

Our Impact

Making a Difference to Improve People's Lives.

Free Books Campaign

Interview with Equity Specialist Sofia Akel on free books, education inequalities and Kano.

Islamophobia

Interview with London Metropolitan University on their new Islamophobia report.

Film on Autism

New film by OUR IMPACT and Cognus Limited to raise awareness of autism.

Elderly Safety

Lessons from Iran on the Human Factors guidelines for supporting elderly people.

4th
Issue

March - April
2021

EDITOR'S NOTES

MARCH - APRIL

ISSUE



It has been an eye opening few months. Communities came together and raised confidence in getting vaccinated. 'Social proofing' was in full effect, as celebrities, doctors and community leaders publicly shared their vaccination stories to reassure members of the public. I also spoke to many people grieving during this time. I know friends and family members that have-

lost a parent or in some cases lost both of their parents, and in quick succession. Last year, Public Health England's report, 'Beyond the data: Understanding the impact of COVID-19 on BAME groups', demonstrated correlations between socioeconomic determinants and the risks of contracting COVID-19. Many of these underlying issues are still present and affect ethnic minorities in different spheres. Many organisations believe that just by adding the words 'diversity' and 'inclusion' will somehow absolve them from any wrongdoing. This alone won't change the systemic discrimination that not only holds back ethnic minorities but also women, people with disabilities, people on the autistic spectrum, LGBTQ people, elderly people and others. The felt experiences of the aforementioned groups have to be taken seriously with more action and less words, in order for all members of society to equally thrive.

MOHAMMED ALI
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



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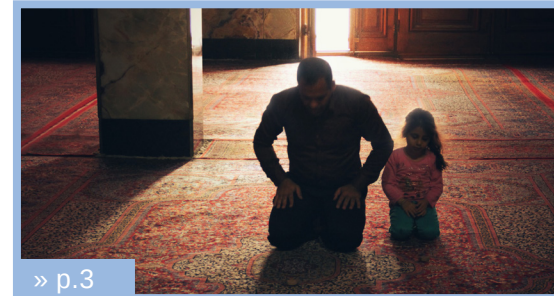
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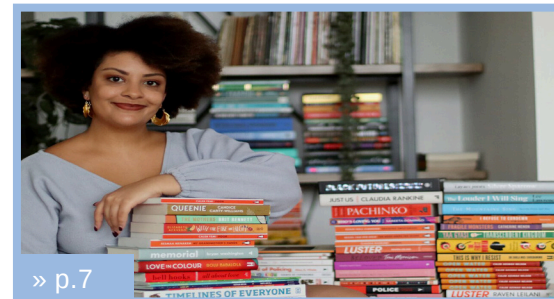


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In part two of OUR IMPACT's special interview with Sofia Akel, Mohammed finds out how Sofia is able to donate free books to people who can't afford them; her work with Netflix superstar and musician Kano; and her research on race and education.



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OUR IMPACT's Mohammed Ali and Rebecca Duffus from Cognus Limited, write about their upcoming film "Young Sutton Voices: Understanding the Autism Spectrum", which raises awareness for young people on the autistic spectrum.



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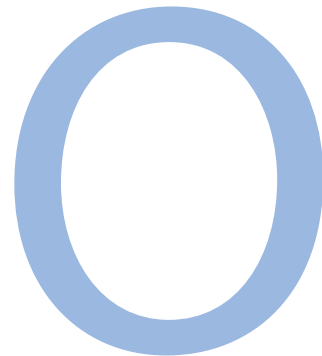
By Payam Khanlari and Hanieh Abdi

Ergonomics specialist and published researcher, Payam Khanlari along with Hanieh Abdi, share lessons from the Islamic Republic of Iran on the Human Factors implications that need to be considered when providing support to the elderly population.



Islamophobia in Higher Education

Sofia Akel Interview Part 1 By Mohammed Ali



On the 27th November 2018, The All-Party Parliamentary Group of British Muslims published a report called “Islamophobia Defined: the inquiry into a working definition of Islamophobia”.¹ In this report, a definition for Islamophobia was established. “Islamophobia is rooted in racism and is a type of racism that targets expressions of Muslimness or perceived Muslimness”.¹ Islamophobic attacks have been on the rise post the World Trade Tower terrorist attack of September 11th 2001. Statistics from the UKs Metropolitan Police show a 13.3% year on year increase of reported Islamophobic hate crime.² Post-September 11th 2001, Islamophobic hate

crimes have resulted in murder and injury of Muslims. There have also been reported cases of arson attacks, vandalism and attempted bombings of buildings and properties occupied by Muslims. Islamophobia, much like racism, does not always manifest itself in markedly criminal behaviour. Research on elusive Muslim discrimination is publicly available and it is evidently seen in different sections of society. In 2017, a report carried out by The Social Mobility Commission found that only 19.8% of Muslims of working age were in employment, compared to 34.9% of the rest of the population, and only 6% of Muslims are in higher managerial, administrative and professional occupations compared to 10% of the rest of the population.³ Researchers from the aforementioned report highlight barriers to success of Muslims ranging from the likelihood of job interviews, reduced due to ethnic-sounding names of individuals and females wearing headscarves being harassed in workplaces.³ This is

compounded by the fact that around 46% of the Muslim population live in the lower 10% of the most deprived areas in Britain, which can adversely affect individuals' ability to access resources, higher education and good job prospects.³ On the 26th November 2020, London Metropolitan University became the first University to adopt the AAPG’s working definition of Islamophobia.⁴ Sofia Akel, race equity lead for London Metropolitan University, published a report in January 2021 titled “[Institutionalised: The Rise of Islamophobia in Higher Education](#)”.⁵ The findings of this report provide a view of “how institutional racism and institutional Islamophobia can collude,” which can create a double barrier and thus lead to Muslims being “disproportionally awarded lower grades than their counterparts”.⁵ In part 1 of this special two-part interview, Mohammed Ali asks Sofia Akel about her findings in the aforementioned report and the impact this will have on other higher education institutes.

Mohammed: Hi Sofia, thanks for taking part in our interview. In your report “Institutionalised: The Rise of Islamophobia in Higher Education”, education performance of Muslims were found to be disproportionate when compared against other groups. You alluded to hostile classrooms and Islamophobic bias from staff as possible indicators. Are there any ways in the future, where these factors can be measured?

Sofia: It would be difficult to measure every instance of bias or microaggressions in any given social or education setting, broadly speaking, for these often happen frequently throughout a person’s lifetime. But through decolonising our educational offerings and aligning the university with anti-racism, we hope to eradicate this type of bigoted, discriminatory behaviour. As it is unacceptable for academics to abuse their positions of responsibility, as educators, to spread discriminatory rhetoric.

Mohammed: 56% of victims of Islamophobia are females. The testimonials from female students highlight their deep anxieties, some even fearing for their own safety. What work can be done to ensure their self-preservation is guarded?

Sofia: Islamophobic people feel emboldened to target Muslims in spaces where they feel able to get away with this behaviour, in the UK it is very commonplace. At London Met, many staff reported there being a culture of normalised Islamophobia. Therefore, at Met specifically, targeted work must be done to firstly change that culture of normalisation both in terms of the social side of university as well as the structural e.g. codes of conduct, etc. It is through the process of eradicating Islamophobia, that we can start to build up the levels of safety that Muslim students feel on campus.

Mohammed: There were some very uncomfortable findings on intersectionality, especially the racism experienced by Black Muslims, and the underrepresentation of minority sects within Islam. What mechanisms do higher education institutions have in place or should have in place to tackle more complex issues surrounding intersectionality?

Sofia: In higher education, many of the behaviour codes of conduct and disciplinary measures do not account for the ways that racism and religious discrimina-



tion has evolved over the years. Therefore they often lack a nuanced understanding in how they manifest, in terms of coded forms of discrimination in particular. Therefore, the sector needs to ‘update’ itself so to speak, to progress its knowledge on the aforementioned and how to tackle it hence. Otherwise many universities may find themselves essentially trying to tackle something with half the understanding required. This work also includes having diverse staff involved in the facilitation of complaints and misconduct procedures, who are culturally competent and hold expertise in anti-racism, anti-discrimination and investigating complaints themselves – at present, this isn’t a requirement in many many universities.

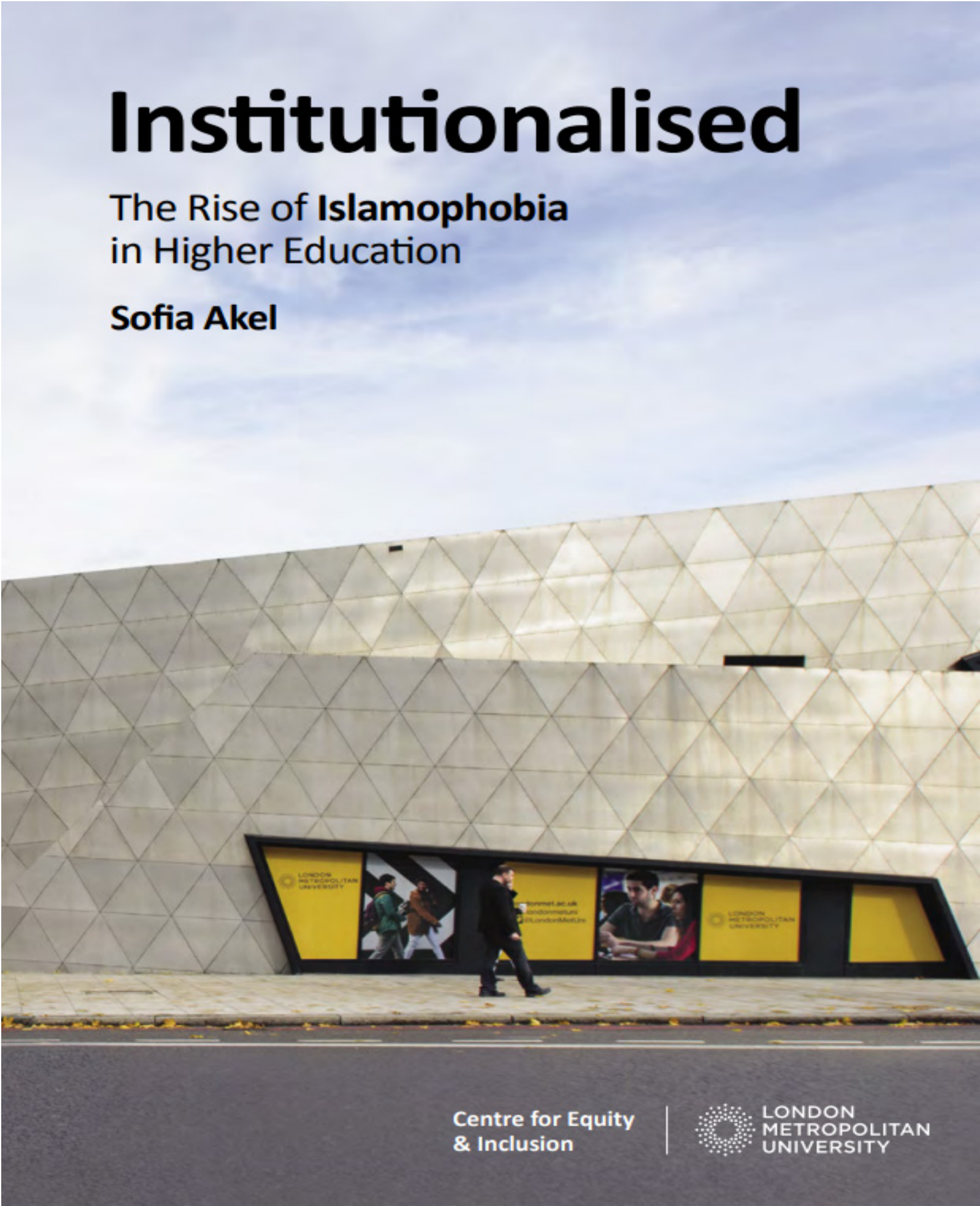
Mohammed: Other Higher Education institutions have yet to accept the All-Party Parliamentary Group’s working definition of “Islamophobia”. Why do you believe this is the case?

Sofia: Islamophobia is both extremely evident and extremely overlooked. The same applies in higher education, whilst many are aware of it, there is a lack of willingness to tackle it and recognise it as a form of serious racial and religious discrimination. In the past few months an increasing number of universities have begun adopting a definition of Islamophobia, albeit in small numbers, the entire sector must heed this call. Regarding the APPG definition, there are many contested versions of what Islamophobia means. But this shouldn’t be used as a ‘getaway’ tactic by universities, for adopting a definition is one piece of a much wider piece of work that must be done.

Institutionalised

The Rise of **Islamophobia**
in Higher Education

Sofia Akel



Centre for Equity
& Inclusion

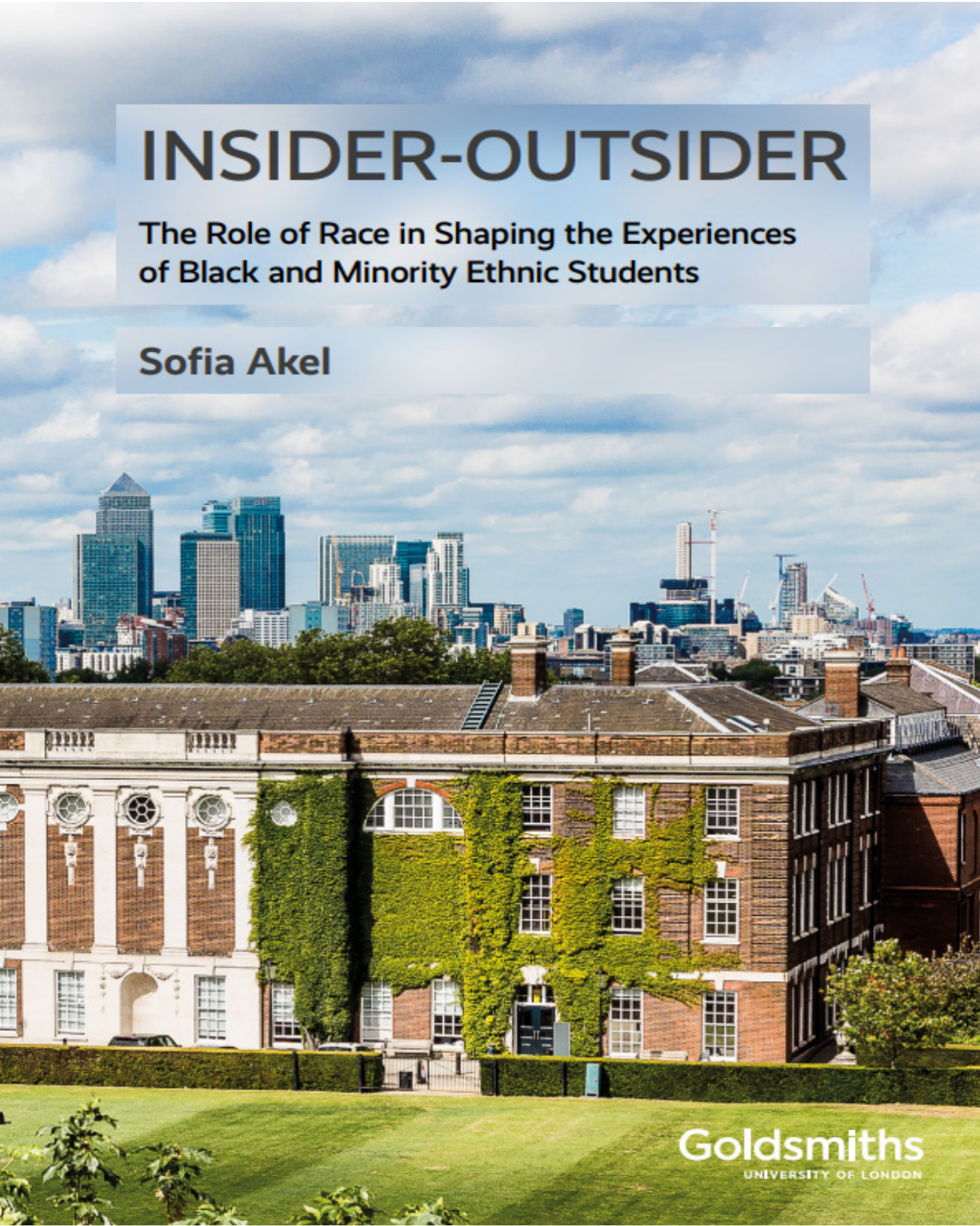


LONDON
METROPOLITAN
UNIVERSITY

INSIDER-OUTSIDER

The Role of Race in Shaping the Experiences
of Black and Minority Ethnic Students

Sofia Akel



Goldsmiths
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

Free Books Campaign

Sofia Akel Interview Part 2 By Mohammed Ali



Sofia Akel has contributed significant research in understanding marginalised communities in the United Kingdom. In 2019, the “[Insider-Outsider](#)” report examined the role that race plays in shaping the experiences of ethnic minority students at Goldsmiths, University of London.

Sofia, alongside UK charity Inquest worked with award winning musician and Netflix film star, Kano, on his music video “[Tear Drops](#)”. Most recently, Sofia founded “The Free Books Campaign” a not-for-profit, community-interest-company that provides free books to those that cannot afford or have access to books.

In part 2 of this special two-part interview, Mohammed Ali asks Sofia Akel about the impact of her work, outside of London Metropolitan University.

Mohammed: In the “INSIDER-OUTSIDER” report, it finds that there is a gap of 25% between Black students and White students when it comes to achieving good grades at Goldsmiths. What steps can Higher Education boards formulate from your research findings that can help reduce the attainment gap for ‘BAME’ (Black and Ethnic Minority) students?

Sofia: There are many universities who are still in the stage of denying or evading accountability for the degree awarding gaps that exist in their institutions. The gap exists as a consequence of institutional racism, therefore the solution is to firstly recognise it as such, and begin the process of dismantling systemic racism from these spaces. Insider-Outsider lists some comprehensive, but not exhaustive measures that Goldsmiths and the wider sector can take to begin this process. We must breakdown the term ‘BAME’ for it is an all-homogenising term that hides the varying severities of the awarding gap, Black students for example face the largest gap of all – another outcome of

anti-Black racism in higher education.

Mohammed: The INSIDER-OUTSIDER report highlights ‘BAME’ students having to “make use of a range of survival strategies in order to navigate their studies and to minimise exposure to racism”. How have Higher Education institutes responded to these findings, given the long term implications on students’ mental health and wellbeing?

Sofia: To my knowledge this report was widely shared among university senior leadership, through to students’ unions across the UK, even internationally. However, simply reading this report is one thing, but acting on its recommendations and implementing them in your own university shows a commitment to tackling institutional racism.

There is much literature and research out there that can inform universities on how best to do this, but the adequate response – which is to say that they have begun acting on their words – remains to be seen on a large scale.



"We are working...to get even more books by authors of colour out to those who can't afford them."

Mohammed: Kano's music video to his song “Tear Drops” visualises the realities of police brutality by putting the audience in the shoes of a victim. What was your input in the video and what were your motivations behind it?

Sofia: Discourse on police brutality and murder in the UK often hides behind the severity of this in the United States. However, Britain is also complicit in upholding the same forms of state-sponsored oppression and killings. Black people in the UK continue to die at the hands of the police, just recently a young man, Mohamud Mohammed Hassan died following police contact in Wales. It's way overdue that these conversations turn to looking at how the UK have killed over 100 Black people in recent decades.

My role in the video was to research the extent of police killings and Brutality in the UK, as well as working with bereaved families and commu-

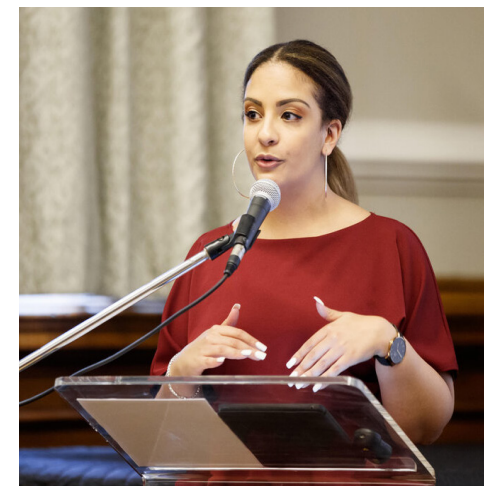
nity organisers on how best to represent their loved ones, through the images used at the end of the video.

Mohammed: ‘FREE BOOKS CAMPAIGN is a very inspiring initiative. Can you share how this came about and what would be the next steps for your initiative?

Sofia: Some of your answers can be found here: <https://www.freebookscampaign.co.uk/our-story>

We are working to increase our reach across the UK and have just recently announced a new partnership with Vintage Books, Penguin Random House to get even more books by authors of colour out to those who can't afford them. This year we officially became a community-interest-company and look forward to seeing what the future brings for the campaign!

Mohammed: Thank you very much, we really appreciate your time for this interview, Sofia.



Sofia Akel is a Race and Equity Specialist and a published researcher in higher education inequalities. She is the Race Equity Lead for The Centre for Equity and Inclusion at The London Metropolitan University. She is also the founder of the Community Interest Company “Free Books Campaign”.



[illegible]

Film on Autism

by Mohammed Ali & Rebecca Duffus

Autism is classed as an area of neurodiversity, which means autistic individuals may think in a different way from someone who isn't autistic. There are a lot of misconceptions and stereotypes around autism and through Rebecca's work as a Specialist Advisory teacher, Rebecca tries to challenge these. In her role, Rebecca supports schools to provide inclusive education for their autistic students. This also involves working with families and young people themselves. One of the highlights of her role is supporting young people to better understand their autism diagnosis, empowering them to have the confidence to get any support they may need and also be a proud autistic individual.

Rebecca values the honesty from the young people she works with and through conversations she has discovered different ways of viewing things and this makes her question what she has been conditioned to accept as 'social norms'. She finds that many autistic people find pleasure in the smaller or more unusual things in life and she appreciates that genuineness and dedication.

This project was important for Rebecca as an opportunity to share the thoughts and opinions of the young people themselves, who do not always get their voice heard. Rebecca was introduced to local health filmmaker Mohammed about capturing these opinions on film. Mohammed shared Rebecca's vision and felt passionate about the subject area, as he has a family member that is on the autistic spectrum.

During the planning stages of the project, Mohammed and Rebecca also worked closely with Aaron, an aspiring filmmaker on the autistic spectrum living in Sutton. Aaron was able to pitch his personal



and in-depth ideas that added value to the vision of the film. It was agreed that there was a need to highlight the diverse spectrum of autism. It was important to draw attention to the differing support needs of autistic individuals and diversity within the spectrum. For example, ethnic minorities' experiences on the autistic spectrum is an area that lacks a lot of research, and it can limit the level of support accessed by members of these aforementioned communities.

Likewise, there are more males diagnosed with autism than girls, but the current thinking is that this gender gap is significantly affected by the way females present differently, 'masking' their true behaviours, and the fact that the diagnostic criteria is based around the 'classic male' presentation of behaviours.

Therefore, it was important that the film was able to capture these experiences in a way that could shape wider society. The filming of interviews took place in February 2020, before there were any

coronavirus restrictions. The filming also wanted to include the voices of young autistic people of different age groups. Therefore, interviews were carried out in primary and secondary schools within the London Borough of Sutton. This project wanted to represent a holistic view on the subject of autism. Thus, the film also included the views of parents of young autistic individuals, as well as young adults on the autistic spectrum.

With the project, it was important to gain consent from everyone involved and to provide an autism friendly environment for filming. This meant providing photos, information and a schedule in advance so that the young people could feel prepared for the process. Fidget tools were made available and choices were given about the sensory aspects of the filming environment where possible, to give the young people a feeling of control over the process. Different communication aids were made accessible for individuals to communicate in whatever

way they felt most comfortable with. For Mohammed, he wanted to ensure that the overall message of the film was accurately represented from the perspective of the participants. He also wanted to highlight the importance of communication during the filming and writing process, as this aided participants to feel comfortable, relaxed and natural.

During filming Mohammed would actively listen, facilitate authentic engagement and carefully analyse the themes that would arise from the different participant's responses. Mohammed carefully synthesised hours of footage and selected the most powerful stories that would help create strong connections between the viewer and the people captured on film.

Being involved with the film making process was an interesting experience for Rebecca, as she tried to translate a vision into a final product. It was always important for her that the young

people were the focus of the film and so it required a lot of reflection and planning to ensure the film was both informative and represented the voices of the young autistic people included.

As a community, there is a lot we can do to show support towards people on the autistic spectrum. The communication and understanding around autism on a local and community level could be greatly enhanced if we took the time to be more kind, patient and understanding towards young autistic individuals and their families. The National Autistic Society provides support to parents, carers and children through organising events, offering telephone support lines and sharing information packs. They need volunteers to help out and donations help support their invaluable work. Finally, World Autism Awareness Week, 29th March – 4th April 2021, is a great opportunity

to talk about autism whether it is with friends, family members or colleagues. To mark this year's World Autism week, Cognus Limited alongside OUR IMPACT will be premiering the film "Young Sutton Voices: Understanding the Autism Spectrum". This film will be available to watch from 29th March on the [OUR IMPACT website](#) and the [Cognus Limited YouTube Channel](#).

What really stood out to both Mohammed and Rebecca during the making of this film was when one of the participants described their experiences of having autism as like having on "a pair of odd socks". Through this film, the hope is to give the audience the chance to understand what life can be like being autistic and really celebrate the fact that differences don't separate people but in-fact makes the diversity of society all the more valuable.

"This gender gap is significantly affected by the way females present differently, 'masking' their true behaviours."



Mohammed Ali has a BA (Hons) in Accountancy and Business, and an MSc in Global Health Policy. He is a member of the Coordinating And Mobilising Emergency Response Activists (CAMERA) Emergency Volunteer Team in Hammersmith & Fulham. He is also the treasurer and committee member for Sutton Speakeasy (Toastmasters International).



Rebecca Duffus is an advisory teacher, trainer and speaker with a background in Psychology and an MA in Education and Autism. Rebecca supports young people and children with special educational needs and additional needs at Cognus Limited. Rebecca is also a trustee at the [Duffus Cancer Foundation](#).

Thank You:

Mohammed Ali from OUR IMPACT and Rebecca Duffus from Cognus Limited would like to thank the following people for their support in the creation of "Young Sutton Voices: Understanding the Autism Spectrum".

Marta Rocco from Sutton Volunteers

Taylor, Alanya and Sharon Bowra

The students, parents and staff at:

Bandon Hill Oakfield

Cheam Common Juniors

Cheam Fields

Wallington County Grammar School

AUTISM AWARENESS FILM

YOUNG SUTTON VOICES UNDERSTANDING THE **AUTISM** S P E C T R U M

YOUNG PEOPLE IN SUTTON

This powerful film explores the diverse variations within the autistic spectrum, as well as highlighting the stigmas associated with autism.

29/03/2021



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Elderly Safety



Which environment is suitable for the elderly? By Payam Khanlari and Hanieh Abdi

Over the last fifty years of socio-economic development, we have seen a significant rise in the population of elderly people worldwide. This is because there has been a decline in global fertility, a fall in population growth and increasing life expectancy. This has also come at high cost, especially within the healthcare sector. A rise in the elderly population is an undeniable fact of today's societies. What has been described as a trend of an increasingly elderly population in Iran, and across the world, in itself does not matter, but the consequences of this growth will have various social and economic dimensions. For example, the resources of the health sector, are important and need serious research. Based on estimates taken from

other communities¹, let's assume that the medical expenses of the elderly cost five times more than the general public,¹ it would increase the health costs of the health sector by 2.5 times per capita. On average, more than 70% of the elderly who are over the age of 75 suffer between three to five chronic diseases.² Although being elderly in itself is not a disease, the burden of diseases gets much higher with old age. This includes diseases such as blood pressure, heart disease, strokes, diabetes, various cancers, respiratory diseases, urinary incontinence, vision and hearing loss, weakness, musculoskeletal pain and mental disorders. Given that the Islamic Republic of Iran has an ageing population, the foreseeable problem is that Iran faces an 'ageing tsunami' in the next 30 years. Government officials from the Ministry of Health, have to ensure that planning starts now; so that this 'ageing tsunami' will have a lower impact in the future. The ergonomic science behind health-related issues for the elderly include

several systems to create an interpersonal fit of the equipment and conditions. The ultimate goal of this field is to reduce accidents, increase comfort and productivity, while offering people satisfaction with the equipment and facilities at their disposal. There is no doubt that this field of science can significantly contribute to the needs of the elderly population, as well as improving equipment and facilities, by intervening with appropriate designs. This would involve improving productivity, increasing safety and improving the comfort of the elderly. The common causes of accidents that occur in elderly households include slippery and uneven floors, poor or no lighting, improper arrangement of home furniture, lack of stair railings and space for movement. The following tables present practical points regarding the observance of ergonomic principles for the elderly population. It should be noted that these necessary measures should be considered expeditiously given that Iran faces an ageing population.

- Nursing homes:**
- A. Instead of using small rugs and carpets, use a large carpet.
 - B. Observe order and avoid crowds.
 - C. Electric and telephone wires should not be in commuting routes.
 - D. The floor must not be left wet and there should be no slippery floors.
 - E. The temperature should be set at about 22 degrees celsius.
 - F. Use phones with automatic dialing
- Bathrooms for the elderly:**
- A. Use of suitable door handles.
 - B. Use non-slip and dentin floors as well as special slippers.
 - C. Install support bars on the walls of the toilet and corridors leading to the bathroom, to help with sitting and to make getting up easier and safer.
 - D. Fix any unevenness on the floor.
 - E. Provide sufficient light in the bathroom.
 - F. Design the shower in such a way that it is easier to control the water temperature.

- Kitchens used by the elderly:**
- A. No wet floors and no use of slippery floors within this environment, and the kitchen floor should not be placed with cumbersome appliances.
 - B. Easy access to the gas valve.
 - C. Heavy equipment should be placed at lower heights to prevent accidents.
 - D. There are four suitable bases for climbing and removing accessories from the closet.
 - E. Adequate light, proper temperature and proper layout of the kitchen space.

- Reduction in overall accidents:**
- A. Passageway arrangements should always be open, especially if the elderly use walking sticks or are wheelchair bound.
 - B. There should be a switch next to beds to control the lights, in order to prevent any injuries in darkness, especially after switching off the lights.
 - C. For floors that are ceramic and smooth, it is recommended to use slippers with rubber soles.
 - D. The paint used for decoration should reflect colours that evoke moods of grandness, energy inspiration and hope. On high movement routes, handles should be installed on the wall, as well as having sufficient lighting and preferably visibility of sunlight should be provided in rooms.

Table: General Ergonomic Goals when Designing for the Elderly
Adapted from Kroemer 2005

Easy to do
Easy to reach, easy to see
No bending or stretching
Simple maintenance and cleaning
Floor space for easy ambulation, passage & activities
Non-slip floors, even when wet
No-threshold entries into rooms, shower stalls & closets
Handrails and grab bars
Toe and knee space for close access to washbasin
Point-of-use storage
Controls of doors, windows, cabinets, appliances: should be effortless, consistent and secure
The lighting of common spaces: bright but without glare
Suitable indoor climate should be automatically maintained
Complex issues solved and hidden within the technical system so that it is use is easy and intuitive
Design for human dignity, safety, & comfort



Payam Khanlari is the chair of the Ergonomics Student Magazine and a Business development professional with a MSc in Ergonomics from Hamadan University of Medical Sciences and Health Services. He is interested in research in occupational physiology and has several articles in this field. He is also an author in many magazines and news agencies.



In conclusion, the benefits of using the principles of ergonomics for elderly people, is that it identifies common problems that are found in rooms, such as low lighting, spacing and flooring issues. Therefore, equipment should be easy to use, lack of spacing should be addressed and inappropriate appliances, furniture, and objects should be eliminated to prevent any injury and discomfort for elderly people. Compared to the general population, people of elderly age have a higher risk of suffering from accidents, so it is necessary to pay more attention to mobility aids. After identifying all these problems, the use of ergonomic principles should be considered before planning each case. Thorough planning and risk assessments should prevent accidents and offer safety, as well as meeting the needs of elderly people. It should also be noted that the use of architectural principles can greatly help to adapt and change these spaces for easier and safer use for the elderly population.



Hanieh Abdi is an Masters of Science candidate studying Ergonomics at the Tehran University of Medical Sciences in the Islamic Republic of Iran. She is also member of the Chartered Institute of Ergonomics and Human Factors and has a passion in the research of cognitive ergonomics.



Further Reading

Islamophobia in Higher Education

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