

Interfaith Coexistence in Educational Spaces: A Communication Study of Christian Students in FC College, UCP, and Punjab Colleges

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ABSTRACT

Aim of the Study: This study examines interfaith coexistence among Christian students across three major educational institutions in Lahore: The Forman Christian College University (FCCU), the University of Central Punjab (UCP), and the Punjab Colleges (PGC).

Methodology: This study employs a qualitative research design, using in-depth interviews with Christian students, teachers, parents, and church leaders to understand how communication, identity expression, and institutional culture shape the everyday realities of minority students.

Findings: The results show that blatant discrimination is infrequent and the relationships among students on campuses are generally respectful and serene. Even so, the Christian students continue to navigate academic life, balancing a kind of wise coexistence. They often control their words, avoid delicate religious matters, and exercise tact to avoid misinterpretation or confrontation.

Conclusion: Students report feeling comfortable making friends and engaging in campus activities, but they remain mindful of being a minority when discussing faith or identity. Educational leaders and church ministers recognize this awareness and view it as both a protective measure and a reflection of broader social curricula.

Keywords: Interfaith Coexistence, Christian Students, Higher Education in Pakistan, Lahore Universities, Minority Experiences, Institutional Culture.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Pakistan is a multi-religious state, with a vast majority of people adhering to Islam, also comprised of religious minority groups such as Christians, Hindus, Sikhs, and Ahmadis, among others. With a lack of systematic data regarding their representation in higher education, approximately 1.37% population follows Christianity, and 2.14% follows Hinduism (Christian Daily International, 2026). Nonetheless, minority groups have always been a substantial part of Pakistan's social, economic, and educational life, through their diversified cultural and intellectual life. The educational institutions in cities like Lahore are considered a key venues where interfaith contacts are formed and societal conventions discussed. Higher

education, especially, is a special environment that offers students of various religions a day-to-day contact via formal classroom debates (Brooks & Boyer, 2019), group work, campus events, and unofficial social life, highlighting a significant gap in academic and research policy.

The interfaith coexistence of learning environments is not only essential in creating tolerance but also important to comprehend diversity and inclusion (Bilal, 2024). This research aims to investigate interfaith interaction among educational institutions that can lead to social cohesion, empathy, and critical thinking between students (Swidler, 2014; Ali, 2022), while reducing “intellectual isolation” (Anjum, 2020). According to Raza et al. (2024), minority religious groups feel discriminated against or sidelined, which can adversely affect their academic achievement, well-being (Ali & Ahmad, 2022; Kausar, 2025), and overall feeling of belonging. Despite the awareness about the necessity of an inclusive education policy in Pakistan, the actual experience of minority students, especially Christians in Lahore, is not well researched. These experiences cannot be fully understood without focusing on the issue of communication - the verbal and nonverbal means of expressing their identity, establishing relationships, and managing these challenges of being a religious minority. Lahore Christian students face a different challenge (Rashid, 2025; Butt, 2023) when studying with a majority-Muslim student body. The population of disproportion may influence peer relationships, classroom life, and engagement in extracurricular activities. Moreover, according to the 2026 report of the Minority Rights Group International, minority students tend to face elements of discrimination that are less obvious, such as verbal harassment and bias in the curriculum. Although the issue of structural challenge has been well documented, literature is scarce on the issue of how Christian students feel and communicate interfaith coexistence (Gill et al., 2022) in the everyday college life (Bajwa & Jafree, 2025).

1.1 Problem Statement

Prior research focuses on minorities, theological discourse, and policy-level narratives, along with a growing body of scholarship on interfaith relations and religious coexistence in Pakistan, has revealed a significant research gap in the field. Most of the research is showing normative confinement to emphasize what interfaith harmony, religious or philosophical debate should be (Ali & Rathore, 2024; Niaz, 2022, Mehfooz, 2021) rather than providing empirical examination of how, in an actual sense, people are experiencing and communicating it through negotiations (Zaman & Haq, 2023). Moreover, contemporary research is more prone to discussing government functionality, classroom dynamics, or minority rights conditions (Werner, 2026; Aziz & Batool, 2025). A large space in research still needs to be filled by incorporating audience-centered approaches like reception analysis, discourse interaction at the student level, or measurable behavioral outcomes. This research has tried to understand the link between mediated communication practices among different university students, higher education institutional policies, and their real impact on attitudes and social coherence.

1.2 Research Objectives

1. To investigate the perception and experience of interfaith coexistence by Christian students in three universities of Lahore.
2. To determine the communication practices, strategies, and, challenges that Christian students use or face in communication with peers, teachers, and administrators.
3. To explore how institutional and informal communication (official notices, campus events, and social media platforms) and peer conversations and group chats impact interfaith coexistence.
4. To compare and contrast the communication experiences of the Christian students in three institutions to establish patterns, barriers, and facilitating conditions of interfaith harmony.

1.3 Research Questions

1. What is the perception and experience of Christian students in three Universities of Lahore about interfaith coexistence on their campuses?

2. What are the communication patterns (formal and informal) that these students adopt or experience in relating with students of other religions?
3. What are the positive and negative effects of institutional communications and policies on interfaith communication and coexistence?
4. What are the similarities and differences in the communication experiences of Christian students in the three institutions?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Peer Networks and Informal Communication

Peer networks are one of the most important venues for minority student communication, as Fazal et al. (2025) have noted that Christian students frequently face subtle exclusion, such as being ignored in group discussions or having their input minimized in joint projects. While these microaggressions may not be overt, they affect students' feelings of belongingness and their strategies in campus life. Informal peer communication - through casual conversations, study groups, and social media platforms - becomes an essential instrument in identity assertion, search for support, and negotiations of inclusion. These interactions frequently involve Orbe's 1998 co-cultural theory (CCT)'s strategies, identified as nonassertive strategies to avoid conflict, assertive strategies to be recognized, and resistance-oriented strategies to resist marginalization Langston, 2025; Okesson, 2023. Social media offers an extended peer network that amplifies support and challenges. Rashid has stated that

Pakistan thrives on its many contradictions and complexities, especially around religion, religiosity, and new technologies. When it comes to social media, its followers in Pakistan quickly embrace religious-inspired content, even though users' searches are more focused on fashion rather than faith. (2019, p.45)

However, that research did not specifically address the lived realities of Christian students within campuses, by overlooking their sense of belonging with predominantly Muslim or mainstream universities in Pakistan. One form of informal group that Christian students generally form is to discuss academic issues, share experiences of inclusion or exclusion, and organize participation in campus events. These interactions are not only communication strategies for (belonging), but also strategies for negotiating power relationships in multi-faith spaces (Yotes et al., 2025). This study has tried to fill this research gap by understanding the socio-cultural educational dynamics of religious minorities in offline campus life.

2.2 Classroom Dynamics and Formal Communication

Classrooms are another important scenario in which communication determines the nature of interfaith coexistence. Particularly, previous studies have shown that minority students might be subject to subtle forms of marginalization (Hakkola & Rosenbaum, 2024) during lecture or discussion time, such as to favor most faith perspectives (Wilson et al., 2023), which indirectly affects classroom discussions and peer interactions. The students may have co-cultural strategies in these settings (Powell & Powell, 2015) to decide when to speak, what to contribute, and how to interact with faculty and peers.

Faculty communication and institutional messaging contribute to classroom experiences. Studies of institutional communication, such as textbooks and curriculum analysis (Kohvakka, 2022; Liu, 2022), have shown that the perspectives of minorities are often not represented or underrepresented. This structural exclusion affects how students interact and how they feel, which plays a major role in how important it is to have a wider range of communication channels, both formal and informal. Christian students may therefore move through classroom interactions in a strategic manner, taking advantage of peer networks and social media to supplement such formal communication gaps and create a sense of inclusion.

2.3 Interfaith Dialogue and Campus Initiatives

Formal interfaith initiatives, such as seminars, workshops and student-led initiatives, are another arena in which communication plays a central role (Kohvakka, 2022) emphasizing the principles of mutual respect, empathy, and understanding across religious boundaries. In Pakistan, while interfaith programs are held at universities, the impact of these programs on interaction between students is often limited (Ahmed & Adnan, 2024). Hussain & Ahmed (2021) have found that interfaith seminars are infrequently translated into sustained dialogue between students, often reverting to pre-existing social groups outside of the context of the event. That highlights a crucial gap since structured events cannot foster interfaith coexistence on their own. Instead, day-to-day communication between students in both classroom settings and informal spaces (Sumi, 2025; Rahman & Hider, 2025) is important for meaningful engagement.

Christian students often move through these dynamics both individually and collectively, either by selective disclosure of religious identity, careful participation in discussion, or conscious interaction in mixed faith peer groups. Collective strategies often include peer-led initiatives, including discussion groups, cultural events, and collective social media campaigns promoting inclusion Ajmal & Ali, 2025, p.117) and understanding the complexity of agency, communication, and relationship dynamics in achieving togetherness (Bodie et al., 2023).

2.4 Institutional Policies and Digital Communication

Institutional communication, such as policies, notices, and event programming significantly impacts on the experiences of minority students. Landini (2025) emphasizes the need for formal policies for a new understanding of the policy–practice gap in the intercultural education research (p. 217). Christian students use peer networks, faculty mentorship, and social media platforms to fill the gaps. The growth of digital media and web-based communication channels has altered the character of inter-religious coexistence within the educational areas. Online spaces in the Pakistani context, where religion tends to overlay politics, education, and identity, are the spaces (Syed, 2025) in which students can articulate their beliefs, work out boundaries, and fight discrimination. Although physical campuses present people with face-to-face dialogues and inclusion, social media and online communities provide a new sphere of communication which is usually safer, more expressive, and less limited to an institutional hierarchy. Nevertheless, most of the previous studies in Pakistan have not exhaustively examined how the religious minority of Christian students employs digital communication to mediate interfaith communication and institutional affiliation.

The use of digital platforms (Al Ketbi et al., 2025; Nwobodo, 2025) also offers the opportunity to communicate with anonymity or semi-publicness, which gives Christian students the opportunity to share their views with no intimidation of any direct retaliation. Farooq and Sohail (2025) and Durrani, (2022) reported that students usually have more freedom of expression in cyberspace than in the classroom. They can share experiences and communicate in interfaith settings or celebrate religious events without feeling judged by their immediate peers, paving the path to examine communication behaviors or patterns and concentrate on emotional belonging.

2.5 Theoretical Background

Principles of Interfaith Dialogue, given by Swidler in 1983, more like a phenomenology of actual dialogues (Mouw, 2022, p. 84), and Co-Cultural theory - CCT (Orbe, 1998), shed light on various aspects of communication among minority students when they are in interfaith learning environments. Normative framework of Swidler, often interpreted as transformative theological concepts (Hamsah & Soehadha, 2024, P. 70), pays much attention to the principles of dialogue as a dynamic interaction, fostering mutual understanding, empathy, and respect among representatives of different faiths. It claims that coexistence is not simply the lack of conflict but of active engagement, in which people are ready to listen, learn, and able to respond to others' beliefs.

On the contrary, CCT offers a structural and strategic perspective on the process of communication between marginalized groups and dominant cultural groups. It determines various communication orientations (Jun et al., 2023) involving nonassertive, assertive, and aggressive, and strategies, assimilation, accommodation, and separation. In this research, both perspectives provide significant interpretive lenses for understanding Christian students in the Pakistani higher education system, particularly in terms of relational and empathetic aspects of coexistence with Muslim students as well as the strategic and adaptive behavior employed by minority students to cope with institutional hierarchies.

In Pakistani research, most interfaith studies focus on sociological or psychological theories (Akhtar & Hussain, 2025), rather than communication-based ones. Past and recent communication studies (Munif et al., 2026; Ali et al., 2026) indicate a need for this kind of research by classifying communication as structure and action; not only by analyzing the fact of dialogue, but also with an analysis of media use, real-life dialogue, and institutional messages. Moreover, this study has tried to fill a significant gap between abstract models of social cohesion and the micro-level dynamics of interfaith coexistence within Pakistan's higher education institutions, as spiritual wisdom can serve as a potent tool against extremism in contemporary Muslim societies (Habib, 2025, p.32).

Moreover, Yousaf et al. (2022) observed that friendship networks are important in alleviating prejudice and developing empathy. Nonetheless, they found that religious differences also cause some hesitation or avoidance in religious or political conversation. The presence of such communication barriers can also result in a kind of superficial coexistence, where the students will engage each other cordially, and at the same time, they do not engage in deeper conversations. Undoubtedly, the role of religious literacy and moderating reasoning (Takdir, M. (2025) is highlighted to prevent radicalization as in the case of Generation Z of Indonesia, yet leaving a contextual and experiential gap on interfaith harmony in everyday academic settings.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study followed a qualitative research design that is philosophically grounded on an interpretive approach, understanding of Christian students in Lahore about their belonging to the Muslim-majority educational set-up, how they are negotiating their identity, and what pressures and warnings, as well as experiences, influence their studying life. The interpretive orientation is handling subjective realities (Willis et al., 2007), as each of the groups involved in this research perceives the same environment in a somewhat different manner. Students get to live their lives first-hand; teachers can see what is going on in a position of authority, and church leaders can see the concerns of the wider community that are historically and politically shaped. What is required is an interpretation of how these perspectives can be used to complement or contradict each other (Armstrong, 2017), as religious minorities tend to walk in a very silent or guarded manner, and only qualitative discussions (Saldaña, 2013) can show what is going on inside.

According to Taylor (2005), Interviews allow the researcher to discuss and explore past events. They can also be useful ways of exploring sensitive experiences of topics, which might not be accessible through more structured questionnaire methods (p. 41). However, there is a possibility of not getting the participants' real-time behaviors (Bogdan & Taylor, 1990), but qualitative interviews in interpretivist research are treated as meaningful representations of lived reality instead of objective records of action. So, in this study, participants' not only retrospective reflections but also current communicative practices are also captured through careful coding, reflexivity, and the use of multiple participant perspectives.

3.1 (Research Participants & Context (Multi-Perspective Qualitative Design)

The study adopts a multi-perspective qualitative design to bring together the opinions of three participant groups: Christian students enrolled in various disciplines within three universities: The Forman Christian College University (FCCU), The University of Central Punjab (UCP) and the two campuses (the Johar Town and Campus-8) of Punjab Colleges (PGC), teachers from diverse religious and educational

backgrounds, Church leaders/priests and parents. The inclusion of multiple groups provides comparisons on the perceptions of each group in the selected academic environment. Instead of considering these perspectives as variables for comparison, the study seeks to interpret how meanings are constructed across different social positions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The study is balanced by having the voices of all three groups side by side, which gives a more comprehensive picture.

3.2 Sampling Strategy

The purposive sampling is adopted to gather the voices that reflect the diversity of the Christian educational experience (Crowell, 2025) in three universities in Lahore. The objective of the participants' selection is not to make a generalization across Pakistan but to research the inner relations in Lahore, where there are numerous well-known historic Christian institutions and where the Christian minority deals with Muslim majority peers within a shared educational environment. The total sample size of sixty respondents consists of four participant groups: thirty-five undergraduate and intermediate-level Christian Students. They have been chosen at different levels of their annual or semester degree programs and in various disciplines to ensure the representation of the whole population.

This combination enabled the study to make comparisons between the Christian-established institutions (like FCCU), the semi-private college network (PGC), and the large private universities (like UCP). Within the purposive framework, snowball sampling was used as an additional recruitment technique (Leighton et al., 2021) to access Christian participants. Initial contacts were established through known entry points within institutions, and then these participants subsequently referred other Christian classmates willing to participate. This strategy was successful since minority students usually have trust networks, and they are safer when referred by a friend. Moreover, the department name and gender have been disclosed due to the privacy concerns of the participants. Ten Christian and Muslim faculty members were interviewed to explore how different teachers' perceptions work out regarding faith identity, having diverse working experiences across Christian and Muslim educational institutions. As teaching experience plays a vital role in comprehending institutional policies, classroom interactions (Buzzelli & Johnston, 2014), and disciplinary intervention practices when it comes to the discussion of religion.

Moreover, interviews were conducted with ten Christian parents (n = 5 parent couples) and five priests or senior church leaders from five key churches within and around the selected institutions to contextualize the religious and community environments of the participants. Spatial distribution of churches also has significance in Christian students' community engagement, but in this research, the purposive sample of teachers, church leaders, and parents is based on the willingness to participate, facilitated through trust-based networks and voluntary consent. Church names and teachers' identities have been anonymized to ensure and protect the ethical integrity of participants and affiliated institutions. Furthermore, in this research, the sample size of interviewees is based on the principles of saturation (Ahmad Giran et al., 2025) when substantially no new themes emerge during the data collection (Duffy, 2026, p. 60), ensuring sufficient variation and depth in the selected data while maintaining the feasibility within the scope of the qualitative inquiry (Saldaña, 2013; Braun & Clarke, 2025).

3.3 Ethical Considerations

All phases of the research have ensured the privacy, safety, and emotional comfort of all participants. Before the start of the interviews, the aim of the study was stated in easy language, and the participants were clearly informed that they could decline to answer any questions or could terminate the interview at any moment. Nobody was pressured to disclose any personal information that one did not feel comfortable with. A great number of Christian students explained self-censorship in their everyday life, and thus, the level of their comfort at the time of interviews was given particular attention.

Any discussion was recorded only after being given permission orally. Other participants did not wish to be audio-recorded, particularly when they were talking about discrimination or sensitive moments, so handwritten notes were taken in those instances. As a way of assuring them that they would not develop

fear, the participants were told that anything they said would not be linked to their name, institution, or identity. No real names are used to identify all the participants; instead, they were given codes. According to Saldaña (2013):

Do not confuse the use of code in qualitative data analysis with the use of code in the field of semiotics, even though there are some slight parallels between the two applications. In semiotics, a code relates to the interpretation of symbols in their specific social and cultural contexts. In qualitative data analysis, a code is a researcher-generated construct that symbolizes and thus attributes interpreted meaning to each individual datum for later purposes of pattern detection, categorization, theory building, and other analytic processes. (p.14)

So students are referred to as S1 to S35, teachers as T1 to T10, parents as P1 to P10, and bishops as B1 to B5. Transcription and analysis are done using these codes. To avoid being identified, any identifying details are deleted. As an example, when a student referred to a certain teacher/incident, the description is generalized without altering the meaning.

Since religious minorities tend to be vulnerable or exposed (Baldwin, 2010) whenever they speak out, the interview locations sought were well considered. Most of the interviews were conducted in private or semi-private areas where students are comfortable. Interviews of bishops and parents were normally conducted in churches, households, staff rooms, or quiet classrooms, respectively. Ethical neutrality is also followed in the research, as the researchers did not contradict the beliefs of participants and did not share personal attitudes towards interfaith relations, trying to lead the participants to a specific narrative. This was aimed at listening and not speaking, to enable them to be free and frank in their conversation without any fear of being judged.

3.4 Data Analysis

Recordings and notes are checked after every interview to validate the results. Manual transcription is done to maintain tone, pauses, and emotional context. Data is analyzed manually following the established qualitative analysis procedures, using Microsoft Word/Excel, instead of CAQDAS software. This approach allowed a deeper engagement with the data and participants' narrative interpretation more reflexively. The process of interview transcription was considered. To begin with, every audio recording was repeated at normal speed and slow speed to ensure total accuracy. This is because emotional cues like laughing, hesitation, long pauses, or voice lowering were observed neutrally (Segel, 2026) since they assisted in disclosing the aspect of self-censorship or discomfort. Interview-based handwritten notes were compared with transcribed text to capture instances that were not recorded, like body language or change of posture, when the topic was religion. In addition to data source triangulation (Carter, 2014), triangulation 'within-method' (Holloway & Galvin, 2023, p. 104) has been employed to ensure credibility and trustworthiness within qualitative standards outlined by Lincoln & Guba (1985). Moreover, under 'tacit knowledge' (Stake, 1978) inquiry, observational notes were prepared during interviewing that were transcribed on digital files and placed in chronological order. Such files consisted of location, environment, observable relationships, and symbolic information such as religious decorations, posters, or notices. Even such small details, like the way in which the students greeted each other or how they reacted after the religion, are followed up on during analysis. All the transcripts and notes were saved on a password-enabled device. Institutions' names were retained; however, coded in the quote of individuals.

Furthermore, coding of interview questions for each group of participants entailed the recognition of recurrent patterns, expressions, and concepts around belongingness, expression of identity, self-censorship, interfaith interaction, and perceived equality, within interviews. Saldaña's (2013) multi-cycle coding was used, in which all meaningful statements were highlighted and assigned to themes, enabling the researcher to synthesize data and identify participants' patterns in natural form. Moreover, similarities and differences were compared with the help of the in vivo and process and descriptive codes to preserve both the participants' voices and identification of communicative patterns.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Lived Experience of Coexistence

Findings of this research reveal that 58% of the diverse cross-section of the Christian community are student respondents (SRs) with varying levels of exposure to interfaith interactions. Approximately 52% SRs have reported feeling fully comfortable within their campuses by evaluating their experience and environment as “positively”, “balanced”, “good enough”, “quite ok”, or “peaceful” as shown in the following ‘in vivo’ codes:

S20 (Intermediate): *“OVERALL EXPERIENCE THEEK RAHA HAI.”*

S24 (Undergraduate): *“HONESTLY KAAFI BALANCED RAHA HAI.”*

S30 (Intermediate): *“ENVIRONMENT OKAY HAI.”*

S35 (Intermediate): *“OVERALL EXPERIENCE POSITIVE HI HAI.”*

S16 (Undergraduate): *“ENVIRONMENT GENERALLY PEACEFUL HAI.”*

At the same time, 70% teachers have reported that they make an effort to maintain academic participation, openness, and inclusivity between the students of all backgrounds, mentioning that:

T1 (Professor): *“HANDLE IT CAREFULLY AND RESPECTFULLY.”*

T4 (Lecturer): *“CHRISTIAN STUDENTS... GENERALLY DISCIPLINED AND FOCUSED.”*

T5 (Professor): *“WE ARE CAREFUL.”*

T6 (Senior Lecturer): *“COEXISTENCE QUITE SMOOTH.”*

T7 (Associate Prof.): *“NO RESTRICTION ON THEIR PARTICIPATION.”*

T9 (Lecturer): *“CAUTION MAINTAINS HARMONY.”*

T10 (Assistant Prof.): *“SYSTEM WORKS QUITE WELL.”*

Almost 80% parents have expressed positive remarks about the interfaith coexistence of their children as respectful, peaceful, good enough, supportive, or much better in following in vivo codes.

P2 (Mother of Intermediate Student): *FRIENDS ARE SUPPORTIVE.”*

P3 (Father of Intermediate Student): *“COEXIST RESPECTFULLY.”*

P4 (Mother of Undergraduate Student): *“CLASSMATES TREAT HER NORMALLY.”*

P5 (Father of Intermediate Student): *“ENVIRONMENT... MUCH BETTER THAN BEFORE.”*

P6 (Mother of Undergraduate Student): *CAMPUS LIFE IS PEACEFUL.”*

P7 (Father of Intermediate Student): *“EXPERIENCE THEEK RAHA HAI.”*

In the case of religious leaders, 90% have defined coexistence as theologically legitimate, historically grounded, and a social necessity to survive as:

Pastor (Church 1): “*CHRISTIANITY TEACHES US TO LIVE PEACEFULLY.*”

Bishop (Church 2): “*NECESSARY IN A DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY.*”

Bishop (Church 4): “*JESUS HIMSELF LIVED IN A PLURAL SOCIETY.*”

Pastor (Church 5): “*THIS BALANCE... IS HEALTHY AND REALISTIC.*”

4.2 Explicit/Implicit Discrimination and Preventive Strategies

However, seventeen students (48%) have shown a more cautious level of comfort by mentioning that they had not faced any direct or explicit discrimination, hostility, or exclusion, and try to remain cautious, controlled, reserved, doing self-censorship, being silent, avoiding, being self-aware, not responding or reacting, careful, or by setting boundaries. As students have described in their interviews:

S9 (Intermediate): “*HAMESHA THORA CAUTIOUS REHTA HOON.*”

S6 (Undergraduate): “*THORI SI CAUTION HAMESHA REHTI HAI.*”

S1 (Undergraduate): “*THORA SA CONTROL KARTA HON.*”

S24 (Undergraduate): “*THORA SA RESERVED HO JATA HOON.*”

S33 (Undergraduate): “*KHUD KO HAR CONVERSATION KA HISSA NAHI BANATA.*”

S2 (Intermediate): “*SILENCE BEST OPTION HOTI HAI.*”

S9 (Undergraduate): “*RELIGION PE BAAT AVOID KARTA HOON.*”

S8 (Undergraduate): “*EK AWARENESS HOTI HAI KE AAP MINORITY HO.*”

S12 (Undergraduate): “*LEKIN MAIN REACT NAHI KARTA.*”

S7 (Intermediate): “*CLASS MAIN WORDS CAREFULLY USE KARTA HOON.*”

S31 (Undergraduate): “*APNI BOUNDARIES MAINTAIN KARTA HOON.*”

Teaching faculty (90%) have indicated that they have not personally observed explicit or overt discrimination regarding interfaith coexistence among students in classrooms and revealed that institutional environments generally provide a fair and healthy environment for all students’ diversity. Some responses also reported that sometimes implicit discrimination or bias towards Christian students may remain invisible to the teachers, leaving a perceptual gap between students and institutions. The following responses have been recorded with in vivo codes:

T1 (Professor): “*NO DISTINCTION AT ALL.*”

T2 (Lecturer): “*NEVER SEEN OPEN DISCRIMINATION.*”

T3 (Assistant Prof.): “*THERE IS NO OTHERING.*”

T4 (Lecturer): “*NEVER HAD A SITUATION WHERE RELIGION CREATED CONFLICT.*”

T5 (Professor): “*DON’T ALLOW DEBATES TO TURN EMOTIONAL.*”

T6 (Senior Lecturer): “*A BIT RESERVED... NOT SOMETHING IMPOSED.*”

T7 (Associate Prof.): *“TRAINED TO REMAIN NEUTRAL AND INCLUSIVE.”*

T8 (Senior Lecturer): *“HANDLED QUICKLY BEFORE IT ESCALATES.”*

T10 (Assistant Prof.): *“NO COMPLAINTS OF DISCRIMINATION.”*

The parents’ side (50%) has claimed no incident of harshness or embarrassment that their children ever experienced as a Christian. Most of the time, they admitted that time has changed, and to keep religion as a personal matter is already part of the primary socialization of a child, as:

P1 (Father of Undergraduate Student): *“NO SERIOUS COMPLAINT.”*

P4 (Mother of Undergraduate Student): *“NEVER TOLD ME ABOUT DISCRIMINATION.”*

P6 (Mother of Undergraduate Student): *“HE FEELS INCLUDED.”*

P8 (Mother of Intermediate Student): *“KOI ISSUE NAHI.”*

P10 (Mother of Undergraduate Student): *“KABHI COMPLAIN NAHI KARTI.”*

Similarly, clergy members (100%) have emphasized the importance of sensitivity when discussing religious matters, in the following ‘in vivo’ codes:

Pastor (Church 1): *“WISDOM KE SAATH BEHAVE KAREIN.”*

Pastor (Church 3): *“FEAR OF MISUNDERSTANDING.”*

Pastor (Church 5): *“BALANCE BETWEEN CONFIDENCE AND CAUTION.”*

Bishop (Church 2): *“HAR BAAT HAR JAGAH... ZAROORI NAHI.”*

Bishop (Church 4): *“BAAT DIGNITY KE SAATH RAKHEIN.”*

4.3 Religious Identity and Guidance on Faith Expressing

Approximately 70% Christian students have shown comfort level in expressing their religious identity within trusted peer groups as:

S2 (Intermediate): *“JO LOG CLOSE HAIN UNKO PATA HAI.”*

S5 (Intermediate): *“FRIENDS KO OPENLY BATA DETA HOON.”*

S15 (Undergraduate): *“FRIENDS LEVEL PE KOI MASLA NAHI.”*

S16 (Undergraduate): *“FRIENDS KE SAATH... BILKUL NORMAL.”*

S29 (Undergraduate): *“CLOSE FRIEND HO... BAAT HO JAATI HAI.”*

About 50% teachers have acknowledged the normality of academicism regarding Christian students’ participation, describing it as:

T1 (Professor): “*CHRISTIAN STUDENTS PARTICIPATE NORMALLY.*”

T3 (Assistant Prof.): “*CHRISTIAN STUDENTS ARE JUST STUDENTS.*”

T5 (Professor): “*WE ADDRESS ACADEMICALLY AND MOVE ON.*”

T7 (Associate Prof.): “*RELIGION NOT ACTIVE IN CLASSROOM INTERACTION.*”

T8 (Senior Lecturer): “*STRONG FRIENDSHIPS ACROSS RELIGIOUS LINES.*”

Christian students’ Parents (40%) have highlighted their grooming patterns of communication, interaction, expressiveness, and distancing for a harmonious coexistence, in the following ‘in vivo’ codes:

P2 (Mother of Intermediate Student): “*FAITH IS PERSONAL.*”

P3 (Father of Intermediate Student): “*STAND FIRM IN BELIEFS*”

P6 (Mother of Undergraduate Student): “*BE CONFIDENT BUT CAREFUL.*”

P8 (Mother of Intermediate Student): “*FAITH STRONG RAKHO.*”

Church leaders (100%) have supported Christian students at every stage of their learning by grounding their teachings in the teachings of Jesus Christ and the Bible, ensuring the sustainability of equality and fairness that any academic institutional culture seeks to promote, as follows:

Bishop (Church 2): “*BE CONFIDENT IN YOUR FAITH.*”

Bishop (Church 4): “*BE WISE IN WORDS.*”

Pastor (Church 1): “*LIVE PEACEFULLY WITH OTHERS.*”

Pastor (Church 3): “*DIGNITY KE SATH... RESPECT HA.*”

Pastor (Church 5): “*CAREFUL IN CAMPUSES.*”

4.4 Family Conditioning and Socialization

Approximately 80% students do not take the initiative of discussing sensitive religious debates or theological issues, as a sign of habit, caution, or respect without any fear, embarrassment, or lack of confidence in being a minority, reported as follows:

S1 (Undergraduate): “*FOCUS ON STUDIES AND FRIENDS.*”

S2 (Intermediate): “*EK AWARENESS REHTI HAI*”

S3 (Undergraduate): “*TOPIC CHANGE KAR DETA HOON.*”

S4 (Intermediate): “*BACHPAN SE HI SEEKH JAATE.*”

S6 (Undergraduate): “*AAP ADJUST KARTE HO.*”

S7 (Undergraduate): “*SENSITIVE TOPIC START NAHI KARTA.*”

S8 (Intermediate): “*HUM MINORITY HAIN.*”

S9 (Undergraduate): “*PEACE ZYADA IMPORTANT HAI.*”
 S12 (Intermediate): “*LOW PROFILE REHNA SAFE HAI.*”
 S 14 (Intermediate): “*LIMITS MAINTAIN KARTA HOON.*”
 S15 (Undergraduate): “*SIMPLE EXPLAIN KARTA HOON.*”
 S20 (Intermediate): “*CHUP HO JATA HUN.*”
 S23 (Intermediate): “*CAUTIOUS REHNA NATURAL HABIT.*”
 S35 (Intermediate): “*UNCOMFORTABLE NAHI KRTA.*”

Moreover, teachers (50%) have appreciated and acknowledged that Christian students remain well-aware in their talk and discussions, as depicted by the following in vivo codes:

T9 (Lecturer): “*CONSCIOUS OF WORDS.*”
 T10 (Assistant Professor): “*SELF-REGULATE IN COMMUNICATION.*”
 T7 (Associate Prof.): “*TRAINED TO BE NEUTRAL AND INCLUSIVE.*”
 T6 (Senior Lecturer): “*CONFIDENT, SOCIALLY RESERVED.*”
 T4 (Lecturer): “*DISCIPLINED AND FOCUSED.*”

Parenting aspect (80%) of Christian students has shown a keenness to remind their children that religious beliefs are a personal matter, which is mostly not found in the socialization of Muslim students, based on many incidents of rigid ideological positions (Agbaria, 2018). The following ‘in vivo’ codes have been observed:

P1 (Father of Undergraduate Student): “*CAREFUL OF WORDS.*”
 P2 (Mother of Intermediate Student): “*HANDLE CALMLY, NO ARGUMENTS.*”
 P3 (Father of Intermediate Student): “*DON’T PROVOKE UNNECESSARY DISCUSSION.*”
 P4 (Mother of Undergraduate Student): “*AVOID SENSITIVE DEBATES.*”
 P5 (Father of Intermediate Student): “*PEACE MATTERS... NOT PROVING A POINT.*”
 P7 Father of Intermediate Student): “*THORA SAMBHAL KE.*”
 P8 (Mother of Intermediate Student): “*HUR JAGHA ZARURI NAHI.*”
 P10 (Mother of Undergraduate Student): “*CAUTION ZARURUI.*”

While all Church leaders (100%) have signified the ‘following of basic Christian teachings in today’s extremely hybrid societies, in which machine-assistance is overriding reality with a delicate sophistication, in the following codes:

Pastor (Church 1): *INTERNALIZING WISDOM-DRIVEN CONDUCT.*

Bishop (Church 2): *SOCIALIZING TO NEGOTIATE IDENTITY.*

Pastor (Church 3): *EXERCISING RESPECTFUL DISENGAGEMENT.*

Bishop (Church 4): *CULTIVATING SOCIAL ACCEPTANCE.*

Pastor (Church 5): *LEARNING DIGITAL VS. PHYSICAL ADAPTABILITY.*

Moreover, a comparison of results between the three educational institutions has highlighted that Christian students of Forman Christian College University (FCCU) are more confident and have a greater feeling of belonging. The students at two selected campuses of the Punjab Colleges (PGC) and the University of Central Punjab (UCP) have expressed less negative or apprehensive behaviors, which contributed to determining the impact of the institutional culture on religious identity expression.

5. CONCLUSION

The family influence has emerged as the most important factor, characterized by the uniformity across participants. Most students talked about the need to pursue certain career paths that were prescribed by their parents as good or stable. There were very few options for other activities, and customary careers like medicine, teaching, or civil services could be offered as the norm in most instances. Some of the general points that were recurrently raised by the respondents include: High parental stability, but not personal interest, preference towards the fields that are thought to be long-established or prestigious in society. And an impression that abnormal ambitions are irresponsible or not serious enough. This trend indicates that decision-making is not often a solitary activity. Rather, the decisions of the youth are negotiated between individual impulses and the societal interests of the family.

It was also discovered during research that educational institutions do not always support students who want to pursue various career opportunities. Lots of the participants pointed out the lack of resources, the low level of counselling facilities, and the lack of teacher support. Major institutional problems determined by Christian students and their community include: the lack of professional career advice personnel, obsolete curricula that do not cater to new areas, teachers who focus on traditional academic performance more than on creative or exploratory learning, and poor access to working experience or training. The existence of these gaps does not necessarily indicate institutional resistance but structural inertia, which is slow to fit the changing interests of society.

Moreover, the media act as a significant determinant of student aspirations and attitudes, providing examples of those who succeeded in taking an unusual route, unlike family and institutional forces. The result of this contradictory message is a two-fold effect: a mixture of inspiration and doubt. The media effects, which are noted during the study, are: Access to other possibilities outside the local norms, a change in the mindset of the expanded definitions of success. Self-confidence reinforcement through displaying like-young achievers, online as an encouragement, and offline, discouragement. Furthermore, online space was reported to be more supportive, and real-life settings were restrictive, indicating internal struggles.

5.1 Study Limitations

The findings must be interpreted by the readers in context, and further research can be done to determine highlighted trends among other universities.

5.2 Recommendations

Other qualitative studies could be provided with students of other religions (Hindu, Sikh, Muslim, etc.) and other areas (like Karachi or rural Punjab) to determine whether the themes found here remain in other settings. Longitudinal studies would be particularly desirable: when new policy reforms (such as the new

minority curriculum) are being introduced, researchers would be able to observe whether the experiences of Christian students evolve over a period.

5.3 Research Implications

In general, the image that is formed is that of cautious optimism. The statistics indicate that there is still a lot of restraint among Christian students though the way to the future is evident. When students create structures of support to each other, when educators create inclusive universities, when institutional policies are put in place that support diversity, and when policymakers maintain fair standards, campuses can be taken a step further to real interfaith understanding. Concisely, schools need to strive to make them places where diversity is not merely heard but eagerly embraced. This vision must be realized by all stakeholders, starting with the students and their administrators.

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