anxiety or discomfort while participating in this study. Before the interview, I reaffirmed my commitment to confidentiality. I emphasized that the interview would be paused if a participant felt discomfort. Furthermore, I indicated that the participant might choose to have the interview recording turned off permanently or temporarily. If the participant requests it, the previous recordings will likewise be deleted. Their comfort and well-being were the primary concerns.

A summary report was prepared specifically for the participants, providing an overview of the research's key findings, insights, and implications. Although there were no monetary incentives to the participants in this study, the potential psychological benefits that participants might have experienced engaging in

qualitative interviews are worth noting. These include self-recognition, catharsis, a sense of purpose, greater self-awareness, empowerment, and a chance to offer a voice to those who have been silenced (Orb et al., 2001).

3:9 Summary

This chapter outlines the research methodology used in this study to investigate the lived experiences of introverted South Asian women working in New Zealand. The research followed a qualitative research paradigm and used semi-structured interviews as the primary data collection method. The flexibility of the semi-structured interview enabled me to ask a series of less structured questions. The interviews included open-ended questions that allowed participants to share their unique experiences. By engaging a relatively small number of participants, I aimed to delve deeply into their lived experiences and the phenomenon of interest, mirroring the core philosophy of phenomenological research, which emphasizes depth over breadth. This research is given full ethics approval (Appendix: C) valid for three years and ethical considerations are taken into account at each step of research. This study involved participants from a distinct cultural background and characterized by a specific personality trait; their rights, cultural beliefs, and values needed to be protected. The next chapter discusses the data analysis process in detail to provide a comprehensive understanding of how the research findings were derived from the collected data. It also showcases the insights gained from thematic analysis.

Chapter 4: Analysis and Findings

This chapter presents the findings from a comprehensive analysis of eight in-depth interviews conducted with participants who self-identified as introverted South Asian women employed in different workplaces in New Zealand. The primary objective of this research was to explore and shed light on the unique and nuanced experiences of introverted South Asian women employed in New Zealand. A common trend emerged from all the interviews: the prevalence of unfavourable attitudes and perceptions about introversion. These perceptions were seen to originate both internally as these females struggled with their introverted tendencies and externally as they dealt with a professional environment that frequently gave preference to extroverted traits. This chapter begins by the description of data analysis and then moves on to how the participants conceptualised and characterised their introversion, providing an essential framework for the discussions that follow. The study then goes into the critical idea of "intersectionality," exploring the complex connections between introversion and South Asian identity. These introverted South Asian women used several coping strategies and adaptation techniques, according to the interviews, to deal with the challenges brought on by the conflict of personalities. While participants highlighted the negative aspects of introversion, they also emphasised its positive aspects, which is important to note. These traits included being a good observer and listener, being well-liked by coworkers for their propensity to stay out of conflict and being emotionally independent. Data analysis consists of four main themes and eight sub-themes. The themes that emerged reveal experiences of participants describing occasions where an introverted nature came into conflict with societal expectations/stereotypes and

influenced interactions between people in New Zealand work environment. The first theme: *Perceptions of Introversion* reveals the way in which participants perceive or define introversion. It describes what “introversion” means to them and why they consider themselves to be “introverted”. The second theme: *Cultural Influence on Introversion* describes how certain phrases and cultural norms of childhood were deeply ingrained into the participants’ minds, pointing out the high value placed on specific traits in South Asia. The third theme: *Workplace Challenges* highlights the prevalent workplace dynamics where introverted individuals often feel compelled to mask their true selves and shows the complex interplay between cultural and societal influences on career decisions. Lastly, for the fourth theme: *Advice and Coping Strategies*, participants share their recharging strategies, speak about the importance of resources and support systems and give some advice to other introverted South Asian women encountering similar challenges.

4:1 Data Analysis

I used thematic data analysis for my research study. Thematic analysis is a technique for detecting, interpreting, and reporting data patterns (themes). It organizes and describes the data set in rich detail. Braun and Clarke (2006) outline six steps for conducting thematic analysis:

Phase 1: Familiarization: Initially, verbal data from interviews was transcribed into written form to conduct a thematic analysis. Although thematic analysis demands a different level of detail than other qualitative methodologies, I ensured the transcripts were orthographic and verbatim, capturing both verbal and nonverbal expressions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Transcripts were checked against the original audio recordings for accuracy.

Phase 2: Generating initial codes: In my study, I entered Phase 2 of the thematic analysis process after thoroughly reading and familiarizing myself with the collected data. My primary goal during this step was to construct initial codes from the data. Each code represented the most basic unit or segment of the data that could be assessed meaningfully regarding the research phenomenon. I manually highlighted text in Microsoft Word to mark potential patterns, added annotations for context, and grouped similar text sections into categories with assigned codes. Below is how I applied code to a short data segment:

Data Extract	Coded for
<p>"I've always been called like, you know, a bookworm or somebody who's like, you know, shy. Not confident enough. Yeah, yeah, yeah. I noticed this. When I was younger, I used to notice that when I would talk, people would not listen in a group. And now it's changed a little bit. But still it happens. So, and I tend to, if I'm being more natural, I tend not to talk" (P4)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Labels: bookworm, shy, unconfident 2. Communication challenges 3. Change overtime 4. Natural reservedness

Phase 3: Searching for themes: During this stage, various codes were sorted into probable themes, and the themes were then used to group all the relevant coded data extracts. Themes started to emerge as early as when transcripts were being made. Visual aids like tables and mind-maps were beneficial for visualizing these relationships. Some initial codes evolved into main themes, while others became

sub-themes. I also created a temporary "miscellaneous" theme for codes that didn't align with any main themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Below is an example of the themes and subthemes that emerged:

Themes	Sub-themes
1. Cultural Influence on Introversion	a) South Asian cultural norms b) Impact on cultural upbringing c) Cross-Cultural Introvert Perceptions
2. Workplace Challenges	a) Pressure to Appear Extroverted b) Career Choices and Societal Expectations

Phase 4: Reviewing themes: Phase 4 involved two levels of reviewing and refining themes. At the first level, I scrutinized the coherence of coded data extracts within each theme to ensure that they formed meaningful patterns. Themes that didn't meet this criterion were reworked, merged, or, if necessary, discarded. Once I found a candidate theme map that satisfied this level's requirements, I moved on to the second level, where I analyzed the whole data set to determine whether the thematic map adequately captured the meanings of the data.

Phase 5: Defining and naming themes: In Phase 5 of my data analysis, I had a well-defined thematic map and began the process of refining and naming the themes. I meticulously organized the collated data extracts within each theme to create a coherent and internally consistent narrative for analysis. Finally, I considered concise

and informative names for each theme to make them immediately understandable to readers.

Phase 6: Producing the report: This is the last phase of thematic data analysis, as described by Braun and Clarke (2006). This entails conducting a final analysis and writing up a report to convey the complex story of the data in a way that persuades the reader of the analysis's value and validity.

4:2 Theme: Perceptions of Introversion

When asked, "What comes to your mind when you hear the word 'introversion'?" most participants responded with "*alone time*." This recurring answer underscores the close connection between introversion and the need for privacy and solitude. Introversion drew a variety of interpretations and meanings from people who self-identified as introverted. This theme sheds light on how introverts perceive themselves and their reasons for believing they have introverted tendencies.

4:2:1 Sub-theme: Reserved and Inward-Focused Nature

The idea of a reserved and inward-focused character is the first sub-theme that arose from participants' perceptions and definitions of introversion. The tendency to keep one's thoughts and emotions concealed and a preference for isolation are two characteristics of introversion, according to many participants. One participant eloquently captured this aspect of introversion by describing it as, "*something that you keep to yourself, mostly like you enjoy your time. Basically, you don't like to express yourself in front of everybody.*" The idea that introverts frequently find comfort and fulfilment in alone time or quiet reflection is apparent in this remark. Comfort zone is a safe space where introverts feel most at ease to avoid the fear of being judged or receiving unfavourable responses from others, as another participant

commented, *"They have like a comfort zone, and then it makes it difficult for them to just come out of that zone."*

Observation is another hallmark of introversion that emerged prominently in participants' discussions. Introverts are often seen as observant individuals who prefer to listen and watch rather than actively participate in conversations or group activities. As one participant reflected, *" Since childhood I have always been a very observant kid. Like, I tended to avoid groups and stuff. I tended to observe things more rather than talk."* This inclination towards observation may be rooted in a desire to understand and analyze social situations before fully engaging in them.

Despite their reserved nature, introverts display a remarkable adaptability in navigating diverse social environments. One participant shared a personal experience of adaptation, stating, *"My dad was in the military, and we kept moving around every year or so I had to like, you know, change environments. And it was such a mission to fit into every environment that I kind of developed this way that I have a very introverted personal side to me that doesn't show up. But because I've had to accommodate myself in situations, so I compensate for that."* This adaptability highlights introverts' ability to flex their social behaviors to meet the demands of different situations, even if it means temporarily suppressing their natural tendencies. However, the adaptability of introverts also comes with challenges. One recurring theme is feeling unheard in group settings. As one participant said, *"I noticed this before when I was younger, when I would talk, people would not listen in a group."* Realizing no one is paying attention to you, it can be rather frustrating, and consequently some individuals prefer to avoid participating in group discussions. As a way of dealing with this some individuals mentioned that they prefer to listen than

speak because they believe it increases the chances of their contributions being recognized and acknowledged by others.

Introverts often find themselves subjected to social stereotypes, such as being labeled as "shy" or "bookworms." However, these labels fail to capture the depth and intricacy of personalities. As one participant recalled, *"I've always been called like a bookworm or somebody who's like, you know, shy. I was described as a shy child, not confident enough."* These generalizations can be misleading and overshadow the strengths and qualities that introverts bring to interpersonal interactions.

Another common correlation is introversion and the perception of being "quiet" and "shy." One participant expressed this sentiment succinctly, *"When hearing introvert, the words that come to my mind are quiet and shy. You can say I cannot not mingle with others, not too much."*

4:3 Theme: Cultural Influence on Introversion

The analysis provides insight into the influence of culture, particularly on how introverted traits are reinforced and viewed among women in South Asian society. Interviews with the participants revealed how particular expressions and cultural customs had an impact on them growing up, emphasising the value placed on courteous and respectful behavior.

4:3:1 Sub-theme: South Asian Cultural Norms

In the narratives shared by the participants certain phrases, like *"She's a good girl, she's quiet, she's humble"* stood out as echoes of cultural values. These phrases represent an appreciation for qualities that are typically associated with introversion in South Asian culture. "Humility", "quietness", and "respect" hold importance in this culture especially when it comes to women's behavior. These phrases hold more than words; they encapsulate the ingrained values of South Asian society.

One participant recalled her childhood memories, *"I remember, I was not allowed to eat or drink anything in front of guests as it was considered disrespectful."* This shows South Asian societies have held these qualities in high regard and considered them as indicators of moral goodness. These values extend to the expectation that South Asian women should embody these qualities in their lives. Participants vividly recalled, *"being quiet"* around elders was not simply a suggestion but an essential expectation deeply rooted in their fabric. This expectation stems from the respect given to family members. As study findings reveal being quiet is not only a sign of respect but also contributes to maintaining harmony and order within the household. Thus, introverted qualities align closely with South Asian cultural norms, reinforcing the cultural preference for introversion.

4:3:2 Sub-theme: Impact of Cultural Upbringing

The impact of cultural upbringing on individuals' introverted personalities is a central theme in the study's findings. Participants reflected on how their cultural environment significantly influenced their development, moulding their personalities to conform to societal expectations that valued introverted qualities. One participant aptly described this environmental influence, noting that *"you're always told you should be quiet, you don't talk too much in front of elders."* This statement underscores the pivotal role of the environment in nurturing and appreciating introverted traits. Participants' comments described that within South Asian households, cultural values are not merely taught but deeply embedded, shaping individuals from a young age. Participants further elaborated on how South Asian culture places a premium on specific behaviors, particularly for girls. As one participant expressed, *"our culture does prioritize a certain way as being the correct way for girls to behave."* This cultural emphasis on conformity played a substantial role in shaping their introverted

dispositions. Another participant described that this pressure to conform to these cultural expectations contributes significantly to the development and reinforcement of introverted traits in individuals, particularly in the context of gender roles. Interestingly, even after moving to a different cultural environment, such as New Zealand, participants noted that the appreciation for introversion remained intact. One participant's observation was particularly illuminating, stating that *"introverts are being appreciated in New Zealand too, they know that you're very polite and won't be creating any problems in the workplace, which is a positive point around introvert"* thus, highlighting the consistency of this appreciation across different cultural settings. This finding implies that introverted characteristics are valued across cultural divides.

Participants shared personal experiences from childhood revealing the influence of South Asian cultural standards. These stories illustrate how cultural inclinations for introverted behavior show in everyday life. One participant's recollection stood out: *"I remember, I would never express my preference for a toy in childhood, or I would never tell my mum that I am getting tired doing house chores. I was known in the family for being a quiet and good girl."* This narrative illustrates how the cultural expectation of quietness and compliance was deeply ingrained, to the point where personal preferences and physical fatigue were suppressed to conform to the ideal of being a *"quiet and good girl."*

4:3:3 Sub-theme: Cross-Cultural Introvert Perceptions

The statement of one of the participants reflect the participant's apprehension about working in New Zealand, driven by a perception of cultural differences. However, as they settled into their new environment, they realized that New Zealanders respected their preferences and personalities. This revelation underscores a crucial aspect of

the intersection of introversion and identity—the impact of cultural differences on individuals' perceptions and experiences, *“For many years I didn’t work here; now I regret why. Though I had been working in Pakistan all my life before. I was reluctant to go out as I knew here culture is different in New Zealand. But I was wrong; here they respect your preferences, your personality. I cover my head which sets some boundaries which people find odd like not shaking hands, etc., but this also kind of helps me somewhere in minimizing interaction which is again in my favour as an introverted person.”*

The participant's acknowledgment of the frustration that arises when colleagues misinterpret introversion as disinterest or unfriendliness resonates with many introverts who have faced similar challenges. It highlights the inherent difficulty of managing these perceptions while maintaining professional relationships. *“As an introverted South Asian myself, I've had those moments too. It can be frustrating when colleagues mistake our reserved nature for disinterest or unfriendliness, right? Yeah, it can definitely be tough to navigate these perceptions and still keep things professional in our relationships.”*

One participant shared her observations about how people tend to make assumptions about introverted individuals based on the introverted behavior in meetings or gatherings. However, a critical question emerges—Is this a self-perceived judgment or a reflection of others' opinions? The participant's response—*“No, it’s intuitive.”*—reveals the subtlety of these assumptions, suggesting that they are often unspoken but deeply ingrained in social interactions.

Participant: It's interesting how people can make assumptions about me based on my behavior in meetings or gatherings. I've noticed that when I'm quiet, some colleagues tend to think I lack confidence, or I am shy.

Question: Is this your judgement or you heard them saying something like that?

Participant: No, it's intuitive.

One of the participant's career experiences, predominantly in affluent clinic settings, offer a unique perspective on how their identity intersects with external perceptions.

The participant's description of colleagues expecting her to be a "complete mouse" due to her introverted nature echoes a common stereotype associated with introverts—being quiet and passive. She stated, *"Because most of my work has been predominantly in very rich areas in clinics, you know, I'd probably be the only brown person there. Especially when I started off and then it would be a lot of old rich white guys, the dentists, you know, like a dentist who lives in America and has, like, a \$7,000,000 house and then they'd expect you to be a complete mouse, and then you're mousy anyway because you're introverted."*

Another layer of complexity emerges when we consider how cultural differences further complicate the understanding of introverted personalities. The participant astutely observes that Asians, in general, may take a little longer to open up compared to their Western counterparts. This cultural nuance can lead to misunderstandings, as people from different backgrounds may have varying expectations regarding social interaction and communication styles. She describes her feelings, *"Being an introvert, it might occasionally be difficult to immediately open up to everyone. Sometimes it seems as though people may not fully understand our personalities due to obvious difference of culture. yeah, it makes it more complicated. They seem to be unaware of the fact that Asians in general take a little longer to open up."*

4:4 Theme: Workplace Challenges

In the context of New Zealand's work environment, all eight participants often encountered situations in which they felt compelled to appear more extroverted, frequently encountering social conformity pressures. Multiple factors, including team dynamics, career advancement, and social interactions, contributed to this pressure. Several participants acknowledged that their introverted tendencies, characterised by a preference for introspection and observant behavior, occasionally impeded their workplace participation and communication.

4:4:1 Sub-theme: Pressure to Appear Extroverted

Participants often found themselves in situations where they were expected to provide immediate feedback, despite their natural inclination to analyze and understand matters thoroughly. As one participant expressed, *"It happens that people are looking for your feedback all the time, and it can be a bit tricky for introverts as they try to understand stuff more and are more observant. But teams just want the participation, and that puts pressure on you. You feel like I didn't say anything for the last two or three ideas, so what will my team think that I'm not interested? It's like you must force yourself to give some kind of feedback."*

Some participants consciously worked on changing their behavior after immigrating to New Zealand. They recognized the need to step out of their comfort zones to enhance social interactions and professional prospects. One participant stated, *"I find this quite challenging, and this is something after I have migrated to New Zealand that I have changed about myself consciously. I've put myself in situations where I've gone out and met up with people and put myself out of my comfort zone. Here in workplaces, I feel, you can't survive without it."* The driving force behind these efforts was the pressure to maintain a positive reputation in the workplace, as another

participant shared, *"And then when you are compared to others who are introverted, I mean, I would always like to have a good reputation at the workplace. So, I just put in extra efforts to appear extroverted when I'm meeting people, like, really, really approachable."*

Participants expressed how sometimes they feel uncomfortable around extroverted colleagues who expect constant conversation. One participant recounted, *"There was this one dentist who was very extroverted, the one I worked with. I would feel very uncomfortable around her because it was just her and me in the room and I'd always feel like I need to make conversation, and that would make me stressful."*

4:4:2 Sub-theme: Career Choices and Societal Expectations

Introverted individuals in New Zealand's work environment faced challenges related to career progression and societal expectations, often feeling disadvantaged within existing performance appraisal systems. Participants highlighted the limitations of existing performance appraisal systems, which primarily focused on objective outcomes rather than considering individual personality traits. As one participant pointed out, *"Appraisals and career progressions only talk about objectives and categorize all employees in one way. They do not categorize people as an introvert or extrovert. We don't have other measures to find out the progress of introverted people. They are mostly the same where they encourage people who talk a lot, who can better project their work efforts, who can be more expressive and so on. All these parameters for progress and career progression seem to favor extroverts."*

Introverted individuals observed that extroverted colleagues seemed to have an advantage in salary negotiations and were more likely to receive recognition for their efforts. The ability to create a positive impression through social interactions often translated into better compensation packages and greater visibility within the

workplace, leading to personal and professional benefits. One participant noted, "*I think people who are extroverted, they are able to negotiate much better packages for themselves, much better salaries. It gets them more credit, it gets them more visibility, it gets them more, you know, personal mileage.*"

Participants often felt neglected and disregarded by coworkers, particularly in environments where extroversion was highly valued. One participant expressed, "*I feel I'm easily overlooked by my colleagues, at times I feel ignored too. There is this teacher who talks a lot, we both are on the same level professionally, she loves joking around, and whenever there is some task, she is the one who is approached first. I feel with extroverts, people are more comfortable to connect.*"

The interviews conducted with introverted South Asian women working in New Zealand revealed valuable insights into the profound impact of introversion on their career choices and workplace experiences. The following narrative will explore these findings through the participants' own words and experiences.

The prevailing workplace culture that places a premium on extroverted qualities became evident. Participants often noted that introversion was not always appreciated or rewarded in the professional realm. They believed that extroverts enjoyed more recognition and financial incentives. In response to this, introverts often felt compelled to develop their social skills to adapt to these demands. One participant described her feelings, "*I think in workplaces, in terms of recognition money or anything, introversion doesn't bring you those benefits that extroversion does in. Not in social circles, not in workplaces, you have to become socially skilled.*"

The weight of cultural and societal expectations on career choices was a recurring theme. Some participants explained that their educational and career paths were heavily influenced by familial and societal pressures. This sometimes resulted in a

misalignment between their true aspirations and the careers they pursued. In essence, they found themselves in professions that didn't resonate with their introverted natures. A participant narrated, " *My prior education because it's a very specific education and it leaves you with very specific things that you can or cannot do, I was quite bull-headed about following it. But I do feel this job is not for me, but you know in South Asia, your career choice is not yours.*"

The desire for less socially demanding work environments was evident among introverted participants. They often yearned for roles that allowed them to work in solitude or engage in technical tasks without extensive social interaction. The contrast between the ideal job that aligned with their introverted nature and the realities of their current professions created a sense of frustration and emotional exhaustion. According to one participant, " *Recently we visited a dental lab in which they make mouth guards, things like that. And I wondered, why didn't I choose this field where I can just sit all day and not have people talk to me and I'm just doing, like, technical work. But here, if I'm treating 10 patients a day, I'm talking to 10 patients and then I'm educating 10 patients a day. It drains me; it's quite a big task for me.*"

Interestingly, some introverted individuals shared their journeys of adapting to roles that required extensive social interaction. They described how over time, they developed the necessary skills to excel in these positions. This adaptation process, while challenging, resulted in personal growth and improved interpersonal skills. However, it often came at the cost of feeling emotionally drained. According to one participant, " *My career choice has actually made me realize my worth. I was never a people person, but I somehow landed in customer services where I just need to talk all day. I feel I have practiced being extroverted over the years.*"

Participants described how they found solace in professions that allowed them to work independently. The advent of remote work further empowered introverts by enabling them to thrive in roles that required less social interaction. However, the desire for career progression occasionally led them to contemplate transitioning into roles that demanded more social engagement, creating a delicate internal conflict. This is described by one participant, *"I love my job as a software developer where I don't need to interact much with people, and now the comfort of working from home is an added thing for me. Sometimes I feel I should go into the teaching field after years of experience, but I'm hesitant as I feel it's something opposite to my personality. Maybe sometime, you never know."*

Cultural differences and the level of acceptance of personal boundaries played a significant role in the career choices of introverted individuals. In this case, one participant expressed regret for not working in New Zealand earlier, where she found a more accommodating and respectful environment. Her ability to set boundaries aligned with her introverted tendencies and minimized excessive social interaction.

One participant shared, *"I cannot dance with my students; that's how I have been, but it's the requirement of my job. I try to do it as I feel I will be easily replaced if I don't. Although at home even I am not that lively, or I have to think what I should talk about with my kids even. It's kind of a struggle for me. At times it makes me really tired, and sometimes I feel it keeps a child in me alive."*

4:5 Theme: Advice and coping strategies

4:5:1 Sub-Theme: Recharging and Coping Strategies

One effective coping strategy mentioned by a participant was her preference for written communication through emails or texts whenever possible: *"Well, in my case, I just let my colleagues know that I'd rather communicate through emails or texts"*

whenever I can. It's just easier for me that way. It can be a bit challenging when you have to answer calls, but it's such a relief when people have an idea of what they're getting into. I feel like my colleagues have noticed this too, and sometimes they don't really expect me to respond immediately."

Participants described their post-work routine at home, highlighting how they transition from a more extroverted work environment to a quieter, recharging atmosphere: *"When I'm at home, you know, after a day of trying to be more sociable than usual, I just put on some music and ask my kids not to chat with me for a little while. I really need this time to recharge."*

"You know, sometimes when I'm in the car, all I really want is some peace and quiet. I feel like I just need some quiet time to recharge my energy. I just need a break from my husband and kids. It can be quite challenging to become more extroverted if it doesn't come naturally to you. It requires some energy, but it's definitely important on job." This participant's approach allows her to create a peaceful environment where she can decompress and regain her energy after expending it in the workplace.

Participants mentioned the importance of being surrounded by people who understand their personality and appreciate their contributions. By seeking the company of understanding colleagues or friends who appreciate their introverted nature, they can find emotional support and affirmation: *"So I try to be in the company of the people who understand me and who appreciate me. And they know what kind of work I do, what kind of personality I have. So that helps me to regain the energy back."*

The COVID-19 epidemic caused a change in the nature of the workforce that expanded the potential for remote work. Participants described how this alteration had a positive impact on their ability to recharge, *"Working from home during Covid*

has actually been quite beneficial for me. It can feel much more manageable to spend three days in the office each week when you know you have two days of quiet work from home to look forward to. Also, at the workplace, I try to have my solo lunchtime instead of team lunches, whenever possible. It gives me some quiet time for myself.”

4:5:2 Sub-Theme: Resources and Support

All of the participants agreed unanimously that they don't have access, to resources or support groups specifically designed to help introverted Asian women facing challenges in the workplace in New Zealand. Their experiences show that there is a lack of mechanisms to meet their needs of a supportive work environment. The participants emphasized the importance of having one on one conversations with their managers as a chance to discuss about their concerns. They believed that these interactions are crucial, for building confidence and gaining recognition at work. As one participant put it, *“When you have one-on-one conversations with your managers, that is a very good time when you can discuss anything with your manager, you can bring up your points, your weaknesses, and if your manager or supervisor at your workplace is they would help you gain that confidence or make you prominent in the workplace, recognize your hard work around everybody.”* This sentiment highlights how crucial it is for introverted employees to receive attention and guidance from managers.

Moreover, participants emphasized the significance of being accepted and understood for their personality traits, in conflict resolution scenarios. They believed that if managers considered their personalities when dealing with conflicts, they would have a sense of support. One participant shared, *“I think people need acceptance. If a conflict or situation arises and the manager tries to resolve it*

understanding my personality, I would feel supported." This highlights the importance of understanding and approaching conflict resolution with empathy and nuance.

When participants were questioned about the availability of resources or support groups in their workplaces they provided their insights, *"I can only think of that and I cannot imagine having. But maybe, you know, at the managerial level. Things like if you had a big company and if you had some resources, I think it would be helpful, but I don't know how comfortable people would be at a workplace sharing their experiences if it was a workplace-supported thing."* This reply suggests the advantage of having resources available at a managerial level. However, it also raises concerns about individuals experience sharing experiences in a workplace environment.

Another participant mentioned the involvement of HR departments in resolving conflicts. She highlighted that people often feel dissatisfied, with HR interventions, *"Many HR departments do that, but still, people are never satisfied. HR has to think about everyone when there is a conflict, so obviously people think they are just not what they want. I think, like, see how Plunket has resources, right? Parenting courses and things like little workshops because I've attended a few, it would be very helpful actually."* This observation highlights the importance of having resources that go beyond HR interventions.

Someone else mentioned their desire for someone who could offer support and serve as a trusted advisor for difficulties. They also mentioned the advantages of having access to a psychologist stating, *"Ideally, I would want someone who could hear me if I am facing any challenges at the workplace. That can be one person and one-to-one sessions with that person would be good to de-stress myself. Maybe some psychologist. I remember how we always had one doctor in our school we*

used to go to." One of the participants emphasized how crucial it is to prioritize well-being and provide mental support within the workplace.

Another participant mentioned that they were not aware of any support groups in their workplace but stressed the significance of spreading awareness about personality types. They recommended engaging in team building activities to encourage acceptance and understanding among colleagues. *"I don't know of any support groups in my workplace, never heard of one. But definitely, there should be awareness about different personality types, so that people are more accepting of them, kind of team-building exercises we do."* This response from the participant highlights the advantages of encouraging diversity and inclusivity through programs and team building exercises.

4:5:3 Sub-Theme: Advice for Introverted South Asian Women facing challenges

During the course of the research, a notable finding emerged as five out of eight participants, all of whom were introverted South Asian women, shared a common perspective. They suggested that other introverted South Asian women who found themselves in New Zealand's workplace culture should consider making efforts to change certain aspects of their personalities to better fit into the professional environment. Their collective viewpoint can be summarized by the statement made by one of the participants, *"I think fake it till you make it."* They advocated for the idea that, in professional settings, individuals could benefit from adapting and, at the very least, pretending to be more extroverted to enhance their prospects and opportunities. According to one participant when asked about advice for other introverted women, she said:

Participant: *Keep putting yourself out of comfort zone because it's like, you know, if you keep training a muscle, it develops. So, if you keep training yourself, you develop, which is what I've done.*

Question: *So, you are making this point that introverted women need to change their personalities?*

Participant: *I think in workplaces. At least pretend to be.*

While some participants emphasised adaptation and the ability to excel in work environments, others emphasised the importance of upholding authenticity and self-confidence. One participant advised, *"You should be confident, and you should feel good about being an introvert because that is how you will feel better in life. You will have situations where you will need to be, but you don't have to act out all the time. Otherwise, you will be drained because you are acting against your nature and you might also develop some social anxiety."* Another participant suggested that it's crucial to accept one's personality while also striking a balance between introversion and extroversion. She said, *"I would say this is your personality, stay as you are. Just try to balance it out. May be extroverts sometimes need to behave as an introvert according to situation. Its all about balancing out things to go through challenges at workplace."*

Additionally, one of the participants recommended the importance of having trustworthy friends who can offer support and, if necessary, help express one's thoughts or provide advice when introverted individuals face challenges in expressing themselves. She advised, *"I will suggest them to have trustworthy friends around them. They can help, if a challenge comes, to express on your behalf or give you a better advice how to deal with that. Sometimes it gets really difficult for an introvert person to express themselves."* Similarly, another one advised, *"Speak up where it's*

needed. I know introverted people, like me, don't like to talk much so no need to talk unnecessarily but do speak where it's needed. Express yourself whenever you get a chance."

4:6 Summary

Thematic analysis demanded a substantial investment of time in my research journey. I was pleasantly surprised that interview questions (Appendix: F) were designed in a way that participants comprehended the questions with ease. However, I noticed data saturation after four interviews. I could tell that participants were enthusiastic to share their experiences, while answering questions in detail, demonstrating how much they wanted someone to hear about the challenges they faced at work. They acknowledged that this interview served as a mirror for them as well, learning a lot about aspects of their personalities that they had never discussed. I examine the significance of these findings in terms of the literature and research questions in the following chapter.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The chapter provides a comprehensive discussion of the study's findings with reference to the research literature by answering each research question. This is followed by a discussion of the results as they relate to the theoretical framework. The chapter will then continue with sections on the study's strengths, limitations, implications, and future directions for research. I start with the research questions and how they are answered.

5:1 Findings for Research Question 1

RQ: 1. What are the workplace experiences of introverted South Asian women working in New Zealand?

5:1:1 Perceptions of Introversions and Self-Identification

Introverted South Asian women have shed light on their experiences of working in New Zealand. "Pressure to Appear Extroverted" was a common subtheme. The eight participants often encountered situations where they felt compelled to engage in extroverted behavior, often succumbing to social conformity pressures. These findings address the first question in this research study on the work experiences of introverted South Asian women in New Zealand. It explains the widespread influence of extroverted norms on working environments and their consequences for introverted individuals, especially those from South Asian culture. Additionally, these challenges had effects on the well-being of introverted South Asian women. As one participant points out, *"All these parameters for progress and career progression seem to favor extroverts."*

The predominant association of introversion with the concept of "alone time" by all eight participants signifies the close relationship between introversion and the need

for privacy and solitude. This aligns with the existing literature as introverts are characterized as people who value solitude and prefer to spend time alone; they process ideas internally rather than verbally; they strive for depth rather than superficiality; prefer writing than talking; occasionally feel "people-drained" and need to withdraw into solitude to regain energy and clarity (Kahnweiler, 2018). Cain (2012) points out that while the exact percentage of introverts who also happen to be highly sensitive is unknown, it is reported that 70% of sensitives are introverts. The remaining 30% often report needing a lot of "downtime." Introverts are more likely to prefer quiet time alone because doing so encourages creative thinking and can help them come up with original solutions to their difficulties (Cain,2012). Psychologists have even theorized that introverts prefer forests or mountains to spend time alone (Oishi et al., 2015).

The results of the data gathered from eight self-identified introverts about their definition and interpretation of the term "introversion" align with the classical definition of introversion by Carl Jung (1921). According to Jung (1921), introversion directs one's attention inward and concentrating on one's internal thoughts and feelings. This is supported by the fact that all eight participants identified as introverts and stated how much they valued or needed time alone. This corresponds with prior research highlighting introverts as inward, private, quiet, reserved, reclusive, sensitive, and exhausted by groups (Eysenck, 1967).

Participants' descriptions of "comfort zone" and the concept of the "sweet spot" by Cain (2012) are very similar which is the lens used to explain the findings.

Participants claimed that they felt secure remaining in their comfort zone. Cain defines, the degree of stimulation at which a person's productivity and creativity are maximized is known as the "sweet spot." This sweet spot often exists for introverts at

lower levels of external stimuli than for extroverts. It captures the idea that situations with few external stimuli and social interactions are safe and secure for introverts. While occasionally venturing outside of this comfort zone is necessary for personal growth, the need to accept and respect one's inherent inclinations and limitations. Participants also described themselves as being more "*observant*" than others, which is in line with Kahnweiler's (2018, p. 5) statement that "introverts have more time to observe and read people." Introverts process cognitive and emotional information at a deep and thorough level while paying "alert attention" to it (Aron & Aron, 1997). Studies have shown that introverted children and adults are more likely to perceive subtle environmental changes (Jagiellowicz et al., 2010). At workplaces, due to their tendency to observe and listen, they often elicit ideas from others that improve teamwork (Cain, 2012).

The discovery that introverts can adjust to numerous social circumstances, as demonstrated by one participant's experience, emphasizes how adaptable introverted people are in various scenarios. Extraversion, one of the Big Five factors, and adaptability are related in much research in general literature (McLaughlin et al., 2008). However, it is worth noting that there is not necessarily a positive correlation between extroversion and adaptability. Only some studies challenge this conventional thinking, mainly when confined to specific contexts like severe conditions or high-pressure scenarios. For instance, researchers found that introversion and low assertiveness were associated with successful adaptation in a simulated mountain ascent and Antarctic winter-over crews (Rosnet et al., 2000; Bolmont et al., 2001). Moreover, positive adaptation during an Antarctic trek was claimed to be linked to "keeping thoughts private," which is also a characteristic of

introversion (Wood et al., 1999). These findings challenge the one-size-fits-all view of personality and adaptability.

Participants' feelings of being unheard in group settings relate to the challenge of invisibility. Compared to their extroverted peers, introverts who work quietly alone are more likely to be overlooked (Lebin et al., 2019). Introverts might feel uncomfortable about drawing attention to themselves and worry that their opinions will not be taken seriously due to their reserved nature (Cain, 2012; Kahnweiler, 2018). Introverts tend to be more relaxed, so their ideas, observations, and solutions might go unnoticed. More introverted employees frequently complain that they cannot express their opinions, especially in group discussions.

Additionally, they find it challenging to speak up and be heard in one-on-one interactions with extroverts. Many people feel that their slower, cautious manner might be blamed. They complain that even when given the chance to speak, the more active team members either ignore or co-opt their ideas. This experience is consistent with earlier research showing how extroverted colleagues in social situations might overshadow introverts. The societal ideal of the charismatic, outgoing person is at odds with the introvert's quiet, reserved temperament (Lebin et al., 2019).

Cain (2012), on the other hand, explains that extroverts are the people who will add life to dinner parties and laugh generously at jokes. Most teachers think that an extrovert is the ideal student. Even we watch TV series featuring rock stars and flamboyant webcast hosts as the main characters instead of the "kids next door". Similarly, we are expected to aggressively market ourselves to advance our careers. This all indicates the societal preference for extroverted qualities.

5:1:2 Social Stereotypes and Misconceptions

Participants' experiences being labeled as "shy" or "bookworms" reflect the misunderstandings surrounding introversion. This discovery aligns with a misconception that introverts are inherently shy or neurotic. However, it is essential to note that introverts might be more reserved and prefer activities to recharge (Lebin et al., 2019). Lebin et al. further argues this does not necessarily mean they are shy. Shyness entails fearing rejection or embarrassment in front of others. Not all introverts possess this trait. Psychologists utilize a two-axis model to map personality traits, placing anxiety-stability on the vertical axis and introversion-extroversion on the horizontal axis. This ends up in four personality quadrants: calm extroverts, anxious (or impulsive) extroverts, calm introverts, and anxious introverts. These categories exhibit that an individual can be a shy extrovert or a non-shy introvert, and it is also possible to be both shy and introverted (Cain, 2012).

5:2 Findings for Research Question 2

RQ: 2. What challenges do introverted South Asian women in New Zealand encounter at work, and how do these challenges affect their well-being? What coping mechanisms do introverted South Asian women employ to deal with specific challenges they encounter at the workplace?

Questions two and three (Appendix F) allowed each participant to naturally discuss the challenges they have had in New Zealand workplaces due to their introverted behavior. Not that the participants didn't have good experiences with their introversion; rather, as many of the interviews conducted, they seemed to offer a private, secure space for participants to talk about the difficulties they had as introverts. The second research question is supported by the finding that the pressure to fit in with extroverted expectations occasionally hampered introverted

women's job participation and communication. Introverted tendencies characterized by introspection and observant behavior have emerged to create specific challenges in the context of career choices and social expectations. Participants have adopted coping mechanisms that demonstrate resilience and adaptability in response to these challenges.

Participants often faced situations demanding quick feedback, which is challenging for introverts who offer a carefully considered response. Introverts experience stress when asked to respond fast and do not have an answer (Kahnweiler, 2018). One area for improvement in many organizational cultures is the perception that those who listen first are incapable of thinking quickly. Since introverts typically analyze information internally before sharing, they might be perceived as contributing less or not interacting with others (Cain, 2012; Kahnweiler, 2018). Participants reported consciously changing their behavior to appear extroverted, though uncomfortable for themselves, as they think it is troublesome to be introverted in a corporate environment.

Participants made deliberate attempts to change their behavior after moving to New Zealand. They realized that they needed to push themselves beyond their comfort zones to improve their social connections and career prospects. This deliberate adaptation reflects Susan Cain's idea of the "Extrovert Ideal," according to which extroverted traits are frequently given precedence in social expectations (Cain, 2012). There is constant pressure to live up to this standard, and introverted people might feel obliged to change their behavior to fit extroverted ideals.

Introverted people might fabricate a False Self in the workplace that conforms to extroverted norms. This directly aligns with Winnicott's theory of the True and False Self as previously discussed in the theoretical framework (Chapter: 2). Their genuine

introverted characteristics, such as introspection and a propensity for in-depth understanding, are suppressed to create this False Self (Winnicott, 2018). The participants' comments on comparisons to other introverted people highlight the role of social comparison in creating this false self (Winnicott, 2018). Even if it involves hiding their True Self, people will sometimes adopt behaviors and characteristics seen as more socially desirable to preserve a positive reputation at work (Winnicott, 2018). Participants' emotions of stress when striving to exhibit extroverted behaviors indicate the discomfort and inner conflict that can result from this tension between authenticity and conformity.

Additionally, the participants' accounts support the assumption that extraversion is frequently idealized and linked to desirable characteristics in Western society (Cain, 2012). Open and talkative people are usually thought to be more innovative, attractive, fascinating, and desirable as employees (Cain, 2012). In this situation, introverted people could face difficulties because of cultural expectations that value extroverted traits.

One of the salient observations made by these participants is the advantage that extroverted colleagues enjoy, particularly in salary negotiations and the recognition of their contributions. Those who excel in social interactions often find themselves on a more favorable career trajectory in a society that values and often prioritizes extroverted traits. Not being front and center is another trait that can create problems for introverts in the workplace. The key impacts of being invisible are lost opportunities, unheard ideas, and lost personal power (Kahnweiler, 2018). The "shiny" extroverted person often gets the resources he needs to do his job while his more introverted co-worker sits back in frustration. Even though the introvert is plugging away, he might not be getting the credit for his work. When it comes time for

budget allocations, pay raises, or plum assignments, management tends to overlook the introverted person's strengths, capabilities, and accomplishments when these folks need to take center stage (Kahnweiler, 2018).

One recurring sentiment among participants is the palpable sense of being overlooked and ignored by their colleagues, particularly in work environments where extroversion is highly prized. This feeling of invisibility is poignantly captured by one participant who laments, "*I feel I am easily overlooked by my colleagues; at times I feel ignored too.*" The experiences of these introverted participants resonate with the observations of DiTomaso (2015), who explores the various observable behaviors in the workplace that can both directly and indirectly impact introverted individuals. Building on DiTomaso (2015), these behaviors encompass responses explicitly against introversion, such as quiet colleagues' direct exclusion or neglect. In this context, ignoring a quiet colleague reflects a failure to appreciate their contributions and capabilities, perpetuating the invisibility felt by introverts. Furthermore, the dynamics of favoring extroversion in the workplace often manifest in behaviors that indirectly disadvantage introverted individuals. These behaviors can manifest when more extroverted employees receive more opportunities and recognition at work simply because their performance is more visible.

One exciting discovery occurred when a participant stated, "*I feel I have practiced being extroverted over the years.*" Placed in a role inherently demanding extensive social interaction, she discovered her ability to engage in conversations and interact with customers despite her initial self-identification as a non-people person. Her career trajectory led her to develop social skills and behaviors that align more closely with extroversion. Interestingly, her experience challenges the conventional notion that acting extrovertedly comes at a significant personal cost, such as losing

authenticity or increased exhaustion (McCord & Joseph, 2020). One of the studies revealed, perhaps surprisingly, that extroverts and introverts felt more authentic during moments in which they acted more extraverted (Fleeson & Wilt, 2010). These results contradict the trait-consistency hypothesis and suggest that acting extraverted could increase authenticity in introverts. In addition, two brief laboratory studies have investigated whether extraverted behavior can increase feelings of tiredness.

Gallagher et al. (2011) found that introverts did not find it significantly more effortful to follow act-extraverted instructions than act-introverted ones. Zelenski et al. (2012) found that acting extraverted did not impact introverts' performance on a cognitive task used as a performance-based indicator of cognitive fatigue. These studies suggest that, contrary to common beliefs, introverts may not experience substantial negative consequences when they engage in extroverted behaviors.

One of the most intriguing findings mirrored by subsequent studies was that the more creative persons tended to be socially poised introverts. They had good interpersonal skills but were "not sociable or participative in temperament." They described themselves as self-sufficient and individualistic. Many had been shy and alone as teenagers (Cain, 2012). These findings do not imply that introverts are always more creative than extroverts. However, they do suggest that there are likely to be many introverts among persons who have been exceptionally creative throughout their lives (Cain, 2012).

5:3 Findings for Research Question 3

RQ: 3. How do introverted South Asian women in New Zealand negotiate their cultural identity and values at work, and how does this impact their professional experiences?

The theme of "Cultural Influence on Introversion" within the narratives of introverted South Asian women in New Zealand addresses the research question of how these individuals negotiate their cultural identity and values in the context of their work environment and how it impacts their overall professional experiences. Participants' narratives echoed the deeply ingrained cultural values prevalent in South Asian societies. These values are rooted in hierarchical family structures and expectations that emphasize humility, quietness, and respect, especially in the context of women's behavior (Singh et al., 2005; Azmat & Fujimoto, 2016; Essers et al., 2013).

Participants vividly recalled their childhood instructions to embody such attributes--a testament to cultural norms shaping individuals from an early age (Azmat & Fujimoto, 2016). For instance, a participant recounted memories of not being allowed to eat or drink in front of guests due to perceived disrespectfulness—this exemplifies how deeply ingrained these values are within Asian culture (Cain, 2012).

The phrases such as "She's a good girl, she's quiet, she's humble" reflect South Asian cultural values, encapsulating the appreciation for introverted qualities (Cain, 2012). These values represent moral goodness and dictate the expectations placed on South Asian women to embody these qualities in their lives (Azmat & Fujimoto, 2016). Participants revealed that being quiet around elders was not merely a suggestion but an essential expectation deeply rooted in their fabric, emphasizing the role of respect within family dynamics (Cain, 2012).

Interestingly, participants noted that introverts were also appreciated in New Zealand, as their quiet and polite nature was seen as an asset in the workplace (McCord & Joseph, 2020). This observation suggests that the value assigned to introverted traits transcends cultural boundaries, reinforcing the enduring influence of South Asian cultural norms (Cain, 2012). The cultural emphasis on conformity, particularly for

girls, played a substantial role in shaping participants' introverted dispositions. The pressure to conform to these cultural expectations significantly contributed to the development and reinforcement of introverted traits in individuals, especially in the context of gender roles (Azmat & Fujimoto, 2016). South Asian culture prioritizes specific behaviors as "the correct way" for girls to behave, reinforcing conformity to introverted qualities (McCord & Joseph, 2020). Personal anecdotes from participants' childhoods vividly illustrate the enduring influence of South Asian cultural norms. Participants recalled suppressing personal preferences and physical fatigue to conform to the idea of being a "*quiet and good girl*," demonstrating how deeply ingrained these cultural expectations are (Cain, 2012).

Instances where colleagues perceive the reserved nature of introverts as a lack of interest or even unfriendliness were a recurring theme and is supported by literature. Introverts' silence and sparse words can create the impression that they are withdrawn, gruff, insensitive, or even rude. They are often asked if they are okay and told they are too serious. Although, Introverted people are not bothered by social situations; they prefer not to engage (Walsh, 2012). Thus, introverted people do not intend to create a negative impression. However, they often do with more outgoing others (Kahnweiler, 2018).

The participant's insights into how introverted individuals are often subject to assumptions based on their conduct in meetings or social gatherings are consistent with the previous research. The seemingly innocent question, "Why are you so quiet?" reflects the stereotype that extraversion is superior to introversion (McCord & Joseph, 2020). Being an introvert can be difficult, especially in Western nations where talkativeness is encouraged and loudness is the norm (Walsh, 2012). The quality of work sometimes has less significance than the loudness of voice, whether

in classrooms designed for group learning or open-plan offices that encourage lengthy meetings (Walsh, 2012). A subliminal bias exists against introverts, wasting their talent, energy, and happiness (Cain, 2012).

Stereotypes, as mentioned by a participant that her colleagues expected her to be a "*complete mouse*," demonstrate that introverted individuals are perceived to be less competent and a poor fit for cognitively complex work (McCord & Joseph, 2020).

Even in professions where trait introversion seems to be an asset, such as professional positions, this may result in unfavorable responses to introversion (Barrick et al., 2001). Since being gregarious and outgoing is the unspoken standard in Western culture, introverts stand out as potentially troublesome individuals (Walsh, 2012). The participant's experiences resonate with this cultural norm, where she was expected to be more extroverted in affluent clinic settings. In the West, caution, discipline, and even fearfulness might be healthy—and intelligent—adaptations for the overstimulated person, but many parents would not want these traits in their children, especially in a culture that glorifies extroverts. Therefore, it is usual for parents of introverted children to push their children to be more outgoing in order to prevent them from being overlooked in school and later in life. That might be a mistake and not easy because it is challenging to radically alter our personality types (Walsh, 2012).

5:4 Findings for Research Question 4

RQ: 4. What can organizations do to create more inclusive work environments for introverted South Asian women?

Introverted individuals employ various coping strategies to navigate the challenges their work environments pose, aiming to strike a balance between their innate introverted tendencies and the extroverted workplace expectations. One effective

coping strategy mentioned by a participant is her preferred communication style, which aligns with previous research indicating that introverts generally prefer computer-mediated communication over face-to-face interaction, as it allows more time for internal processing (Goby, 2006). She emphasized the importance of clarifying to colleagues that she prefers written communication through emails or texts whenever possible, stating, "*I just let my colleagues know that I'd rather communicate through emails or texts whenever I can.*"

It is common for introverted people to become exhausted when forced to be with people continually (Kahnweiler, 2018). This is evident from the comments by participants, "*I feel like I just need some quiet time to recharge my energy,*" and as another said, "*I try to have my solo lunchtime instead of team lunches, whenever possible*". Fatigue and a sense of dread can set in, and introverts require time to recharge their batteries and decompress after spending time with others (Kahnweiler, 2018). These periods allow for rest, reflection, and planning for the next gathering. According to John Gray (2003), a "cave" is a metaphor for a man's place of refuge, where he can rest. Introverts require a similar getaway to recover from the tiredness they experience when surrounded by extroverts (Kahnweiler, 2018).

Another recurring theme was the need for introverts to recharge after expending energy on social interactions. If introverts believe they are being treated unfairly because they are introverted, they might feel pressure to become more extroverted (McCord & Joseph, 2020). However, fatigue can also be caused by self-control efforts done in an attempt to blend in, particularly for more introverted people.

Several theoretical perspectives suggest that behaving more extraverted would be detrimental to introverts, particularly regarding perceived genuineness and feelings of exhaustion (Jacques-Hamilton et al., 2019). Authenticity is a subjective judgment that

one's behaviors reflect one's actual self (Fleeson & Wilt, 2010), whereas tiredness is a subjective experience of insufficient energy (Leikas & Ilmarinen, 2017). The trait consistency hypothesis (Fleeson & Wilt, 2010) posits that people feel most authentic when they act by their disposition (i.e., in a way that is consistent with their disposition).

Similarly, free trait theory (Little, 2008) proposes that when people act against their dispositional tendencies, they will need to "restore" or "recharge," or they will incur bodily and emotional costs, such as exhaustion. Thus, introverts who attempt to increase their extraverted behavior might enjoy affective gains at the expense of feeling inauthentic and exhausted (Jacques-Hamilton et al., 2019). Surface acting by more introverted individuals is associated with lower cognitive and energetic resources than surface acting by more extroverted professionals (Judge et al., 2009). Introverted people are also more prone to exhaustion due to long-term efforts to behave contrary to their nature (Jacques-Hamilton et al., 2019). Overall, it suggests that introverted persons are more likely to be influenced by self-control efforts (i.e., behaving more extroverted), which might hurt performance, particularly given norms that encourage and reward more extroverted behavior (McCord & Joseph, 2020). The experiences and insights shared by the participants shed light on the lack of resources and support groups for South Asian women in the workplace in New Zealand. These findings align with existing research on support and diversity initiatives (Scandura & Graen, 1984; Bauer et al., 2006; Cardon et al., 2022). One participant emphasized the importance of one-on-one conversations with managers to address issues. Building relationships with managers can mitigate the impact of introversion on task performance. Organizations can enhance their resources by engaging introverted employees through mentoring programs or training for

supervisors (Scandura & Graen, 1984), thereby facilitating a smoother transition for introverts (Bauer et al., 2006). Communication apprehension and self-censorship might also be the challenges employees face, which can hinder their ability to speak up in the workplace (Cardon et al., 2022). By fostering a communication climate and promoting inclusion, organizations can create an environment where introverted employees feel more comfortable expressing their ideas and perspective.

One key takeaway from the feedback provided by the participants is the recognition of how crucial it is for managers to offer support that aligns with each individual's unique personality. As one participant aptly pointed out, "*If a conflict or situation arises and the manager tries to resolve it by understanding my personality, I would feel supported.*" One essential skill leader must possess is understanding individuals (Bakhsh, 2020). Managers need to be able to interpret the requirements of their employees in order to decide on a management approach. Supervisors can utilize the Big Five personality traits framework for personality categorization to aid managers in identifying personality types (Bakhsh, 2020).

The statements like, "*I don't know how comfortable people would be at a workplace sharing their experiences if it was a workplace-supported thing*" and the suggestion of "*one-to-one sessions*" shows participants' reluctance toward sharing experiences. This highlights the need for organizational strategies that foster comfort and trust. This resonates with Cain's (2012) caution against the pitfalls of the "New Groupthink". Cain recommends that if the crowd's wisdom is wanted, it should be gathered in writing or electronically, ensuring that ideas are kept secret from one another until each participant has had a chance to contribute. Even though face-to-face interaction is crucial for establishing trust, it should be remembered that group dynamics inevitably entail barriers to original thought. Individuals should be allowed

to interact alone and in small, informal groups. Further, Cain mentions, that good ideas should not be confused with assertiveness. No matter how externally introverted they appear, managers must remember that between one-third and half of their staff likely exhibit introversion. The layout of the company's offices should be considered. Expectations should be modified because introverts might only sometimes show enthusiasm for team building, open office plans, or birthday celebrations over lunch (Cain, 2012).

The advice "*I think fake it till you make it*" from one of the participants implied that introverted people should not feel compelled to remain introverted at work. Many introverts learn to fake it early, precisely what they do. Moreover, that mask hides something profound and primitive. The introverted or extroverted temperament appears to be significantly inborn and inherited, influencing behavior shortly after a child is born (Walsh, 2012). This finding resonates with the broader literature on workplace dynamics. Extraverted behaviors tend to be implicitly associated with competence, even though these constructs are weakly related (Wolf & Ackerman, 2005). For example, dominant individuals tend to attain positions of influence within groups because they are perceived to be competent by their groupmates, even after controlling for actual competence (Anderson & Kilduff, 2009). According to a prior study, extroverts are typically seen as more competent, have more ideas, and have more insight than introverts (Cain, 2012). As leaders, overconfident and loud people are more likely to be hired by employers (Paulhus & Morgan, 1997). Some creative industries, like graphic design, need an extroverted disposition from the employee. One of Cain's interviewees, who worked for a significant media business, said, "You have to be outgoing, fun, and jazzed up to work here" (Cain, 2012). Extroverts favor verbal and face-to-face interactions and are more likely to participate in direct

communication. They prefer verbal communication overwritten because of their social nature, even though it is more secure (Raja et al., 2020). Being surrounded by people gives them energy. Understanding people's emotions and feelings through verbal communication is helpful in organizations. This method of communication makes it more likely to develop effective relationships with others, which is challenging for introverts (Raja et al., 2020).

The research participants' statements demonstrate the various viewpoints of the group of introverted South Asian women. Some participants stressed the value of adaptation and navigating work environments, saying introverted people should be willing to change their behavior in particular circumstances. In his book, Kahnweiler (2018) stresses the value of introverts moving outside their comfort zones. As a result, they can build the connections that make introverts a visible and vital asset to their company and profession (Kahnweiler, 2018). However, another advice was to *"stay as you are. Just try to balance it out. Maybe extroverts sometimes need to behave as introverts according to the situation"*. This is consistent with studies showing that people's behaviors change significantly over time (Zelenski et al., 2013). Although trait extroverts exhibit extraverted behaviors more frequently than introverts, trait introverts nevertheless spend most of their time behaving outgoing, bold, and energetic (Fleeson & Gallagher, 2009).

One participant said, *"You should be confident, and you should feel good about being an introvert because that is how you will feel better. You will have situations where you will need to be, but you do not have to act out all the time. Otherwise, you will be drained because you are acting against your nature, and you might also develop some social anxiety."* According to the study, assuming that introverts seek pleasure, it is worthwhile looking into explanations for introverts' seemingly inferior behavioral

choices (Zelenski et al., 2013). Research has investigated several theories, focusing on the potential costs of acting against one's disposition. Little (2008), for example, proposed that people will go against their initial nature (i.e., physiological tendencies) in order to pursue essential personal goals (e.g., personal projects). Although achieving one's goals might improve one's well-being, Little (2008) contends that it also detracts from one's well-being because it is psychologically complex and challenges the nervous system. Introverts might enjoy appearing extraverted (especially when achieving essential goals) yet doing so can weary them physically and psychologically (Zelenski et al., 2013).

According to Vohs et al. (2005), counter-dispositional behavior might have nonaffective costs such as ego depletion and self-regulatory resource consumption. To put it another way, acting in a nonhabitual manner can need more effort or active self-control. Zelenski et al. (2012) used the Stroop task to measure depletion and found some support for this theory; however, the effects were only seen in trait extraverts who were told to act like introverts. In other words, trait extroverts performed worse on a Stroop task after engaging in counter-dispositional behavior in an interview or group task, but trait introverts did not (Zelenski et al., 2013).

There are two perspectives on this topic of retaining authenticity in the literature. Even though being extraverted is enjoyable for introverts without incurring negative affective, cognitive, or self-control costs, they might nevertheless avoid doing so since it feels unnatural (Zelenski et al., 2013). Although no authenticity studies have been conducted in a laboratory environment to alter introverted or extraverted behavior, the existing evidence argues against subjective authenticity as a cost of introverts' extraverted behavior (Zelenski et al., 2013). Fleeson and Wilt (2010) discovered the opposite, finding that while trait introverts believed their introverted

behavior to be more authentic in retrospective reports, simultaneous ratings (using the experience sampling method, or ESM) suggest that most people, including trait introverts, claimed to feel more authentic when also reporting more extraverted behavior. Contrary to popular belief, extraversion, emotional stability, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness were all associated with a person's sense of authenticity at the moment, and these correlations were independent of disposition (Fleeson & Wilt, 2010). More intuitive retrospective findings suggest that introverts might believe being extraverted would feel unauthentic, but while doing so in the time, they might experience something different (Zelenski et al., 2013). According to research, extraverted interventions might even be used to cure depression and other psychiatric disorders in order to make individuals happier (Zelenski et al., 2013).

5:5 Findings for Research Question 5

RQ: 5. How can workplace cultural competence training be implemented to improve the working conditions for introverted South Asian women?

Various studies have shed light on the workplace competence training that can enhance the well-being and contributions of introverted individuals in the workplace (Mccord & Joseph, 2020; Furnham & Bradley, 1997; Dagar, 2023; Cain, 2012).

These studies have proposed potential strategies to accommodate different personality types in professional settings better.

One strategy involves rethinking office space design. The methods through which organizations attempt to increase collaboration might produce an environment in which more extroverted individuals are more likely to thrive and more introverted individuals are stigmatized (Mccord & Joseph, 2020). Office plans have evolved from closed spaces to open-concept office designs (Dagar, 2023). The open-office trend rewards those who are better able to work in a noisy, distracting environment, i.e.,

more extroverted employees (Furnham & Bradley, 1997), which might create a within-organization hierarchy that disadvantages more introverted employees. Open offices enable extraverts to recharge their energy. However, the constant commotion leads to overarousal among introverts, depleting their energy. For effective “psychological” inclusion, along with the open spaces, organizations can provide designated “quiet zones,” meditation pods, private work rooms, and remote work options (Dagar, 2023)

Collaboration, communication, and recognition methods can also be adapted to suit introverted employees. However, legitimate organizational practices, brainstorming, open communication, and public acknowledgment are hostile to the workforce's introverted workers (Dagar, 2023). Additionally, focused thinking is needed for specific complex and creative tasks. A buddy system, one-on-one idea sharing, written or virtual ways of contact, silent or personal appreciation of work, and a buddy system would be appropriate to ensure an equal opportunity for introverts (Dagar, 2023). Regarding wellbeing interventions, team outings and offsite activities are often more appealing to extroverts than introverts. Organizations might implement silent retreats and mindfulness programs geared inward to promote introverts' well-being. In order to support compatible activities (pottery, journaling/writing), they can also invest in an organization-wide "person-activity" fit mapping. A holistic approach must also be used to assess well-being in both high- and low-arousal conditions (Dagar, 2023)

Moreover, the concept of person-environment (PE) fit is crucial in reducing negative responses to introversion in the workplace. Employees are more likely to perform better in environments that align with their strengths, creating a demands-abilities fit (Kristof, 1996) because performance expectations are more likely to be met. In such

cases, legitimate responses to introversion might be lower because performance expectations are more likely to be met (McCord & Joseph, 2020). Introverted employees might experience fewer negative responses to introversion in environments that align with their personality traits. These environments may include quiet workspaces (Furnham & Bradley, 1997), which provide introverts with the solitude and focus they need to excel. Additionally, introverted individuals may thrive in more autonomous work settings (Raja & Johns, 2010), with greater control over their tasks and responsibilities. Furthermore, task-oriented work (Stewart et al., 2005) can be conducive to introverted employees' performance, as it allows them to concentrate on specific tasks and projects, leveraging their deep thinking and analytical skills (McCord & Joseph, 2020)

Creating flexible work settings that allow employees to navigate a variety of social interactions while also providing opportunities for privacy is crucial. When done correctly and in moderation, cooperative learning can be productive. However, individuals should also be given the time and training to practice purposefully.

Furthermore, it is critical to acknowledge that many people—particularly introverts—need additional peace and solitude to produce their best work (Cain, 2012).

Due to their quiet nature, the competencies and potential of introverted employees might be less likely to be noticed (Grant & Berry, 2011; Judge et al., 2002). Studies suggest that to enhance creativity, managers must provide employees with tasks that have high levels of task complexity so that they might be challenged to engage in creative activities (Zhang et al., 2017). It is also essential for managers to remember that too much involvement in guanxi management (relationship-based business management) hinders introverts' cognitive persistence, which is needed to produce truly creative results (Zhang et al., 2017). Thus, managers should tolerate introverted

employees who do not show enthusiasm in engaging in guanxi management.

Managers need to pay close attention to the different personalities of their employees to harness the creativity of highly introverted employees and allow them to reach their full potential (Zhang et al., 2017).

5:6 Revisiting the theoretical frameworks

5:6:1 Winnicott's Conceptualization of the True Self and False Self

A significant discovery of this study was that the majority of individuals talked about putting on a persona or occasionally feeling differently on the outside than they do on the inside. Some participants reported acting more extrovert than they usually do, while others gave a more general description of the idea that their behavior at home or in comfortable places differed from their public persona and that they did this to better handle particular social situations. Most interviewees said they did this to deal with their sense of alienation and realisation that their introverted inclinations were not acceptable in society. Some introverted participants' personas mirror what Winnicott (2018) identified as a False Self. On the other hand, it is neither as severe nor result in as much dysfunction as Winnicott's (2018) False Self.

According to Winnicott (2018), if the environment is not truly sensitive to the person's individuality, the highly individuated True Self will not manifest. Instead, a False Self—one that tries to stifle uniqueness and conform to the demands and norms of others—may form. It's a safety measure, a safeguard against criticism, censure, or even the dreaded abandonment. Ultimately, this False Self becomes inflexible and unduly obedient because of its unconscious attempts to win over and satisfy others. Individuality, vitality, idiosyncrasy, and difference are all masked. The vitality, the might, the "wildness" of the True Self is lost in this crippling, confining process (Berzoff et al., 2011, p. 101).

The personas that the participants described shared a similar function in that it required one to suppress their own needs to meet the needs of others. They also indicated that they only did this in specific situations and that it was frequently exhausting and could not be sustained over long periods. Respondents viewed this persona as a tool, something they could control, that would enable them to handle situations more effectively. The participants share their need to be liked by others and the awareness that, in some circumstances, they might need to take a different approach to the problem, which might conflict with their preferred course of action.

5:6:2 Ambivalent Sexism

A clear insight into the complicated intersection between being a South Asian woman at work in New Zealand and being an introvert is provided by the experience of the participants. In those cases, there is a wide network of professional connections, unusual cultural traditions and a complicated relationship among gender norms and expectations, in particular sexism.

An important finding of the research is that in the New Zealand workplace, participants internalize benevolent sexism and value submissiveness as a strength. As one participant says, "*Introverts are being appreciated in New Zealand too*", it appears that the people of New Zealand hold introverts in particularly high regard, viewing them as nice and trustworthy individuals. They find it pleasing because introverts are good listeners and keen observers of the little things that most people overlook. South Asian women stand to benefit from this because introverted traits like being quiet, considerate, and modest are well-praised in their own culture and where if they are extroverted, the cultural expectations and gender standards put on them can complicate their lives (Lo, 2018).

It is crucial to understand how early experiences develop cultural norms related to being a “*quiet and good girl*”, as indicated by one participant, to comprehend how cultural upbringing forms individual identities. Cultural stereotypes of submissiveness are ingrained in participants’ upbringing and affected by ambivalent sexism.

Examining cultural traits through the lens of sexism can provide a more profound understanding of how traditional gender roles are accepted and maintained, affecting the behavior and expectations of South Asian women in the professional environment. Women who follow traditional gender roles are encouraged by South Asian culture and made to feel good about themselves when they behave in a particular way, but this also makes women feel incompetent and dependent (Glick & Fiske, 1996). According to a participant, the experiences of covering one's head and following cultural standards show how individualism and personal autonomy are accepted in New Zealand workplace. The acceptance of boundaries and the potential for misunderstanding by colleagues highlight the difficulties faced by South Asian women as they strive to find a balance between their cultural identity and workplace expectations. This intricate interplay between work-life and cultural traditions reflects the broader concept of benevolent sexism, which suggests that conforming to traditional gender roles can sometimes be rewarded in various professional settings. On the other hand, it seems that the participant has noticed a trend of struggling to fit into different elite environments due to cultural differences not being fully accepted. This highlights the difficulties that South Asian women in New Zealand face in the workplace. To fit in, the participants felt that they were expected to be “*mousey*” or conform to other stereotypes. This illustrates how growing up in a culture that supports ambivalent sexism can affect how South Asian women are perceived in the workplace. It's worth noting that research has shown that ambivalent sexism is

supported globally (Barreto & Doyle, 2022). Ambivalent sexism can play a significant role in impacting women's lives in a variety of social situations. In this case, it appears that exhibiting a submissive attitude is what can be expected of South Asian women in New Zealand workplaces.

5.7 Summary

By examining the cultural traits through the lens of sexism, we can gain a deeper understanding of how traditional gender roles are accepted and maintained, particularly among South Asian women in professional environments. Introverted South Asian women in New Zealand workplaces feel the need to act or adopt a persona to negotiate society's demand for a particular kind of social connection, and there is a sense that they are not authentic which leaves them feeling energy drained. Participants observed that extroverted colleagues enjoy more benefits while introverts are overlooked. On the other hand, it was observed that in New Zealand workplaces introverted South Asians are appreciated as introverts are believed to be conflict-avoidants at work and those who value peaceful interactions. Recognizing that introverts possess valuable capabilities that can significantly benefit organizations, it is imperative to identify the conditions conducive to unlocking their full potential and enabling them to excel in their roles. This understanding is crucial for the well-being and success of introverted employees and advantageous for organizations seeking to harness the unique strengths of introverted individuals. The following chapter reveals the interesting outcomes of the study along with its strengths and limitations.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

The main research question guiding this study was: "What are the lived experiences of South Asian women working in New Zealand who identify as introverts, and how do their introverted nature and cultural background intersect and influence their workplace experiences?" Through in-depth interviews and qualitative analysis, this research illuminates the unique experiences and challenges of an underrepresented group, i.e., introverted South Asian women employed in New Zealand. The lived experiences of these individuals reveal the complexity of navigating a world that frequently prioritizes extroversion over all else--a vital insight. While introverted South Asian women face various challenges in New Zealand workplaces, it is essential to highlight that they also have exceptional qualities highly respected by their coworkers, including being observant, good listeners, and conflict-avoiders.

6:1 Outcomes of the Research

The outcomes of this study suggest that South Asian introverted women might be neglected and invisible in New Zealand workplaces. In this research on introverted South Asian women working in New Zealand, it was clear that their interactions with peers and coworkers substantially impacted their experiences. Those who reported feeling encouraged and appreciated by their peers and colleagues mainly had more positive social experiences and higher self-esteem. Participants who felt seen as different and suffered professionally, particularly when they did not feel supported or seen by their coworkers, expressed social issues and insecurities. This lack of support and recognition affected their self-perceptions. This suggests that managers and organizations ignore employees with different personality types, particularly introverts, who might be having difficulties. Introverted people frequently exhibit more

internalized and less overt actions, making it difficult for others to recognize their challenges. This emphasizes the need for managers and organizations to be more aware of the many personality types in their workforce.

The most intriguing finding from this study was that most participants adopted an extroverted behavior to get by in specific professional situations. Even though it was exhausting at the end of the day for them as in South Asia introversion is considered a "norm", they thought that acting extroverted was preferable to appearing normal in the workplace in New Zealand. Also, I discovered that in New Zealand workplaces there are some pre-judgments about South Asian women. They are sometimes expected to be humble, quiet, or shy considering their background that supports ambivalent sexism and due to appreciation of introversion in their own culture. These expectations and workplace judgments highlight the dynamics at play illustrating how biases can be shaped by both cultural stereotypes and broader societal perspectives.

Similarly, managers and supervisors should be aware that introverted persons can build a more extroverted persona that they can embody at specific times and in particular social circumstances. Managers and organizations should actively attempt to understand introverted employees' unique needs and preferences to build more inclusive and supportive work environments. This could include encouraging open communication pathways, offering outlets for introverted individuals to express themselves, and developing norms that accommodate varied personality types. Various studies have shed light on the strategies and social conditions that can enhance the well-being and contributions of introverted individuals in the workplace (Cain, 2012; Dagar, 2023; Furnham & Bradley, 1997; Mccord & Joseph, 2020).

These studies have proposed potential strategies to accommodate different

personality types in professional settings better. Recognizing that introverts possess valuable capabilities that can significantly benefit organizations, it is imperative to identify the conditions conducive to unlocking their full potential and enabling them to excel in their roles. This understanding is crucial for the well-being and success of introverted employees and advantageous for organizations seeking to harness the unique strengths of introverted individuals.

One strategy involves rethinking office space design. The methods through which organizations attempt to increase collaboration might produce an environment in which more extroverted individuals are more likely to thrive and more introverted individuals are stigmatized (McCord & Joseph, 2020). Office plans have evolved from closed spaces to open-concept office designs (Dagar, 2023). The open-office trend rewards those who are better able to work in a noisy, distracting environment, i.e., more extroverted employees (Furnham & Bradley, 1997), which might create a within-organization hierarchy that disadvantages more introverted employees. Open offices enable extraverts to recharge their energy. However, the constant commotion leads to overarousal among introverts, depleting their energy. For effective “psychological” inclusion, along with the open spaces, organizations can provide designated “quiet zones,” meditation pods, private work rooms, and remote work options (Dagar, 2023).

Collaboration, communication, and recognition methods can also be adapted to suit introverted employees. However, legitimate organizational practices, brainstorming, open communication, and public acknowledgment are hostile to the workforce's introverted workers (Dagar, 2023). Additionally, focused thinking is needed for specific complex and creative tasks. A buddy system, one-on-one idea sharing, written or virtual ways of contact, silent or personal appreciation of work, and a buddy

system would be appropriate to ensure an equal opportunity for introverts (Dagar, 2023). Regarding wellbeing interventions, team outings and offsite activities are often more appealing to extroverts than introverts. Organizations might implement silent retreats and mindfulness programs geared inward to promote introverts' well-being. To support compatible activities (pottery, journaling/writing), they can also invest in an organization-wide "person-activity" fit mapping. A holistic approach must also be used to assess well-being in both high- and low-arousal conditions (Dagar, 2023). Moreover, the concept of person-environment (PE) fit is crucial in reducing negative responses to introversion in the workplace. Employees are more likely to perform better in environments that align with their strengths, creating a demands-abilities fit (Kristof, 1996) because performance expectations are more likely to be met. In such cases, legitimate responses to introversion might be lower because performance expectations are more likely to be met (McCord & Joseph, 2020). Introverted employees might experience fewer negative responses to introversion in environments that align with their personality traits. These environments may include quiet workspaces (Furnham & Bradley, 1997), which provide introverts with the solitude and focus they need to excel. Additionally, introverted individuals may thrive in more autonomous work settings (Raja & Johns, 2010), with greater control over their tasks and responsibilities. Furthermore, task-oriented work (Stewart et al., 2005) can be conducive to introverted employees' performance, as it allows them to concentrate on specific tasks and projects, leveraging their deep thinking and analytical skills (McCord & Joseph, 2020). Creating flexible work settings that allow employees to navigate a variety of social interactions while also providing opportunities for privacy is crucial. When done correctly and in moderation, cooperative learning can be productive. However,

individuals should also be given the time and training to practice purposefully. Furthermore, it is critical to acknowledge that many people—particularly introverts—need additional peace and solitude to produce their best work (Cain, 2012). Due to their quiet nature, the competencies and potential of introverted employees might be less likely to be noticed (Grant & Berry, 2011; Judge et al., 2002). Studies suggest that to enhance creativity, managers must provide employees with tasks that have high levels of task complexity so that they might be challenged to engage in creative activities (Zhang et al., 2017). It is also essential for managers to remember that too much involvement in guanxi management (relationship-based business management) hinders introverts' cognitive persistence, which is needed to produce truly creative results. Thus, managers should tolerate introverted employees who do not show enthusiasm in engaging in guanxi management. Managers need to pay close attention to the different personalities of their employees to harness the creativity of highly introverted employees and allow them to reach their full potential (Zhang et al., 2017).

6:2 Strengths of the Study

The research has several strengths. Firstly, it uses a qualitative approach that allows introverted South Asian women to express their experiences and share their perspectives. The study adopts an interpretive approach, which is in line with phenomenology principles, to delve into the essence of experiences rather than merely quantifying their frequency. This approach is especially useful in highlighting the often-overlooked voices of introverted women. Thus, the study provides a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by introverted women in the New Zealand workplace, highlighting the importance of recognizing the potential hindrance of

extroverted expectations on quiet employees and accommodating diverse personality traits in the workplace.

One of this study's key strengths is the tremendous platform it provided for introverted South Asian participants to have their voices heard and express their unique experiences. I acknowledge that I had an assumption before starting data collection for my research. As it's commonly believed that introverts are quiet and difficult to open up to in conversations, I assumed that it would be difficult to approach introverts and get them to open up for interviews. Surprisingly, though, participants felt pleased to share their stories that had never been previously discussed. This highlights that a safe and open space for dialogue is essential in encouraging people to share their experiences and thoughts on professional matters which can improve their mental well-being. Throughout the study, participants showed a real desire to engage in conversation and continue the discussion of their points of view, highlighting the relevance and significance of the research problem. Participants might experience a sense of empowerment and self-discovery because of this process of self-expression and validation. Thus, in addition to expanding our understanding, this research could have a significant therapeutic impact on those engaged.

Since no research has been conducted on the experiences of Asian women working in New Zealand, this research contributes to the knowledge base on introversion, cultural diversity, and gender in the workplace. It seeks to provide a perspective that not only adds to existing knowledge but also presents a fair representation of the distinct difficulties and strengths faced by this particular group within the New Zealand workforce. I hope this work informs organizations, leaders, teams, and

individuals and contributes towards fostering an equitable and understanding professional world.

6:3 Limitations of the Study

I acknowledge that this study has limitations because it was restricted to New Zealand and focused solely on South Asian women. The participants were limited to two South Asian countries: Pakistan and India. The data cannot be generalized to other South Asian countries as the diversity within Asian countries varies. This shows the significance of undertaking research that incorporates a diverse range of South Asian perspectives.

Although I believe that my findings have implications for individuals within the South Asian diaspora, I am aware of the limited number of participants in my study. A sample size of eight participants might restrict the representativeness of the broader population of introverted South Asian women working in New Zealand. The small number of participants might restrict the depth of research and the range of viewpoints that can be explored within this group (Boddy, 2016).

One of the things I encountered when conducting this study was running into a roadblock when writing chapter two of the literature review. Finding materials that addressed the subject of introversion from the viewpoints of other countries and cultures appeared to be difficult for me. Though being a South Asian myself, it was comparatively easier for me to understand and write about the perception of introversion in that particular region.

One significant limitation to consider in this study is the group of participants I selected. It's worth noting that the individuals who participated in my study were a subset of introverts. Specifically, I focused on adult introverts who identified themselves as such. However, it is possible that those who volunteered and shared

their experiences might not fully represent the range of experience within this group. Various factors could have influenced their willingness to participate and share, resulting in a sample that might not accurately reflect the experiences of all introverted women working in New Zealand. It is essential to recognize this limitation and understand that the perspectives and experiences shared by these participants may not entirely represent the population.

One potential drawback of this study is that it heavily relies on the information reported by the participants themselves. The data collected for this research primarily depended on how the participants described their experiences, emotions, and perspectives regarding introversion in the workplace. Although self-report data is valuable for exploring individuals' subjective experiences, it can be influenced by biases, such as social desirability or recall bias. These biases can potentially impact the accuracy and completeness of the gathered information. Moreover, self-report data might only partially capture the unconscious factors influencing participants' experiences. Despite efforts to establish trust and rapport with the participants, certain aspects of their experiences are always possible to remain undisclosed. Recognizing these limitations associated with self-report data encourages a cautious interpretation of the findings. This underscores the importance of using complementary research methods and diverse data sources to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of this topic.

If I were to repeat the study, my interview questions would be more targeted and insightful. In the transcripts, I noticed phases with little data which might have served to calm the interviewee and build rapport and instances when I could have pushed more but instead moved on. Participants felt safe and confident in sharing their experiences and views, and the conversation flowed more freely as we got more

engaged. While there was no evidence of socially desirable responses in my study, the potential should be examined, especially given my researcher position.

6:4 Implications for future research

The current study, with its limitations and a primary focus on participants reporting somewhat similar experiences, underscores the need for future research to strive toward the diverse representation of introverted South Asian women's varied experiences. The sample potentially comprises individuals who developed adequate coping mechanisms or held relatively negative perceptions about introversion. Future researchers should consider employing various research approaches to capture a fuller spectrum of experiences among this population group. For instance, some people could be more willing to participate in anonymous surveys, which could reveal information about the perspectives of people who might not have opted to participate in interviews. Future studies ought to expand their scope beyond the current sample and investigate the experiences of introversion among South Asian women in various countries or among different ethnic groups. Such cross-cultural comparisons serve as an avenue revealing the intersection between cultural nuances, workplace dynamics, and by extension—introversion. Future research should investigate the role of gender, which is another promising avenue for study, to shape experiences of introversion. This exploration could provide valuable insights by delving into how cultural beliefs about gender influence perceptions and manifest in social and professional settings. A comprehensive understanding of South Asian women's workplace experiences necessitates an appreciation for the interplay between their gender, introversion, and cultural expectations; therefore, understanding this dynamic is crucial at all levels.

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Appendices

Appendix: A

Participant information sheet

Massey University • Massey Business School • Auckland Campus

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Title of Study: Lived Experiences of Introverted South Asian Women Working in New Zealand

Researcher: Mariam Tayyab

Contact details: [REDACTED] Phone: [REDACTED]

Main Supervisor: Dr. Shirley Barnett, School of Management, MBS, Manawatu Campus

Contact details: s.j.barnett@massey.ac.nz Phone: 951 7932

Co Supervisor: Dr. Fatima Junaid, School of Management, MBS, Manawatu Campus

Contact details: f.junaid@massey.ac.nz Phone: 951 8743

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You are invited to participate in a research study conducted as a requirement for Master of Business Studies degree. The study explores the lived experiences of introverted South Asian women working in New Zealand. Whether or not you take part is your choice. If you don't want to take part, you don't have to give a reason. If you do want to take part now, but change your mind later, you can pull out of the study. Specific details provided below.

This Participant information sheet will help you decide if you'd like to take part. It sets out why I am doing the study, what your participation would involve, what the benefits and risks to you might be, and what would happen after the study ends. You do not have to decide today whether or not you will participate in this study. Before you decide you may want to talk about the study with other people, such as family, whānau, or friends. Feel free to do this.

If you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to sign the Consent Form on the last page of this document. You will be given a copy of both the Participant information sheet and the Consent Form to keep.

This document is 5 pages long, including the Consent Form. Please make sure you have read and understood all the pages.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL FROM THIS STUDY

1. Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Your decision to participate or withdraw will have no impact on your relationship with Massey University or any other relevant organizations.

2. If you decide to participate, you can withdraw till 15th of August, 2023 without providing a reason. Your decision to withdraw will not result in any negative consequences or penalties.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

The purpose of this study is to gain a deeper understanding of the challenges, coping strategies, and overall experiences of introverted South Asian women in New Zealand workplaces. Through this research, I aim to highlight the factors that influence their work environment, relationships, and overall well-being. The findings will contribute to a broader understanding of diversity, inclusion, and cultural experiences in the workplace.

HOW IS THE STUDY DESIGNED?

If you agree to participate, you will be invited to take part in an interview. The interview will be conducted at a time and location convenient for you, ensuring a comfortable and private setting (a library or a community centre). The session will last approximately 1 hour, during which your experiences, thoughts, and opinions related to your workplace experiences as an introverted South Asian woman in New Zealand will be discussed. The conversation will be audio-recorded to ensure accurate capture of the information shared. However, note that all data will be anonymized and any personally identifiable information will be removed during the transcription process.

WHO CAN TAKE PART IN THE STUDY?

You were selected as a possible participant because you identify as South Asian woman working in New Zealand. To participate in this study, participant must meet the following eligibility criteria:

1. Identify as a born and raised South Asian woman.
2. Currently reside and work in New Zealand.
3. Self-identify as introverted.
4. Have work experience in any industry or sector.
5. Have successfully passed the screening test for this study.
6. Able to communicate in English, Urdu or Hindi.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND BENEFITS OF THIS STUDY?

1. Participating in this study involves minimal risk. However, discussing personal experiences and challenges related to your workplace may evoke emotional or psychological discomfort. If at any point you feel distressed during the interview, please let me know, and appropriate support will be provided.
2. The potential benefits of this study include contributing to a greater understanding of the experiences of introverted South Asian women in the workplace, which may inform future research, policies, and initiatives aimed at creating more inclusive and supportive work environments.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO MY INFORMATION?

1. All information obtained during the study will be treated with the strictest confidentiality. Your identity and personal details will be kept confidential.
2. To protect your privacy, all collected data will be anonymized, and any identifying information will be removed. I will ensure that only the research team will have access to the research materials, including recordings, transcriptions, analyses, and consent/assent documents, which will be stored securely on password-protected devices and in locked storage facilities. Once the research materials have served their purpose and are no longer required for any future analysis or verification, they will be appropriately destroyed.
3. In any publications or reports resulting from the study, your identity will be kept anonymous by using pseudonyms to represent participants. Your personal information will not be disclosed without your explicit consent.

CAN I FIND OUT THE RESULTS OF THE STUDY?

The findings of this study will be shared with participants upon request.

WHO HAS APPROVED THE STUDY?

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Ohu Matatika 3, Application OM3 23/30. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact the Chairperson, Massey University Human Ethics Ohu Matatika 3, email humanethics3@massey.ac.nz

RIGHT TO ASK QUESTIONS AND REPORT CONCERNS

You have the right to ask questions about this research study and to have those questions answered by me before, during or after the research. If you have any further questions about the study, at any time feel free to contact me by email at [REDACTED] or by phone at [REDACTED]. You can also contact either Dr Shirley Barnett or Dr Fatima Junaid with any questions relating to this study.

If you have any other concerns about your rights as a research participant, or if you have any problems as a result of your participation, you have the right to report these concerns. You may contact the Research Ethics Advisor through e-mail at humanethics@massey.ac.nz or at [+64 6 356 9099](tel:+6463569099) extension 83904

Appendix: B



Informed Consent Form

Massey University • Massey Business School • Auckland Campus

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You are being asked to be in a research study about lived experiences of introverted South Asian women working in New Zealand. You were selected as a possible participant because you self-identify as introverted and identify as South Asian woman working in New Zealand and fit within the parameters identified through a brief screening tool.

Please review the following statements carefully and indicate your consent to participate in the study by signing below:

- I confirm that I have carefully read the participant information sheet, either independently or with the assistance of a reader in my first language and I have a clear understanding of its contents.
- I confirm that I have been given sufficient time to decide whether to take part in this study.
- I acknowledge that I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and clarify any concerns I may have about the study and that I have a copy of this consent form and information sheet.
- I am aware that participation in this study is voluntary, and I acknowledge that I have the right to withdraw my participation within a 2-week period following the receipt of the transcript.
- I agree for my data to be collected and processed by the researcher including information about my work experiences and personal perspectives as an introverted South Asian woman working in New Zealand.
- If I want to opt out of the interview, I agree that the data that has been gathered about me up until that point may still be used.
- I understand that my participation in the study will be kept confidential, and my identity will be anonymized in any reports or publications that may result from the study.
- I consent to the audio-recording of the interviews conducted as part of this study for accuracy and reference purposes.
- I understand that the results of this study may be used for academic purposes, such as publications in peer-reviewed journals or presentations at conferences, but my personal identification information will not be disclosed.

- I understand that there are no direct benefits guaranteed to me as a participant, but the study may contribute to the understanding of the experiences of introverted South Asian women in the workplace.

Declaration by Participant:

By signing below, I acknowledge that I have read and understood the information provided in the information sheet and consent form and voluntarily agree to participate in the study.

Name of Participant: _____

Signature of Participant: _____ Date: _____

.....

Declaration by Researcher:

I declare that I have explained the details of the research study to the participant and have answered all their questions about the research.

Signature of Researcher(s): _____ Date: _____

Appendix: C

Ethics Approval Letter

[Link to the application](#)

HoU Review Group:

Reviewer Group:

Dr Fatima Junaid and Dr Shirley Barnett

Researcher: Mariam Tayyab

Project Title: Lived Experiences of Introverted South Asian Women Working in New Zealand

Dear Mariam,

Thank you for the above application that was considered by the Massey University Ohu Matatika 3 at their meeting held on 11/09/2023.

On behalf of the Committee I am pleased to advise you that ethical approval has been granted for your research.

Approval is valid for three years. If this project has not been completed within three years from the date of this letter, an amendment to extend the approval must be requested by contacting the Research Ethics Office at humanethics@massey.ac.nz.

If the nature, content, location, procedures or personnel of your approved application change, please contact the Research Ethics Office at humanethics@massey.ac.nz to request an amendment form.

If you wish to print an official copy of this letter:

1. Please login to the RIMS system (<https://rme.massey.ac.nz>).
2. In the Ethics menu, select Ethics Applications.
3. Using the Advanced option, select Ethics Applications (Area), Application ID (Search On), enter the ethics notification number in the Value area and select Find on the toolbar.
4. With the application the Results Tab, tick the empty box on the far left of the application and select Reports from the toolbar.
5. Select the "Human Ethics - Full Application Notification Letter" link, this will open the report viewer.
6. Select the application code from the Report Parameters dropdown and submit. You can then select an export option from the top toolbar (Print, Save).

Yours sincerely

Professor Tracy Riley

Acting Chair, Research Ethics Chairs' Committee and Acting Director, Research Ethics

Appendix: D

Screening Questions

1) I often feel the need for alone time after being around a lot of people. (Circle one)

Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

2) I prefer spending time alone or with small groups as opposed to huge social gatherings. (Circle one)

Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

3) I usually spend some time to observe and get to know new people before striking up a conversation. (Circle one)

Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

4) I rarely make an effort to introduce myself at social gatherings; instead, I choose to converse with people I already know. (Circle one)

Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

5) As a child, I remember being quiet and reserved. (Circle one)

Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

If you agree/strongly agree with atleast 3 out of 5 questions, and are interested in participating in this study, check the box below:

I confirm my eligibility and consent to participate in this research project

If you do not meet the specified eligibility criteria, I kindly request that you do not proceed further. I sincerely appreciate your interest.

Appendix: E

Demographic Questions

1. How old are you?

2. What is your South Asian ethnic background?

1. What is your citizenship or country of origin?

2. How long have you been working in New Zealand?

3. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

4. Which country did you get this education from?

Appendix: F

Interview Questions

Work Experiences:

1. What are the three words that come to your mind when you hear the word “introversion”? How does introversion affect your work life as a South Asian woman in New Zealand?
2. How do you believe your introverted personality has influenced your experiences in the workplace in New Zealand? Have you ever encountered instances where you felt misunderstood or judged due to your introverted nature? If so, please provide an example and describe its impact on you.
3. Can you identify specific challenges or obstacles you have faced as an introverted South Asian woman in the workplace? How have you navigated or overcome them?
4. Have you experienced any intersections between your introversion and your identity as a South Asian woman at work? How has this influenced your interactions with colleagues or superiors?
5. Have you come across any resources or support groups that have proven particularly valuable in addressing the difficulties you face as an introverted South Asian woman in the New Zealand workplace?

Lived Experiences:

6. What are some positive aspects or strengths that you believe introversion brings to your life as a south Asian woman in New Zealand?
7. Do you have any advice or suggestions for other introverted South Asian women who may be encountering similar challenges in New Zealand?
7. Have you ever felt pressured to be more extroverted or conform to societal expectations? How have you maintained authenticity as an introverted South Asian woman in the New Zealand work environment?
8. How do you find solace and recharge as an introvert in a society that often values extroversion and social engagement?
9. In what ways do you feel that being introverted has influenced your career choices, job search process, or work environment in New Zealand?
10. How do you navigate networking and professional relationships as an introvert? Are there any strategies or techniques that have been helpful for you?
11. Do you perceive certain expectations or stereotypes associated with being an introverted woman in the workplace? How do you manage or challenge these perceptions?