



**FORMAN  
CHRISTIAN  
COLLEGE**  
(A CHARTERED UNIVERSITY)

**Exploring the Phenomenon and Experience of Religious Liminality among Overseas  
Muslim Students in FCCU**

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## **Abstract**

Religious expression and its diverse forms have been prominent in anthropological studies. Most Islamic anthropologists have documented the various cultural manifestations of Islam in different societies. With the rise of higher education and globalization, international student migration has increased. This is being observed in Pakistan as well. The migration of Muslim students from one Islamic culture to another opens a window to explore the phenomenon of religious liminality. For this purpose, this study takes on a descriptive qualitative approach through which 10 respondents who are currently enrolled in an undergraduate program at FCCU and were born and/or raised in the Middle East and migrated to Pakistan for higher education have been interviewed and their experience of transition and integration into the Islamic culture of Pakistan have been documented. The data has been analysed using thematic analysis. The findings of this study suggest key themes of facilitators and hurdles during migration, perception of the Muslim culture of Pakistan, experiences of religious liminality, and suggestions to foster inclusivity on campus by participants.

*Keywords:* religious liminality, overseas Muslim students, international students pakistan

## Introduction

UNESCO (2022) reports an increase of 40% in enrolment in higher education from 2000 to 2022 and with that a 52% increase in higher education providing institutions. This report further addresses the necessity of social cohesion for the successful integration of a diverse student population. International mobility of students has also arisen as a common phenomenon during this period, seeing a triple increase from 2000 to 2019 going from 2 million to 6 million, further the share of internationally mobile students in total enrolments has also increased from 2.09% in 2000 to 2.58% in 2019 (UNESCO, 2022).

Higher education plays a role in the transformation in an individual's life that is by nature both personal and epistemic (Paul, 2020). This is due to education as well as a conducive university environment that brings about changes in an individual's personality that were unknown to them before (Paul, 2020). Benson et. al (2010) further argue that an individual's socio-economic background in general and factors like migration, location, and diversity, in particular, play a key role in this transformation.

Higher education institutions (HEIs) have seen a big shift in their physical and urban form and their education modes from the mid-1960s as they are becoming more privatized and have a global appeal (Troiani & Dutson, 2021). In recent years, HEIs are undergoing a period of neo-liberalization i.e., they are leaning towards a "globalized learning economy" (Canaan & Shumar, 2008). This internationalization of universities has led them to incorporate curricula that are global in reach along with an intercultural approach to their values thus creating space for international and intercultural student bodies (Heck & Mu, 2015). The main challenge posed by this reform is that of finding

inclusion amidst differences and complexities of identities that are becoming more intricate yet integrated into the globalized educational setting (Suarez-Orozco, 2004).

Fosnacht & Broderick (2020) highlight the importance of studying the influence of religion and spirituality in the identity development of young people and adults. Particularly in university environments, the underrepresentation of racial and gender identities is studied in much depth however religious identity also plays an influential role in shaping a student's experience on campus. Most prevalently, the identity of minorities on campus environment feel pressure to assimilate into the identity of the dominant group (A.N. Rockenbach et. al. 2017). A positive relationship exists between students feeling their faith respected on campus and a healthy outlook on campus environment (Fosnacht & Broderick, 2020).

In Pakistan, higher education institutes are increasingly becoming hosts to international students that belong to different nationalities and more prominently to overseas Pakistani students (Zafar, 2019). Overseas Pakistanis are a specific niche that is recognized by the Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan and are allotted reserved seats in various universities by the HEC. These students are a particular case as in their academic life they report various personal experiences such as homesickness, alienation, and culture shock that affect them academically and psychologically. The most common factor that these students report is culture shock while maintaining their Muslim identity their academic, psychological, and identity-building experiences are very different from that of locals (Zafar et. al, 2019).

## **Research Objectives**

This study is interested in investigating the phenomenon of religious liminality experienced by overseas Muslim students enrolled in universities in Pakistan by focusing on its manifestations in their academic and social contexts. The objectives of this study are:

1. To analyse the transitional experiences of overseas Muslim students during their integration into higher education institutions in Pakistan.
2. To examine the perceived role of university structure, culture, and administrative processes on the religious liminality encountered by overseas Muslim students and assess their effects on student learning and overall well-being.
3. To propose suggestions aimed at fostering inclusivity within the higher education system in Pakistan with particular emphasis on addressing the challenges faced by overseas Muslims and promoting their successful integration into university life.

### **Research Questions**

1. What are the experiences of overseas Muslim students during their transition and integration into HEIs in Pakistan?
2. What is the perceived role of university structure, culture, and administrative processes in the religious liminality encountered by overseas Muslim students and their effects on student learning and well-being?
3. What measures can be taken to foster inclusivity within the higher education system of Pakistan, particularly for the successful integration of overseas Muslim students in the universities of Pakistan?

### **Significance of Study**

This study is significant as it opens discussion about the concept of religious liminality among student populations which is an uncharted avenue in this field of

research up to this point. Liminality in general and religious liminality in particular have few theoretical or exploratory work to their name however with the increase in migration and globalization these conditions of experience in social and cultural contexts are becoming very much prevalent.

This study also explores the impact of an inclusive university environment on the personality development and identity formation of young people. It is highlighted previously how higher education institutions play an effective role in the identity development of students. Thus this study explores not only the developing phenomenon of religious liminality but also how it plays a part in identity formation for young people and the role that the university environment plays in this regard.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework used for this study is of “liminality”. This concept was developed by Gennep in 1909, and it refers to a state of transition and dislocation from one point to another (Malksoo, 2012). It is a movement from one social or cultural condition to another such that there are few similarities in attributes between the past situation and the new one (Malksoo, 2012). Thomassen (2015) describes liminality as the way humans deal with change in their social or cultural contexts. Liminality is present in the conflict between structure and agency, it is a state of in-betweenness and also involves the experience of people as they enter, experience, and deal with it.

According to Thomassen (2015), Victor Turner in 1985 further worked upon the concept of liminality developed by van Gennep in his works by extending it to social and cultural application. Turner applied the concept of liminality to include the examples of pilgrims or migrants and their experiences of leaving one place behind and adapting in another. In Turner’s work liminality and its thresholds are defined and these may be



marked, temporal, or spatial. For this research, the spatial threshold is relevant as it defines the liminality experienced when moving from one place to another in social and cultural contexts.

Crosby (2009) defines liminality as “a space between disciplines and on the threshold of multiple cultural sites”. This concept can be extended to develop the concept of religious liminality which means a shift in religious experience from one state to another in a way that leaves the practitioner in confusion about their relationship with and expression and experience of the religion (Haut, 2017). The study uses the liminality framework in the context of religion i.e., religious liminality to conceptually understand the experience of transition and integration of overseas Muslim students to Pakistan.

## **Literature Review**

El-Zein (1977) describes ideologies as being subject to change over time. Thus, ideologies should be conceived as “social activities” which are maintained through their expressions i.e. rituals. These rituals undergo manipulation when subject to different forms of expression thus bringing constant changes within ideologies according to their historical moments of use. As the ideology changes, in turn, the social order also reshapes and redefines (p. 242). Eickleman (1976) previously supported this perspective by viewing all social symbols in particular religions as being in a “continuous state of change”.

Weber (1968) in his work describes immediate reality as an irrational stream of consciousness in which man gives meaning to his surroundings and social elements, these meanings then constitute his own historical and social world. The range of meanings remains infinite and thus the creation of historical meanings also remains “in flux, ever subject to change in the dimly seen future of human culture”. In this state, Weber defines

an “ideal type” which is taken as an objective meaning held by societies. In this context, historical contexts and the social state of a society remain in a diachronic conceptual relationship characterizing each other.

Geertz (1968) previously studied that different societies, owing to their particular historical experience and culture, transform Islam. Thus, at a local level, there are as many interpretations of Islam as there are historical contexts. However, at an elite or clerical level, the “sacred tradition” or scripture is reflected upon which is independent of the specific expressions of historical contexts yet this universalism cannot be related to local experience in its complete essence without being subjected to manipulation. The power of religious elements thus also dwells in the system of meanings provided by historical contexts while in turn this process is controlled by formal religious education in which scripture is taught in a repetitive form which is independent of any cultural idiom. In this way, many local Islams are being studied with their infinite and fluid meanings whereas the symbol itself remains static.

Eickelman (1976) views that any social structure never remains stationary but changes at every moment. This change is brought about by the dialectical interactions between social conduct and symbolic systems. This produces ideological systems from social manipulations manifest in social activities that are defined by historical contexts. In contrast, Gilsennan (1973) describes religion in itself to be “idle” and its actual function to support the social order manifest at that time. Thus, all different manifestations of religion are the “rational order of secular society”. Therefore, social reality and religious systems exist as two independent systems of meaning.

This conflict in the study of Islam as an analytical subject while it changes across cultures and across time was addressed by Asad (1986) in which the idea of Islam as an

objective analytical topic and/or a heterogenous collection of artefacts was debunked and a perspective of Islam being a “discursive tradition” was introduced. A “tradition” was defined as a discourse in which different aspects and rituals of religion evolve in the present while being linked to a past and a future context. It involves the analysis of the practising and maintenance of rituals and their transformations over time and how coherence is maintained in their form by adherents.

Predicting the future of the development of Islamic expressions after a state of political turmoil in Muslim countries, Arkoun (1990) describes a change in the political and semiological expressions of Islam in different regions. This change will be brought about by secularization, scientific knowledge, economic systems, urbanization, Western interferences etc that will influence different Muslim regions in different ways. Arkoun writes that “expressions of Islam are not the same in Indonesia, Morocco, Senegal, or France” Similarly similar expression is not found in the same society over different periods. Ritual action might maintain their original form however the ideologies associated with them, especially in a cultural, social, and/or political sense, undergo constant changes (p. 53-54).

Amidst this theoretical debate on the development of tradition, the migration of Muslims within Muslim countries emerges as an interesting phenomenon. These migrations may be for the sake of refuge, rural-to-urban, or for the sake of labour as is mostly characteristic of South Asian Muslims moving to Gulf countries (Karpas, 1996). These host countries expect migrants to conform to their local rites and rituals (Karpas, 1996). This leads to an adaptation and intermingling of religious expressions in different places.

In the current era, owing to globalization, higher education has become increasingly prevalent and higher education institutions in Pakistan have become host to not only national but a large international student body as well (Ali et al, 2021). Acculturation i.e., assimilation into a different culture after having habituated to another before is one of the main psycho-social factors faced by international students (Berry, 2001, as cited in Ali et al, 2021). This period is also instrumental in identity formation for students thus acculturation becomes a characteristic part of identity formation for these students (Mori, 2000, as cited in Ali et al, 2021).

Zafar et al (2018) conducted interviews with international students from Gulf countries studying in HEIs in Pakistan to identify the issues that are faced by them in academic contexts. Most of these students reported issues that emerged due to a dissonance with culture. They reported feelings of alienation from the culture that they were in even though they essentially belonged to it. Homesickness, financial management, family problems etc were other issues faced by these students that affected their academic performance and they reported they could not perform as well as they used to in their home countries.

Religion is one of the fundamental constructive elements of a higher education student's identity which further influences their academic and/or professional choices and performance (Sokolovskaya et al, 2020). The influence of religion on a student's academics was further illustrated by Hu & Cheng (2021) when they showed that positive personal religious coping predicted a better quality of university life and vice versa. A religiously inclusive campus supports students in their academic endeavours and also plays a supportive role in their identity formation (Fosnacht & Broderick, 2020).

## **Methodology**

## **Research Design**

The research design utilized for this study was descriptive qualitative research design with semi-structured descriptive interviews with the sample population. The purpose of employing a research design of this sort is to get results of an exploratory nature that document the cultural or lived experience of the respondents in the given setting (Magilvy, 2009). A qualitative research design inspires a “comprehensive summary of an event in the everyday terms of those events” (Sandelowski, 2000, as cited in Magilvy, 2009).

Thus, to explore and record the experiences of overseas Muslim students with regards to religious liminality, semi-structured interviews were conducted following data analysis and write-up which extracts data from the lived experiences of the respondents in a phenomenological manner.

## **Conceptualization**

### ***Liminality***

The word comes from Latin “*Limin*” which translates to “threshold” (Turner, 1985). Liminality is defined as “the experience of finding oneself at a boundary or in an in-between position either spatially or temporally” (Thomassen, 2015). Liminality involves experiencing the in-between itself and also the changes in structure and subjects as they go through it (Thomassen, 2015).

### ***Religious Liminality***

Hout (2017) describes religious liminality as an individual’s experience of uncertainty with religion, religious expression, and their place in it.

### ***Inclusivity***

Inclusivity in education is described as an environment in which differences among students are celebrated rather than outcasted and an overall harmony is adapted which provides learning and growth opportunities to all students regardless of differences (Ferguson, 2018).

### ***Overseas Students***

Higher Education Commission of Pakistan (HEC) defines overseas students as students who either possess a foreign nationality, a dual Pakistani and foreign nationality, or were born in another country.

### **Access and Sampling**

The target population for this small-scale study comprises of undergraduate students currently enrolled in Forman Christian College & University (FCCU), Lahore. Along with that, the sample should also meet the following criteria:

1. The participants are currently enrolled in an undergraduate program at FCCU.
2. The participants identify as Muslim.
3. Their parent(s) are/were settled in the Middle East.
4. The participants were brought up and had their schooling in the Middle East.

The purposive sampling technique was employed through which respondents who meet the criteria shall be reached out to and interviewed (Rai et al, 2015). A sample of 10-15 respondents is aimed for or until the saturation point is reached.

As a student of FCCU, the method of reaching out to the students meeting the research criteria was through online platforms, in-person connections and references from other people.

### **Tools**

A 9-item sociodemographic survey was conducted to record general demographic information about the respondents and observe how these factors might correlate with the factor under study (see Appendix B).

The semi-structured interview guide comprising 10 potential questions following themes of transition and integration into a new culture and religious liminality in an academic setting can be found (see Appendix C).

### **Ethical Considerations**

To undertake sociological research of this sort it is imperative to address the ethical issues that might occur and the way these shall be redressed. The integrity and quality of the research was maintained by providing full disclosure about the purpose of the study to the participants who are there voluntarily and maintaining the confidentiality and anonymity of the respondents by using aliases (Broom, 2006). A consent form was also designed and offered to the participants to sign before the interview to ensure informed consent of the participants (Broom, 2006). As the participants were all from FCCU therefore they shall be reached out through institutional means such as through university emails and personal references.

### **Data Analysis**

Braune & Clarke's (2017) six-step thematic analysis method will be used for data analysis in this research. The steps include:

1. Familiarization
2. Coding
3. Generating themes
4. Reviewing themes
5. Defining and naming themes
6. Write-up

This model of thematic analysis developed by Braune & Clarke for qualitative data analysis is instrumental as it identifies the key themes and topics from the answers of the respondents according to the research question. It is a flexible approach that applies to this research.

### **Findings**

The findings of this study are based on the perception and experience of religious liminality amongst the overseas Muslim students at FCCU along with the facilitators and hurdles in this experience that they face and the cultural and infrastructural role of the university in the light of this phenomenon. The study respondents included 10 students at the university currently inducted into the undergraduate program. The sociodemographic characteristics are displayed in Table 1.

The overall findings of this study suggest six key themes:

1. The facilitators and hurdles in the transition from Gulf countries to Pakistan
2. The perception of overseas Muslim students of the Muslim culture of Pakistan
3. The experiences contributing to religious liminality
4. Institutional characteristics of FCCU
5. Suggestions by participants to foster inclusivity





**Table 1: Demographic Information of the Participants**

Participant	Year of Study	Age	Country	Year of moving	Gender
1	Senior	24	Kuwait	2015	Female
2	Senior	23	Saudi Arabia	2021	Female
3	Senior	24	Saudi Arabia	2011	Female
4	Junior	21	Saudi Arabia	2021	Nonbinary
5	Senior	24	Kuwait	2014	Female
6	Junior	22	United Arab Emirates	2018	Female
7	Sophomore	20	Saudi Arabia	2019	Female
8	Junior	21	United Arab Emirates	2008	Female
9	Senior	23	Saudi Arabia	2018	Nonbinary
10	Senior	22	Saudi Arabia	2014	Female

### **Facilitators and Hurdles in the Transition from Gulf Countries to Pakistan**

The participants interviewed for this research were born and raised in Gulf countries. Having spent a significant portion of their life in Gulf culture, the move to Pakistan was an influential “rite de passage” that brought many new experiences and changes with it. In describing the experience of transition from Gulf countries to Pakistan and integration into the Muslim culture of Pakistan, the participants talked about the facilitators and hurdles encountered by them during this journey.

#### ***Facilitators***

Exposure to the Pakistani culture through diaspora communities present in the Gulf countries was one of the main factors that facilitated these students in their transition to Pakistan.

“Basically, my experience was not that different as there I grew up in a Muslim Pakistani community, so I did not interact with the Arabs much.” (Participant 1)

Being raised in a domestic environment that was predominantly Pakistani culture influenced as parents were usually first-generation immigrants was also a facilitator in the adjustment after transition.

“Overseas Muslims are not that different from Pakistani Muslims because our parents were raised here, and they taught us in that fashion.” (Participant 2)

Meeting other overseas students after moving from Gulf to Pakistan also facilitated in the transition as the similar experience of growing up in Arab and moving to Pakistan helped in the formation of trusted bonds.

“I felt the first year was rough but then the second year was kind of smooth because I found people I could relate with. There was one friend of mine who live in Dubai for some time and I got along well with her. It became difficult because after two years she moved back to Dubai and I felt like I did not have any friends anymore that I could relate with.” (Participant 3)

A constant interaction with Pakistani culture in the form of visits during summer break also facilitated in reducing the extent of culture shock.

“it was not much of a shock because I used to visit during the summers and even in Saudi Arabia I used to go to a Pakistani international school so it wasn’t that much of a shock” (Participant 7)

Exposure to Pakistani culture and diaspora communities was thus found to be the most influential factor that facilitate the transition of these students.

### ***Hurdles: Culture and Religion***

The students described feeling an overlap between the boundaries of culture and religion in Pakistan as one of the main hurdles they face in integration into this culture.

“I think in Pakistan people have enmeshed the boundary between tradition and religion” (Participant 3)

The participants described feelings of confusion and anger as the primary feelings induced by this experience.

“I am confused. I am confused because I grew up in a different place. I saw their practices. I saw different practices with my parents and I saw different practices in the place where I lived. I feel like Pakistani culture has nothing to do with Islam. I feel like it is not a proper representation of Islam so I get angry at the “Muslim” culture.” (Participant 3)

“There are a lot of cultural practices mixed with religion here like Moharram for example like we didn’t understand or have so many different versions in Riyadh so when you come here it is a cultural shock.” (Participant 4)

The students also described the nature of the Muslim culture of Pakistan as being extremist.

“It is bad because here there is no mean position there are only extremes. Either people are extremely liberal or extremely Islamic. Saying a small thing can get people to put fatwas on you or accuse you of blasphemy and if you make a small mistake people will make a huge deal out of it.” (Participant 5)

A lack of coherence in the societal model of Islam and extreme positions born in society due to this phenomenon acted as a hurdle in integration.

“Religiously Pakistanis were a lot harsher about their idea of Islam and everyone had a different idea of Islam follows different rules and regulations” (Participant 6)

The lack of diversity of beliefs was attributed as one of the causes of lack of tolerance which resulted in extremism.

“Here you might experience much more extremism when it comes to different beliefs unlike that in Saudi Arabia where you also encounter a lot of expatriates who have different beliefs but here in Pakistan you just have different sects and not many different beliefs, so the people get very extreme about them.” (Participant 4)

In particular, the rise in blasphemy cases acts as another barrier between the students and their relationship with the Muslim culture of Pakistan.

“These days when you hear so much news about blasphemy laws it is quite strained I would say.” (Participant 8)

### ***Hurdles: Collectivist Culture of Pakistan***

The participants described the Gulf countries as having an individualistic culture and Pakistan as having a collectivistic culture in which religion is not a personal but rather a social matter.

“Here in Pakistan people are very involved in the lives of each other but there in Kuwait people are not in terms of religion or otherwise” (Participant 1)

“The Saudi life is very isolating not necessarily in a bad way. Everyone keeps to themselves; everyone minds their own business and that is definitely not true for Pakistan and I see that people are very, in a good sense as well, but sometimes people are too into other people’s lives and trying to understand what is going on and in their personal life and everything so it is tough.” (Participant 9)

An effect of the collectivistic culture is seen in the description provided by a participant of the differences they observed in the perception and observance of religious festivities in the two places.

“Eid was celebrated differently. Not a lot of difference but in Saudi, we spent Eid twice in Madina and there Eid felt like a religious festivity in a way we would start our day with prayer, give sweets, and celebrate it like a Sunnah whereas here the focus is more on meeting family.” (Participant 2)

A shift of focus from individual fulfilment of religious duties to familial fulfilment is observed. Similarly, another participant described the family-oriented collectivistic culture and its enmeshed boundary with religion:

“And there, nuclear families are more customary which is part of Islam but here we say that joint family is Islamic as it is the duty of the sons to serve their parents.” (Participant 5)

This phenomenon further includes the inclusion of extended family members in personal decision-making.

“I mean there people were not much involved in your decisions. Here everyone is all of a sudden affecting your decisions like where are you going to go to school etc.” (Participant 10)

Thus, the shift from an individualistic culture to a collectivistic one becomes one of the most significant hurdles in the transition from Gulf countries to Pakistan. This is not limited to family dynamics but includes society and its reinforcement of norms as well. The participants further talked about a fear of getting judged if they failed to follow the socio-religious customs of Pakistan.

“If you don’t follow the cultural practices of a place you are bound to be judged and if you don’t follow the religious practices enmeshed with culture then also you’re bound to be judged.” (Participant 3)

Another participant described changing the way they dressed to fit in with societal expectations.

“Just to not get questions and stares when you go outside you dress the way people want you to dress.” (Participant 5)

The social judgement and assumptions run beyond moral judgements as one participant described being viewed as a foreigner in marketplaces and the effects of it.

“People judge you for your appearance even if you are shopping people could up the price. You get stared at and people make assumptions about you and how much you earn and just generally see you as a foreigner.” (Participant 4)

In an exceptional case, one participant while describing the inclusion of others in decision making also included the sense of community they gathered from it.

“One of the positive things about the culture is that you have such a big group of people around you and your company matters and so I think that's also interesting to see that in academic cultures in university, you have a lot of people to rely on that you would not necessarily be able to do in Saudi Arabia because everyone kept to themselves.” (Participant 9)

### ***Hurdles: Closed Systems of Social Organization***

In describing their experience of integration into the Muslim culture of Pakistan, some students talked about their observation of closed systems of social organization, such as ethnicity, caste, and sectarianism, interfering with religion.

One participant talked about their exposure to caste systems in Pakistan and not having been familiar with them before in Gulf countries.

“I also saw a major difference in the importance of casts and all of that stuff that was something I was not brought up with and growing up I did not even know my caste.” (Participant 10)

Another participant described the role of clothes as social symbols and the superiority of ethnic identity over religion:

“Here what happens is that if you are wearing a chaddar then you are less Muslim and if you are wearing topi wala burka then you are a pathan, not Muslim, your identity is pathan” (Participant 5)

Many students talked at length about sectarianism present within Pakistan and the conflicts that result due to it were something they had not previously encountered in Arab countries. Activities and discourse around sectarian issues were a phenomenon they were previously unfamiliar with.

“I had no idea about Shia Muslims and what their beliefs are and our differences.” (Participant 2)

“They have a different notion of Islam like they are Barelvi and where I grew up in Saudi they are just Ihl-e-Sunnat.” (Participant 2)

There was a difference observed in the social representation of different sects as well in that there were different masjids and prayer times for people belonging to different sub-sects within sects and these practices were not observed by the participants in the Gulf countries.

“In UAE there was only one time for every prayer like Fajar would be called at one time everywhere but in Pakistan, there were so many different groups of Muslims that they would have their times for every prayer so a certain person would not be going to this mosque and would travel 20 minutes away to another mosque because that specific type of mosque would be doing the prayer suited for the sect of Islam they followed.” (Participant 6)

The extreme sentiments that people carried towards the discussion and the clear distinction of different sects also came as an element of shock to the participants.

“In the Middle East, the Shia-Sunni sects are not very differentiated. They don’t address themselves as Shia or Sunni but as Muslims and dress the same I remember one time I argued with a friend over this, it was not an argument, I told her that my family we were not raised in a way that we were told to pick we were told to look at everyone as Muslims and not differentiate. And she said if you are in Pakistan you would be killed for saying that so just say that you are Sunni.” (Participant 6)

One participant belonging to the Shia sect talked about the sectarian discrimination they faced in Pakistan that they had previously not experienced in the Gulf. The participant talked about how it continues to be a significant hurdle in their integration into Pakistan.

“I think that it is easier for Sunni Muslims, but Shia Muslims are a minority. They are targeted a lot and are made to feel like they are different and mostly it gets made fun of which is not right but you have to stay silent in those times because you cannot do anything about it” (Participant 10)

### **Perception of the Muslim Culture of Pakistan**

The population interviewed for this research belonged to countries where people belonging to diverse national and/or ethnic backgrounds and religious beliefs existed together and in Pakistan, they saw a lack of the type of cultural diversity that they were accustomed to.

“We had a lot of South Asian community and even in that there was diversity like there were Bangladeshi, Indians etc and even in Arabs there were many nationalities so that was also a difference.” (Participant 3)

The students highlighted noticing an attitude of intolerance towards other religious beliefs in society and ascribed the lack of foreign cultural diversity as the cause for it.

“As you know there were different cultures and people from different religions, and they integrated so well that there was no showcasing of anger of people if someone lived differently but here there is so much anger of people. I have noticed a lot of difference in that sense and also there they had a lot of inclusivity.” (Participant 8)

The students also described their outlook on the Indigenous religious sub-cultures of Pakistan such as the phenomenon of hierarchical systems of *peeri-mureedi* (teacher-student) of esoteric religious education, quoting the perception they have about it as Bid'ah.

“We talk about maulvis and peers, but it is everything that we Pakistanis follow, it is considered Bid'ah in Saudi [...] I was born into this system so there are some things that I dislike for example this peer system. My parents believe in it. My parents religiously follow Madani channel I don't know if a lot of people know about it but it is taken as something funny by most people, but my parents religiously follow them and they have a different notion of Islam like they are Barelvi and where I grew up in Saudi they are just Ihl-e-Sunnat. So, it's like... to me... religion should not be difficult but it is something that has been made difficult in Pakistan.” (Participant 2)



One participant described the way she perceived Qaris in Pakistan that call to and lead prayers to be lacking in religious zeal generated by proper understanding of religion and only performing rituals out of duty.

“the Qaris when I pray in Pakistan, even in the masjid of DHA, the tone of the Qari is so tired like I don’t mean to be rude but they are not reciting it they are just reading it” (Participant 7)

The students narrate their perception of quality of religious education as well in the interviews claiming that a lot of misconceptions are prevalent as religious education is not up to par.

“There is a lot of misinformation about religion and they all get it from random maulvis who decide to get up one day and preach.” (Participant 2)

These misconceptions were, as one student ascribed, the cause of much variation in the belief about the teachings of Islam and caused heterogeneity in the religious manifestation of Islam in society.

“Everyone had so many misconceptions about Islam that in Middle Eastern countries they don’t follow such beliefs they are very specific, and they follow a homogenized type of belief like everyone would follow the same belief and here everyone went with whatever they wanted.” (Participant 6)

The students thus perceive that the way they perform religious rites and rituals is different from the way it is done in Pakistan and they cannot talk to others about it as the fear of conservative mindsets holds them back.

“Everything I learnt from the Arabs there, I used to go to an Islamic school and learn the Quran, and the things I learnt from the Arab and Egyptian neighbours there I still try to teach people but obviously I cannot because the people here are really close-minded.” (Participant 7)

When asked about their opinion on the quality of religious education in higher education institutions the students said that they are sceptical about what is taught in classes as well and do not resonate much with it on a personal level.

“I studied A levels so I did not interact with Pakistani boards idea of Islam or Pakistani teachers.” (Participant 6)

“I don’t want to learn anything Islamic from Pakistan because obviously their teaching is different. If I do want to learn I would prefer to learn from an Arab who has studied and done a course in it who know what the real teachings are” (Participant 7)

“In university when we had our Islamic course it was just random stuff. I thought I would learn like really good stuff but it was I think very basic stuff.” (Participant 7)

### **Experiences of Religious Liminality**

The participants recounted their stories of transition and integration into the Muslim culture of Pakistan and in these narrations, there were instances of experiencing a certain barrier or distance from their peers in terms of religiosity and from the religious manifestation of Islam in Pakistan.

One of the main factors that characterized these experiences was the lack of tolerance towards people with different beliefs and the hostile attitude of different groups of believers towards one another.

“Here people are judgemental of other religious identities. So that is where I have experienced religious liminality, but it is not as much related to the academic environment.” (Participant 3)

The reason for this was coming from an environment of interfaith harmony in which rites and festivities of different faiths were celebrated together often under the same roofs of schools and housing buildings.

“We would celebrate different religious festivals together as well. It was more like cultural liminality than religious.” (Participant 3)

Liminality is also experienced as a barrier in open communication irrespective of whether it being an academic setting or not. The participants said that they found it difficult to maintain conversations with their peers in Pakistan as most topics would have religious undercurrents and navigating through these topics would involve constant walking over eggshells.

“People are very firm about the beliefs that were inculcated in them. It can be tough sometimes and sometimes very easy. Some topics are easy to explore with them but there are some that get very tough.” (Participant 4)

“I would say that because I guess in Sharjah religion was not really a topic of discussion there but every conversation here meanders into religious topics like every topic here has a religious basis.” (Participant 8)

The extreme sentiments in society about religious beliefs and their heterogeneous nature that these students encountered further increased the isolating experience of the transition that they were going through thus increasing the feeling of liminality.

“In Pakistan, a lot of the understanding about religion is what we think it is and the way I grew up in Saudi Arabia it was completely based on the understanding of what the Quran and Hadith said there was certain things that I grew up and changed my point of view on and Pakistan has its rules so it was isolating a little bit.” (Participant 9)

For a participant belonging to Shia sect, the exposure to sectarian discrimination and being “othered” was a significant contributor in the experience of liminality.

“When you are among other people and your friends it is very easy to joke about religion like they are expecting you to laugh at their jokes and acknowledge them when they are making fun of it” (Participant 10)

The expectation placed on them to laugh at jokes directed at their faith and their ultimate complacency to it in order to fit in with the crowd placed them in a position of liminality.

“You have to stay silent and at times you also have to laugh with them at what they are saying because you want to fit in because alone you cannot walk separately from the herd.” (Participant 10)

The participants also felt a change in gender role expectations and the place of their gender within Islam in the socio-cultural framework of Pakistan. The participants’ own experience of their gender during the phase of transition was radically altered and they found their interaction with gender changing as well.

“They would allow women to stay inside while men would have to go and pray. Here it was not like that. And on top of that I also noticed there are lack of prayer rooms/areas for women [...] it becomes a gender thing too because when you think about inclusive spaces. For example, I don’t think they have enough space for women’s prayer.” (Participant 3)

The way that female participants observed *purdah* and their perception of it was also altered during the transition.

“There everybody follows the similar uniform *purdah* but here everyone’s definition of *purdah* is different [...] There you needed to wear the hijab, and it would put you above all, but here if you wore the hijab people would criticise you and question you.” (Participant 5)

The effect of these factors contributing to liminality was that the participants described feeling distance and dishonesty about their faith and being confused about their position within it.

“It makes me confused as it makes me feel less like a natural and makes me feel less honest about my belief.” (Participant 3)

One participant shared their way of coming to terms with these feelings of liminality and the approach they took to fit within the Pakistani cultural practices of Islam.

“What I decided was “when in Rome, do as the Romans do”. Religion was what I practised at home, outside I had to be the way the people around me were.” (Participant 5)

### **Institutional Characteristics of FCCU**

When it comes to the institutional character of FCCU in promoting inclusivity for religious beliefs and practices the participants had different views about the infrastructural facilities and the overall culture of the university.

### ***Infrastructural Characteristics***

About infrastructural facilities, the participants talked about a lack of prayer spaces in the academic buildings or near them. The presence of the masjid was acknowledged however the participants said that it was too far and not in good condition. They recommended having small prayer spaces within the buildings most frequented by students.

“There is no place to pray. In E block or in S block. People pray in the hallways or they pray in the economics centre but there is no place to pray. If you really want to

pray you have to go all the way to the mosque and have you ever been to that mosque? It is not very well structured.” (Participant 2)

“FC has been around for long and for them to not have made an accommodation for women or even people in general to have more space for common places for prayers is limiting.” (Participant 3)

The inclusion of diverse religions in infrastructure facilities provision was also appreciated by students.

“We have a break on Fridays from 1-2pm. And we have a masjid and a chapel as well, so I think that FC is very accommodating.” (Participant 5)

### ***Cultural Characteristics***

The participants found the culture and environment of FCCU to be very accommodating and inclusive of all religious faiths.

“Our university (FC College) is a very secular place and everyone in there was free to do or follow any faith and they were also able to share their views openly on campus.” (Participant 1)

The administration, faculty, and students were all appreciated by the participants for their non-discriminatory attitude towards all in the university.

“As for the students and people in general at FC they are very accommodating of religious inclinations and the extent to which they follow religion, so the university people are inclusive.” (Participant 3)

This respectful and inclusive approach is inculcated within the culture of FCCU as described by the respondents.

“FC is more of a secular university where you can be anyone and many views are changed when you come here. You are not seeing people in the perspective of Muslim or Christian identities, you see people as humans here.” (Participant 5)

The inclusive culture of FCCU and its openness to creating an environment in which people could freely express themselves was much appreciated by the respondents.

“I think what FC did right was the culture they had for the Muslims so Muslims and Christians and whoever else especially in terms of clothing because I know a lot of people who came from Saudi Arabia who wanted to wear naqabs and abayas could do

it comfortably and people who came from the US or UK and wanted to wear shorts and sleeveless shirts and whatever they felt comfortable in. I think one thing that other universities can look to FC for is that if nothing else their regard for culture was very important and significant” (Participant 10)

### **Suggestions by Students to Foster Inclusivity**

The structural level recommendations given by the students included separate prayer spaces in academic buildings or nearby and betterment in the quality of the masjid.

“In terms of spaces, prayer rooms for students belonging to all religions and not just Muslims and separate spaces for all to discuss their religion.” (Participant 3)

“A sermon after Friday prayer but I think we can integrate that. I think the bare minimum thing that our university can do is fix up the mosque.” (Participant 2)

Improvements to the curriculum of religious education in the university and creating tolerant classroom environment was also recommended.

“The masjid should be really good and someone who teaches you really well about the rules and people not judge other people and be allowed to follow and practice their religions like Christians and Muslims [...] I think it would be really fun if they could include a really good teacher and not a strict one who is always just saying strictly do this and do that but who actually knows things and teaches people who are not educated as much.” (Participant 7)

Some suggestions such as encouraging seminars or class sessions in which religious diversity is talked about were also given.

“Basically, activities and more events which celebrate cultural diversity like FC does for students from different places in Pakistan they can also have for international students” (Participant 3)

“I think in university what they can do is that during orientation, like we have Univ100, students are divided into different sections and in that way it is known which students are overseas, so a student can be selected who can educate the overseas student about the culture and norms of this place.” (Participant 10)

Some recommendations were more on an academic policy level.

“ok so most people I know who come from overseas still have their parents or family still there and chances are that they have their own visas going on so they have to visit and these visits don’t always align with semester breaks or other holidays so they should be accommodated in terms of leaves” (Participant 3)

“if they are residents of other countries they should be exempted from Urdu. They should not be forced to give an equivalence.” (Participant 6)

Some students believed that more than on a university level the inclusion that is taught through socialization since childhood is more important.

“If children are taught from a young age to accept people as they are instead of questioning them about everything then that would be better.” (Participant 5)

“Here’s the thing it starts from birth honestly. But if it is for university then I think they should encourage their students to be more open and more humane towards one another and generate understanding.” (Participant 4)

## **Discussion**

Victor Turner (1958) defined liminality as being at the centre of a transitory rite of passage. It involves the process of entering, experiencing, and coming out of transition and is characterized by a vast experience of change in individual development. In this study, this framework was applied to document the transition experienced by Muslim students as they moved from Gulf countries to Pakistan. The findings of this study suggested six main themes including facilitating and antagonising factors in transition, perception about the Pakistani Muslim culture, experiences of religious liminality, the impact of transition on academics, character of FCCU as an inclusive space, and the policy recommendations given by participants for better integration of overseas Muslim students in the higher education institutions of Pakistan. This section will discuss these findings in the light of previous literature.

Interviews with the participants showed that the main facilitating agents in the process of transition for overseas Muslim students are diaspora communities. Monje (2018) found a similar pattern in her study of Colombian migrant women in the United Kingdom and their collective processing of forced migration as they found community with each other. The presence of a community who shared that experience acted as a support system in

dealing with the challenge of identity shift and migration. Monje (2018) described migration as not a “zero-sum game between two national identities” but rather a “positive renegotiation of the values and identities of both places”. In our study, the participants described being with the diaspora in the Gulf as their medium of connection to the Pakistani culture and after moving to Pakistan, the diaspora acted as a solace and was reminiscent of their experience of growing up in the Gulf. Thus, diaspora can be defined as an “ongoing transnational network” (Kantek, 2023) that helps migrants or return migrants feel connected to their roots while growing branches in a foreign environment.

On the other hand, culture shock for these students manifested in different societal aspects of Pakistan such as the intermingling of culture and religion, collectivistic culture, and the various closed systems of social organizations. These factors are in line with the findings of Ali (2013) in which collectivistic culture, specifically the influence of joint families, and closed systems such as ethnicity and sectarian differences were explored and shown as striking strokes in the tapestry of Pakistani social culture. The Islamization during Zia’s regime caused much sectarian divide in a country that started out on non-sectarian routes (Ahmer, 2014). The intermingling of culture and religion can be explained through Geertz (1968) who stated that societies transform Islam according to their particular historical experiences and cultural contexts, however, the scripture is taught in its original form, and this process is influenced by cultural idioms thereby transforming the meanings of symbols while the symbol itself remains static. Thus, according to Geertz (1968) at a local level, there are different interpretations and manifestations of religion owing to different cultural contexts. The participants in our study also ascribed the mixing of culture and religion as a significant contributor to extremism as they talked about rampant misinformation about Islam and its effects seen in extremist ideas of the people. Previously, Ushama (2014) cited intense emotional



associations and resistance towards secularization as the leading causes of extremism in Muslim societies.

The participants further shared their perception of the Muslim culture of Pakistan in which they particularly talked about their outlook on indigenous religious structures and agents and their unfamiliarity with them. These included their perception of shrines, sub-sects, and religious education. Kurin (1983) documented the shrine systems of Pakistan and noted the unique culture and hierarchical systems that extend into creating an external culture and system of beliefs that the adherents follow. These ideas and practices of "*peeri-mureedi*" were unfamiliar to the participants of the study. The participants also talked about the dissonances they observed between the religious education of the two places and conveyed their scepticism of the religious educators of Pakistan. They expressed their feelings towards the attitude of maulvis in Pakistan as that they were doing a job without proper understanding of its meaning and that therefore religious education, both local and academic, was filled with misconstrued ideas. This was previously mentioned by Ushama (2014) as well who cited a lack of understanding of duty among religious educators and scholars as one of the significant causes of misinformation about religious ideas and beliefs.

In recounting their experience of transition, the participants recollected the instances that made them experience religious liminality and the feelings that they associated with it. The participants talked about going through an initial phase of isolation and loneliness, these experiences were also recorded by Shah et al (2021) in their interviews with international students in Islamabad. Liminality was also experienced as a result of differences in education about religious rituals and practices as the participants said that discourses with peers and elders around religion and religious practices made them feel othered and "not Muslim enough". This phenomenon was predicted by Arkoun (1990)

that as societies evolve, ritual actions will remain the same however the forms and meanings associated with them will vary across societies. Interviews with the participants also showed that most of them felt religious liminality in terms of the treatment of other religious identities with discrimination and hostility. The students came from a background of religious and cultural diversity where interfaith harmony prevailed; the growing extremism in Pakistani society felt alien to their religious experience. This was an experience that had not been previously recorded in other studies about international students in Pakistan.

Narrowing the topic down further, the participants were asked about the cultural and infrastructural role of FCCU as an inclusive space. The participants described that the culture of FCCU is very inclusive and safe for all religious beliefs, identities, and sects. As for the infrastructure, the students pointed out a lack of accessible prayer spaces as they said that the masjid is too far and not convenient during spring and in between classes, therefore an adequate provision for praying spaces was recommended. The students further said that the curriculum for Islamic education courses can be improved.

Lastly, the participants provided recommendations for academic and student activities policies that may ensure further inclusion for not only overseas Muslim students but all other religious groups as well. In light of Fosnacht & Broderick (2020), the importance of inclusion of a student's religious values on campus to a positive outlook towards the campus environment. Thus, we see that most of the recommendations given by the students included promoting activities that celebrate and educate about religious differences rather than developing hostile or discriminatory attitudes towards them.

## **Limitations**

This was a small-scale study that was conducted within the premises of a specific higher education institution. It was successful in documenting the experiences of overseas Muslim students and their views about inclusion and diversity policies in educational institutions however this study was limited to the culture and infrastructure of FCCU. There were many new dimensions and nuances of the transition experience that the participants talked about briefly and were documented in the interviews which could be elaborated in more detail with a larger study sample. Moreover, the study faced a constraint in the representation of gender groups i.e., the sample contained 8 women and 2 nonbinary persons, and the men approached did not show interest in being interviewed.

### **Implications**

The study implies that higher education institutions play a pivotal role in the social and cultural development of young people and if they provide a safe and inclusive environment then they support individual development and promote harmony among students belonging to different social backgrounds in the university. Being a platform of interactions between different social groups, the university can inculcate values of tolerance and intercultural harmony among students by actively promoting it in its curriculum and student activities.

### **Recommendations**

The findings of this study documented the experience of migration for overseas Muslim students as they moved from the Gulf to Pakistan. Through the interviews with these students, many dimensions of experience were touched upon such as isolation, unfamiliarity with the broad societal culture, different socio-religious norms, individual identity shifts etc that can be further divulged.

Liminality is manifested in terms of loneliness, confusion, and isolation from the macro-culture. It is recommended that the formation of communities and forums of student groups be encouraged as the study found diaspora communities to be of utmost utility in terms of curbing feelings of isolation and liminality and connecting students. In the interviews, the students recommended having forums and sessions in universities that bring together students belonging to different social, religious, and cultural backgrounds. Furthermore, they recommended having accessible prayer spaces, especially during spring and summer semesters. Tamtik & Guenter (2020) also recommend having diverse admission policies and creative institutional and educational environments that are supportive of promoting intercultural harmony.

The students of Forman Christian College, Lahore were interviewed for this study and asked about institutional character in promoting inclusion. The students narrated that the culture of the university was very accommodating for all however there were infrastructural measures that they recommended such as having more accessible prayer spaces. Tamtik & Guenter (2020), too, talk about the importance of infrastructural provisions for having an equitable campus environment. The students mentioned that faculty and administrators did not discriminate however sectarianism is prevalent amongst student groups and that a better religious education curriculum can be provided.

## **Conclusion**

The study aimed to document the experience of religious liminality through the medium of transition of overseas Muslim students from Gulf countries to Pakistan. The liminality framework developed by Victor Turner was employed for this purpose and the argument for varying cultural manifestations of religion was reached through it. The

study explored the facilitators and hurdles experienced during this transition and the perception and religious experiences of these students along with the institutional role of FCCU in this phenomenon. As globalization and travel for education become more commonplace, university environments that foster diversity and inclusivity will play a positive role in creating a healthy campus environment that in turn promotes individual personality development and intercultural harmony.

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## Appendix A: Consent Form

### Informed Consent Form

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet explaining the purpose of the research.
  2. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the research project.
  3. I understand that my participation is voluntary, and I am free to withdraw from the study at any given point without specifying any reason. I am free to decline or not respond to questions I do not wish to answer.
  4. I understand that my responses will be kept strictly confidential, and my name will not be used in the research materials. I will not be identifiable in any information in the research report.
  5. I give permission to the researcher to access my anonymized responses.
  6. I agree that the data collected from me may be used in future studies after identifiable information has been removed.
  7. I agree to take part in the above research.
  8. I understand that a copy of all signed sheets including the consent form and the information sheet will be provided to me and will also be kept in the researcher's main project record.
9. **Name:** \_\_\_\_\_
10. **Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_
11. **Email:** \_\_\_\_\_
12. **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B: Socio-Demographic Survey Instrument

<b>1) Age (in Years):</b>	<b>6) Provincial belonging:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Punjab, <input type="checkbox"/> Sindh, <input type="checkbox"/> Balochistan, <input type="checkbox"/> Azad Kashmir, <input type="checkbox"/> Gilgit-Baltistan, <input type="checkbox"/> Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, <input type="checkbox"/> Islamabad Capital Territory
<b>2) Gender:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female, <input type="checkbox"/> Other	<b>7) Gulf Country of Origin:</b> Saudi Arabia <input type="checkbox"/> , Kuwait <input type="checkbox"/> , United Arab Emirates <input type="checkbox"/> , Bahrain <input type="checkbox"/> , Qatar <input type="checkbox"/> , Oman <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>3) Year of Study:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Freshman, <input type="checkbox"/> Sophomore, <input type="checkbox"/> Junior, <input type="checkbox"/> Senior	<b>8) Current living arrangement:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Joint family, <input type="checkbox"/> Nuclear family, <input type="checkbox"/> Single-person household, <input type="checkbox"/> Hostel, <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say, <input type="checkbox"/> Other:
<b>4) Household income (per month):</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Below 50,000, <input type="checkbox"/> Between 50,000 and 100,000, <input type="checkbox"/> Between 100,000 and 200,000, <input type="checkbox"/> Above 200,000, <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say	<b>9) Religion:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Islam, <input type="checkbox"/> Christianity, <input type="checkbox"/> Hinduism, <input type="checkbox"/> Atheist, <input type="checkbox"/> Agnostic, <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say, <input type="checkbox"/> Other:
<b>5) Regional belonging:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Urban, <input type="checkbox"/> Rural, <input type="checkbox"/> Suburban, <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say	

## **Appendix C: In-depth Interview Guide**

### **Interview Guide**

#### **Section 1: Experiences of overseas Muslim students during their transition and integration into HEIs in Pakistan**

1. When did you move to Pakistan and from which country?
2. How was the experience of the early stages of the transition?
3. Did you notice any differences in the Muslim culture of the two places? If so, what were they?
4. How was your experience of integration into this culture?
5. How would you describe your relationship with the Muslim culture of Pakistan at the present moment?

#### **Section 2: Perceived role of university structure, culture, and administrative processes in the religious liminality encountered by overseas Muslim students and their effects on student learning and well-being.**

1. Has the transition impacted your academics in any way?
2. Do you experience religious liminality while interacting with other university students or administration?
3. Is the university structure and culture accommodating of your religious practices?

#### **Section 3: Suggestions to foster inclusivity and integration of overseas Muslim students within the higher education system of Pakistan.**

1. What would you suggest for the integration of overseas Muslim students into the universities of Pakistan?
2. How can the university environment be made more inclusive for overseas Muslim students?

### Appendix D: Facesheet Information

<b>Sr.No.</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Year of Study</b>	<b>Country of Origin</b>	<b>Year of Moving</b>	<b>Living Arrangement</b>	<b>Religion</b>	<b>Regional Belonging</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Kuwait</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>Nuclear</b>	<b>Islam</b>	<b>Urban</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>KSA</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>Joint family</b>	<b>Islam</b>	<b>Urban</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>KSA</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>Nuclear</b>	<b>Islam</b>	<b>Urban</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>Nonbinary</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup></b>	<b>KSA</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>Nuclear</b>	<b>Islam</b>	<b>Urban</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Kuwait</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>Single person</b>	<b>Islam</b>	<b>Urban</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup></b>	<b>UAE</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>Nuclear</b>	<b>Islam</b>	<b>Urban</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup></b>	<b>KSA</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>Joint family</b>	<b>Islam</b>	<b>Urban</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup></b>	<b>UAE</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>Nuclear</b>	<b>Islam</b>	<b>Urban</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>Nonbinary</b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>KSA</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>Nuclear</b>	<b>Islam</b>	<b>Urban</b>
<b>10</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>KSA</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>Joint family</b>	<b>Islam</b>	<b>Urban</b>

### Appendix E: Thematic Analysis

Sr. No.	Themes	Sub-themes
1	Facilitators and Hurdles	1a. Facilitators: Diaspora 1b. Hurdles: Mixing Culture and Religion 1c. Hurdles: Collectivistic Culture 1d. Hurdles: Closed System of Social Organization
2	Perception of Muslim Culture of Pakistan	2a. Lack of International Cultural Diversity 2b. Outlook on Indigenous Religious Structures 2c. Outlook on mass religious education
3	Experience of Religious Liminality	3a. Lack of Tolerance 3b. Barrier in Communication 3c. Exposure to Sectarianism 3d. Change in Gender Role Expectations 3e. Confusion about Faith
4	FCCU Institutional Characteristics	4a. Cultural Role 4b. Infrastructural Role
5	Suggestions by participants	5a. Accessible Prayer Spaces 5b. Improved Religious Education Curriculum 5c. Diversity Inclusive Activities 5d. Socialization

## Appendix: F: IRB Certificate



**FORMAN CHRISTIAN COLLEGE**  
(A CHARTERED UNIVERSITY)

### **INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD** **APPROVAL CERTIFICATE**

IRB Ref: IRB-628/01-2024

Date: 04-06-2024

Project Title: Exploring the Phenomenon and Experience of Religious Liminality among Overseas Muslim Students in FCCU.

Principal Investigator: Aleeza Islam

Supervisor: Ms. Sharmeen Bano

The Institutional Review Board has examined your project in the IRB meeting held on 04-06-2024 and has approved the proposed study. If during the conduct of your research, any changes occur related to participant risk, study design, confidentiality or consent, or any other change then IRB must be notified immediately.

Please be sure to include the IRB reference number in all correspondence.

Dr. Sharon Hanook  
Convener-IRB  
Chairperson Department of Statistics  
Forman Christian College  
(A Chartered University)  
Lahore

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