

**Protecting Religion and Belief on Campus:
A Case Study of Muslim Students in Three Universities in England**

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Abstract

In this doctoral study, the perceptions of Muslim students regarding policies protecting religion and belief at three selected universities in one metropolitan area in England were examined. Using a 'Satisfied settling' lens, the study explored Muslim students' experiences and perspectives of how these universities used and communicated these policies in the context of the Equality Act 2010 and associated Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) strategies. The research addressed gaps in the literature regarding the implementation of universities' strategies related to religion and belief on campuses. Primary quantitative data was collected from 150 Muslim students through questionnaires, while qualitative data was obtained from 18 timeline maps followed by semi-structured interviews. Additionally, EDI reports from the selected universities were analysed.

The findings revealed that Muslim students had diverse perceptions of the university policies protecting their religious beliefs on campus. Although the findings highlighted the presence of barriers faced by Muslim students throughout their academic journey, overall, there was a balance of positivity and negativity in the respondents' overall satisfaction and settling within the university setting.

The study concluded with recommendations for researchers, universities, and students to enhance the communication of policies and to prioritise the voices of Muslim students. Future research should have included a wider selection of universities and other institutions to facilitate a more comparative analysis of the strategies employed by different educational establishments. Furthermore, the inclusion of participants from other religious backgrounds would have allowed a comparative analysis, contributing to a more inclusive examination of policies protecting religion and belief in English universities.

Declaration

No portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institutes of learning.

Dedication

In heartfelt dedication to the land that has inspired and nurtured my academic pursuits, I humbly dedicate this research to the vibrant nation of Kuwait.

To my beloved parents, Mom and Dad, for instilling in me the value of education and consistently encouraging me to strive for excellence. Your unwavering presence in my life is a constant reminder of the boundless love and steadfast support that I am fortunate to have.

To my daughter, Kadi (future doctor), your unwavering encouragement has been a wellspring of inspiration for me.

To my son, Rakan, your positive influence and presence in my life have profoundly impacted my journey.

In memory of my late uncle, who passed away in April 2024, and who guided me on the path of knowledge.

To myself, for the determination and perseverance that have brought me to this point.

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With deepest appreciation and love,

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List of Terms and Abbreviations

BAME	Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic.
Belief	Used here to mirror the language of Equality Act 2010 which defines “belief” in section 10 (2) as “any religion or physiological belief, a reference to belief includes any reference to belief includes a reference to lack of belief”
CRT	Critical Race Theory
EDI	An acronym for equality, diversity and inclusion.
EU	European Union
Halal	Food sourced or prepared in accordance with Islamic law.
HE	Higher education
HEIs	Higher education institutions, used here as a catch-all term for universities through the UK unless otherwise specified.
HEPI	Higher Education Policy Institute
HESA	The Higher Education Statistics Agency.
Hijab	The hijab is a headscarf commonly worn by Muslim women. It serves to cover the hair and neck, and often includes a face veil that covers the face
Islamic Societies	Used here synonymously with student associations, Muslim students’ Guilds, or Muslim student representative bodies.
Islamophobia	Refers to offensive actions or statements fuelled by prejudice or stereotyping of Muslims
OfS	Office for Students
PGR	Postgraduate Research
Qur’an	The Islam Holy book
Religion	Used here to mirror the language of Equality Act 2010, which defines religions in section 10 (1) as “any religion and reference to belief includes any reference to belief includes a reference to lack of belief”
RQ	Research Question
UG	Undergraduate
UK	United Kingdom
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
VLE	Virtual Learning Environment

Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Background to the Study

This study aims to investigate the perceptions and experiences of Muslim students in relation to the policies of three English universities on protecting religion and belief. This is in the context of the Equality Act (2010) which recognises religion and belief as protected characteristics, with the overall goal of the law being to prevent discrimination, harassment and the victimisation of individuals based on their religious beliefs. In English universities, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) policies are the main means of implementing the requirements of the Equality Act in respect to both their staff and their students (Fell & Dyban, 2017; Wolbring & Lillywhite, 2021). These policies are based on the Equality Act Public Sector Duty, which mandates that universities, as public institutions, must refrain from discriminating against religious groups and accommodate reasonable religious practices within campus facilities (Smith, 2016). Chaudhry (2019) further highlighted the significance of this legislation in extending protected characteristics to cover religion and belief, thereby giving English Higher Education institutions (HEIs) a legal duty to consider the on-campus experience of individuals with a religion or belief. In support of the aims of the Equality Act with regards to religion and belief, English HEIs are encouraged by Advance HE (2018) to cultivate an inclusive environment that promotes positive relationships among individuals with different religions or beliefs (interfaith or multi-faith), diverse divisions within those religions or beliefs (intra-faith), alongside individuals with other protected characteristics.

In the context of these legal requirements, this thesis uses a case study approach to evaluate how effectively three different universities in one metropolitan area of England communicate their policies for and approaches to ensure the equal treatment of Muslims on campus. In particular, the thesis aims to gather and analyse the perspectives and experiences of

a wide range of Muslim students about their institutions' communication of the practices and policies that are meant to protect their religious and belief characteristics.

Islam is the second-largest religion in the world after Christianity (Denny, 2023; Saada, 2023). Approximately 24.1% of the world's population identifies as Muslim (Bai, 2023), and this is also true in the United Kingdom (UK), with 6% of the population identifying with Islam (Gemar, 2023). According to Esposito (2011), Islam is a diverse and widely-practised religion with a complex history and set of beliefs, emphasising monotheism, submission to God and divine justice, and it is crucial to understand the Islamic world's history and culture in order to comprehend the faith and its followers.

The Islamic community actively participates in religious practices, which include private prayers and collective acts of worship (HESA, 2018). Despite being a minority group in non-Islamic countries, an increase in anti-Muslim/anti-Islamic sentiment was observed following the 9/11 attacks in the United States, indicating a concerning trend since that significant event (Abu Khalaf et al., 2023; Lajevardi, 2021; Modood & Calhoun, 2015; Shakoor et al., 2023). Those and other terrorist attacks since 2001, alongside the increasingly multicultural nature of Western society due to globalisation, international students and migration, have provoked new tensions and a global rejection of religious expression, particularly in respect to Muslims (Garcia Yeste et al., 2020). Additionally, Kyriacou et al. (2017) have confirmed that Muslim students in UK universities face a higher prevalence of challenges, including identity crises and discriminatory behaviour, compared to non-Islamic groups. It is also evident that students receiving education in England perceive their religion as a significant and integral part of their identity (Kyriacou et al., 2017).

As there are different types of universities in England, it is important to consider the distinct characteristics that each type offers. One significant difference is the research focus and tendency to offer more academically oriented courses in Russell Group universities

(Russell Group, 2021), compared to post-92 universities and church-affiliated universities. While being research-informed, post-92 universities, on the other hand, tend to have a greater focus on teaching and offer more vocational courses (Sumner, 2020). While these universities also follow the same government policies and regulations as other universities, their emphasis lies in providing practical and industry-relevant education (Highman, Marginson & Papatsiba, 2023). In addition, church-affiliated universities are guided by religious principles and have their own specific ethos and values (Stuart-Buttle, 2019). They offer a unique perspective on education and may incorporate religious teachings into their curriculum and policies. While they may have research and teaching components similar to other universities, the religious affiliation sets them apart in terms of their mission and approach (Anthony, 2001).

It is also worth noting that the student demographics differ between these types of university. Russell Group universities often have a higher proportion of postgraduate and research students. Post-92 universities attract a broader range of students from diverse socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds (Barron, Gourlay, & Gannon-Leary, 2010), including those who may resonate with the religious principles of the institution (Yorke, 2004). Church-affiliated universities, often tied to specific Christian denominations, occupy a unique space within this diversified landscape. While traditionally grounded in their own faith traditions, many have embraced inclusivity by offering more open forms of religious education (Breuilly, 2018). More detailed information about the universities included in this study can be found in Chapter 3 which discusses the methodology.

Traditionally, the UK curriculum prioritised Christianity, particularly Anglican and Catholic traditions (Osborne, 2009). The 1988 Education Reform Act played a significant role in the recognition of the Christian tradition within the education system (Inter Faith Network for the UK, 2009). It is worth noting that the Christian tradition within the modern UK HEI sector may not be as emphasised or protected as it once was. The secularisation of HE and the

growing diversity of student populations have led to a more inclusive and multicultural approach to education. The lack of knowledge and understanding of the religious landscape within HEIs perpetuates a prevailing assumption that religious and non-religious perspectives exist as a binary. Dinham, Francis, and Shaw (2017) argued that tackling this requires a reevaluation of existing policies to incorporate religion and belief alongside other protected characteristics stipulated in equality laws, prompting a crucial consideration on how to effectively measure and address these aspects within educational settings.

Notwithstanding this Christian tradition, it is evident that there is now a significant presence of Muslim students within the student population as a whole (Natzler, 2020), although the distribution of Muslim students across English universities is not equitable (Zempi & Tripli, 2023). During the 2020/21 academic year, UK universities enrolled an estimated 255,000 Muslim students across various levels of HE. Of these, approximately 89% were undergraduates, and 70% were UK residents. Overall, Muslim students accounted for approximately 10% of the total student population (Khan, 2022). Furthermore, according to data from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) for the 2021/22 academic year, students with Islamic religious beliefs constituted 12% of all students in England. Specifically, there were 185,890 Muslim students in HE in England alone, positioning Islam as the second-largest religion after Christianity (HESA, 2023). Estimates suggest that Muslim students make up approximately 8-17% of the total student population (Guest et al., 2020; HESA, 2018; Codioli McMaster, 2020). Accurate data on the number of Muslims in England are lacking (Stevenson, 2018). According to the 2021 Census data released by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), the Muslim population in England and Wales stands at 3.87 million, representing 6.5% of the total population. The figures show an increase of 1,162,067 individuals in the Muslim population between 2011 and 2021, accounting for 33% of the overall population growth, as reported by the Muslim Council of Britain (2022).

As introduced above, English universities adhere to EDI policies in order to protect the religious beliefs, traditions and practices of their culturally diverse communities (Khalil, 2016; Vergani et al., 2017). These policies aim to promote an environment of equality and inclusivity so as to ensure that students have a safe space to study and spend their time. For instance, English universities provide dedicated multi-faith spaces on campus to promote EDI, allowing individuals of various, or no, religious beliefs to engage in spiritual practices, meditation, prayer and quiet reflection (Smith, 2016). While the Equality Act itself does not mandate the creation of specific facilities, it does emphasise the responsibility of universities to make 'reasonable adjustments' to accommodate religious needs (UK Legislation, 2010).

This study investigates the perceptions and experiences of Muslim students in English universities regarding how those universities communicate and promote their policies on the protection of religion and belief, while also examining the universities' endeavours to promote EDI strategies for these students, specifically exploring the on-campus protection policies from the viewpoint of Muslim students.

The identified gap in this study lies in the lack of research focusing on a specific metropolitan area in England that encompasses three different types of HEIs and explores how these universities communicate their policies regarding the protection of religion and belief specifically for Muslim students. The study thus aims to inform the development of more inclusive and supportive policies for Muslim students in similar metropolitan areas and HEIs, promoting EDI within educational institutions. While no other research, to the best of my knowledge, exactly replicates this study, several studies have delved into the challenges faced by Muslim students in English universities. These studies point out that the UK government's Counter-terrorism strategy, known as Prevent, reinforces negative stereotypes of Muslims and restricts freedom of speech within university environments (Danvers, 2021; Zempi & Tripli, 2023), which can perpetuate trauma similar to the outcomes experienced by victims of racism

(Mahmud & Satchell, 2022). Furthermore, there has been a noticeable increase in Islamophobia on campuses, resulting in hate crimes and discriminatory acts against those practising the Islamic faith (Abbas, 2022; Kishi, 2017), thereby affecting their satisfaction with campus life. Based on the recent study conducted by Wiedlitzka et al. (2023), it highlights a significant rise in hate incidents targeting Muslims, with data showing a surge in anti-Islamic hate speech online following trigger events such as terrorist attacks and refugee crises. Additionally, research by Paterson et al. (2018) indicated that around 80% of Muslim respondents have experienced at least one hate incident online in the past three years, further underscoring the prevalence of Islamophobic behaviour. This growing trend of Islamophobia on campuses underscores the urgent need for proactive measures to address and combat such discriminatory acts.

Recognising that students from diverse backgrounds navigate and thrive within universities differently (Gamote et al., 2022), this study employs the ‘satisfied-settling’ lens, initially introduced by Islam and Mercer-Mapstone (2021), to explore the specific experiences of Muslim students in HE. This framework offers a comprehensive view of the complexities inherent in the experiences of Muslim students. While ‘satisfaction’ conveys positive engagement and adaptation, ‘settling’ acknowledges the compromises and adjustments that may be necessary within a system that does not entirely meet their needs. By adopting this dual perspective, this study can delve into both the positive elements of Muslim students’ university experiences, including instances of EDI and the potential obstacles they encounter, such as microaggressions or feelings of exclusion. Furthermore, by applying this framework within the context of religion and belief protection policies, this research aims to contribute to a nuanced understanding of how Muslim students navigate both satisfaction and settling within the English HE system. Phase one of the study involved a comprehensive analysis of the EDI policies related to religion and belief in each of the selected universities. These were sourced

from the respective university websites, subject to availability. In phase two, a quantitative self-administered questionnaire was distributed in order to gather data from Muslim students about their perceptions of the religion and belief protection policies provided on campus. Phase three of the study entailed conducting semi-structured interviews with Muslim students who had already completed the questionnaire. Additionally, timeline mapping was introduced as a novel method, not previously utilised in research on this subject. A total of eighteen participants, six from each university, were chosen for these interviews.

1.2 Research Aims and Objectives

It is crucial to have clear research aims and objectives as they provide guidance for the overall direction of the research, focus, study design, data collection procedures, and data analysis to be employed (Neuman, 2018). In that context, this research aims to contribute to the knowledge base by improving the understanding of how policies regarding the protection of religion and belief are communicated on university campuses in England, with a specific emphasis on the perspective of Muslim students. The objectives of this study are outlined as follows:

- 1) To investigate the perceptions of Muslim students regarding the communication of university policies protecting religion and belief on their campuses.
- 2) To examine the communication policies used by three different universities to convey their policies protecting religion and belief to Muslim students.
- 3) To explore the opportunities and barriers encountered by Muslim students in light of the communication of policies regarding the protection of religion and belief on university campuses.

1.3 Research Questions

The research questions (RQs) of this study aim to investigate the protection afforded to Muslim students on university campuses regarding their religion and belief, and to examine how the three selected universities create an environment that is inclusive and promotes equality for their Muslim student population. The RQs guiding this study are as follows:

RQ1: What are the perceptions of Muslim students regarding the policies protecting religion and belief at English universities?

RQ2: How do universities communicate their policies for protecting religion and belief to Muslim students?

RQ3: What specific opportunities and barriers do Muslim students encounter in understanding and engaging with the policies safeguarding religion and belief on university campuses?

RQ1 aims to explore the perceptions of Muslim students regarding the policies protecting religion and belief on their campuses. It acknowledges that these perceptions may vary based on individual experiences on campus. The study employed a self-administered questionnaire and semi-structured interviews to understand whether Muslim students view these policies as positive or negative in terms of creating a more inclusive and tolerant campus environment.

RQ2 seeks to examine how universities communicate their policies for protecting religion and belief to Muslim students. Data collection for this objective also involved self-administered questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. That analysis of communication strategies was supported, however, by the EDI reports obtained from each selected university.

Lastly, RQ3 addresses the opportunities and barriers encountered by Muslim students in understanding the policies protecting religion and belief. To gather data for this objective, the study utilised techniques such as participant timeline mapping and semi-structured interviews.

1.4 Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks

The theoretical framework for this study draws upon the guidance provided to HEIs in England by Advance HE (2018). That guidance provides valuable insights and recommendations for HEIs in promoting EDI within their institutions and serves as a foundation for the study's approach and direction. In particular, the guidance emphasises the importance of ensuring minimum legal protection concerning religion or beliefs in the context of the Equality Act (2010), which encompasses religious beliefs, philosophical beliefs, as well as the absence of religion or belief (Advance Higher Education, 2018).

In the context of this study, the term "communication of policies" pertains to the dissemination of university policies and strategies through the perspectives and experiences of Muslim students regarding their awareness of these policies. It seeks to determine if universities offer support to protect their religion and beliefs and to uncover the opportunities and challenges faced by Muslim students in non-Islamic environments, as this includes examining inclusivity, diversity acceptance, and the provision of equitable opportunities for Muslim students on campus.

By aligning with the official guidance regarding EDI strategies, the study aims to assess the extent to which HEIs have implemented the recommendations provided by Advance HE for creating inclusive and equitable university experiences for Muslim students. Crucially, however, this study builds on that by adopting a Satisfied settling lens to understand the perspectives of Muslim students, in the expectation that this will contribute to identifying how support structures within English HE institutions might be improved.

Moreover, the framework also explores various aspects of EDI, with a particular focus on campus access, learning, and experience. This entails considering factors such as individual value, sense of belonging, potential considerations of leaving the university due to unwelcome

experiences, respectful treatment, the value given to students' opinions, opportunities for academic success, universities' commitment to EDI, available resources, the potential need to exert more effort for equal recognition, and the impact of the university experience on academic growth. An understanding of these aspects is crucial for informing strategies and interventions that promote a more inclusive and supportive university experience for Muslim students, enabling them to thrive academically and personally.

In the context of this study, the term 'satisfaction' refers to the overall contentment experienced by individuals, specifically Muslim students, in relation to university policies protecting religion and belief on their campuses. It encompasses their level of approval, happiness and fulfilment (Kamal & Sengupta, 2008). By extension, the term 'dissatisfaction' refers to negative or unfavourable feelings (Kamal & Sengupta, 2008). Satisfaction is defined in various ways in the literature but there are common elements, such as an emotional or cognitive response, a focus on expectations, items or experiences, and a specific timeframe related to usage, choice or accumulated experiences (Giese & Cote, 2000). Furthermore, the term 'settling' pertains to the process through which individuals, including university students, establish a sense of comfort, acceptance and accommodation (Liu, 2023). This involves finding a place within the campus community where they feel welcomed, supported and able to express their religious beliefs and practices freely without experiencing discrimination or marginalisation (Addy et al., 2023).

As discussed by Skea (2017), in an HE context, the satisfaction lens has hitherto been linked most prominently with student satisfaction measures of university 'quality', particularly through measures like the UK's National Student Survey. Skea deconstructs the concept of satisfaction, citing Martin Heidegger's observation of the value of experiencing the 'uncanny', and of how being 'unsettled' can lead to self-knowledge and intelligibility. Skea also explores how 'satisfaction' lenses have tended to derive from economic concepts aligned with economic

rationality, and notes that their application in an HE setting thus tends to imply the treatment of students as customers, thereby reinforcing a sense of academic entitlement (Skea, 2017).

Nonetheless, Islam, Lowe and Jones (2018) and Islam et al. (2019) attempted to apply a lens of satisfaction within a new framework of ‘Satisfied settling’, and with a focus on EDI, thus extending the framework away from the market and economic domain. The researchers specifically aimed to employ the concept of ‘Satisfied settling’ as a lens to understand how Muslim students unconsciously rationalise the lack of access to a more enriching university experience in relation to their religious needs (Islam et al., 2019, p.94). The adoption of this lens in this study seeks then to build on Islam et al.’s innovation by applying the framework to the examination of the EDI policy-related factors that contribute to or hinder Muslim students’ satisfaction settling within the English university environment, thereby providing a fuller understanding of the experiences of Muslim students regarding their religious protection needs. The study also acknowledges the wider aspects of identity and belonging, including acculturation processes and different cultural contexts.

Previous research, such as the study conducted by Islam, Lowe, and Jones (2018) at the University of Winchester, has highlighted the challenges faced by Muslim students in terms of their sense of belonging and engagement within HEIs. These studies have identified feelings of exclusion and the potential impact of that on student participation and their overall university experience. The research also acknowledges the larger attainment gap and higher dropout rates among Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) students, including Muslims. Nationwide studies have identified that BAME students are more likely to drop out of HE, and there is a well-known attainment gap in UK HE. Their qualitative research employed methods such as semi-structured interviews and recruitment through virtual learning environment (VLE), flyers, and snowballing. To address gaps in the literature and provide a more comprehensive

understanding of the issues faced by Muslim students on their English campuses, this study used a mixed methods approach, comparing three universities in one region of England.

Another important work informing this study is Guest et al.'s (2020) report, "Islam on Campus: Contested Identities and the Cultures of Higher Education in Britain". This explored the experiences of Muslim students, the challenges they face, and strategies for inclusivity on university campuses. The document also examined cultural and political factors influencing attitudes towards Islam and Muslims through a national survey and six HEI-based case studies involving interviews and focus groups with staff and students across the UK.

According to unpublished research by Tamea (2022), Muslim students negotiate and compromise their needs in various ways to fit in with the university environment. For example, they may compromise their faith to attend social and university events, navigate the loan system, or not speak up about their beliefs to avoid disrupting others. They may also feel nervous and naive in the university environment and may be forced to attend meetings in pubs or other places that conflict with their religious beliefs. Tamea's research used an interpretive paradigm, which was suited to the ontology of Muslim students within HE in England. The chosen methodology was an ethnographic qualitative style, which involved observing and interviewing participants in their natural settings to gain an in-depth understanding of their experiences, focusing on a small sample of seven Muslim students from a post-92 university. A striking observation of Tamea's study is that while there is a lot of research on the question of race in HE, there is little on the question of faith, even though the two clearly overlap. The faith focus on this thesis is thus partly a response to the gap in the literature identified by Tamea. Introducing timeline mapping as a data collection approach in this study highlights an innovative method. Additionally, underscoring the importance of utilising arts-based and creative social justice approaches can significantly enhance the collection of diverse data and viewpoints.

1.5 Originality and Significance of the Study

This study aims to fill a significant research gap by examining the perspectives and experiences of Muslim students in HE. It also contributes methodologically by incorporating creative approaches like timeline mapping to gather data, adding another dimension to the existing research landscape. Despite being one of the most rapidly growing minority ethnic communities in Western countries (Edwards, Larson & Burdsey, 2023), there is a dearth of research on how Muslims navigate protected areas within the English HE context (Codioli McMaster, 2020). Additionally, there is a lack of research that explores student perspectives and experiences through the lens of Satisfied settling. The only previous research that combines these two areas is that of Islam, Lowe and Jones (2018) and Islam and Mercer-Mapstone (2021), which was conducted at a small-medium sized university in the UK.

Furthermore, there is a lack of research that explores how different types of English universities communicate their policies on the protection of religion and belief specifically to Muslim students. This is especially pertinent given the increase in Islamophobia as a concerning issue in Britain (Mahmud & Islam, 2023; Muslim Council British, 2015) and the implementation of Counter-terrorism and Prevent policies on campuses. Studies have indicated that Islamophobia restricts freedom of expression and marginalises Muslims, thereby presenting challenges for communication and integration in England (Akel, 2021).

To address these research gaps, this study focuses on three distinct types of English universities: a Russell Group university, a church-affiliated university, and a post-92 university. These institutions are situated in a metropolitan area with a diverse and sizable Muslim student population, allowing for the exploration of various variables related to religion, cultural identity, demographics, beliefs and backgrounds. This unique approach enables a deeper understanding of the experiences of Muslim students within the broader student body,

particularly in the context of concerns about negative stereotypes and marginalisation due to the Counter-terrorism and Security Act 2015 (Jamal-Uddin, 2020).

Overall, this research makes a significant contribution to the existing literature by exploring the experiences of Muslim students in English HE. Furthermore, this research goes beyond the examination of perceptions to address other types of gaps, including methodological gaps, such as the application of Satisfied settling lenses and the incorporating of visual mapping as a research methodology. These approaches, triangulation data collection, provide valuable insights into the experiences of Muslim students in HE settings, while also shedding light on the varying approaches adopted by different universities in the communication of policies on the protection of religion and belief.

1.6 Contributions to Knowledge

The study by Shakoor et al. (2023) suggests that biased media portrayals, influenced by orientalist ideas and a lack of Muslim representation, have contributed to an inaccurate and unfavourable perception of Islam and its followers in the Western world. This underscores the need for further research on the Muslim experiences in non-Islamic environments. In that broad context, this study aims to contribute substantially to existing knowledge by focusing on Muslim students, considering the sizeable Muslim population in England, which exceeds three million and places Islam as the second-largest religious affiliation after Christianity (Office for National Statistics, 2018). Moreover, it aligns with the UK's commitment to promoting equitable access to education. Scholars such as Gill (2022) and Tazzyman et al. (2021) have emphasised the importance of collecting standardised data on EDI, covering both protected and other characteristics associated with underrepresented groups in Postgraduate Research (PGR) studies.

The Home Office in England addresses issues related to equality and diversity, with a focus on communicating the values outlined in the Equality Act (2010) to protect individuals from discrimination based on religion, belief and other protected characteristics. In line with the UK Government's Equality Act, this study investigates the current practices regarding the communication of protection for religion and belief among Muslim students within campus settings. Given the limited literature and research in this area, this study contributes to exploring the similarities and differences in the communication policies employed by three English universities concerning the protection of religion and belief, from the perspective of Muslim students.

1.7 Positionality; Navigating Personal Perspectives in this Study

By acknowledging my positionality as a researcher, I have been able to navigate potential biases, assumptions, and preconceptions that might influence the study's validity and reliability (Mthombeni,2024). When examining Muslim student experiences, my positionality encompasses elements such as religious beliefs, cultural background, and personal encounters with discrimination and/or marginalisation. These factors provide me with an empathetic understanding of the challenges faced by Muslim students in academic settings and have assisted in interpreting findings with sensitivity and nuance. Embracing my positionality enables me to cultivate reflexivity and self-awareness, enriching the depth and authenticity of the research inquiry. Additionally, positionality extends beyond individual characteristics to encompass broader societal, political, and institutional contexts that shape the research landscape. In the exploration of Muslim student experiences in HEIs, my positionality intersects with power dynamics, institutional policies, and societal attitudes towards religion and diversity. By scrutinising these complex interactions, I have uncovered hidden biases,

power imbalances, and structural obstacles that influence the daily experiences of Muslim students within academic environments.

Integrating positionality into the research process requires a deliberate and reflective approach to understanding my role as a researcher and how my personal perspectives may impact the study outcomes. I engaged in discussions with colleagues at various conferences to unpack my positionality and explore its implications for research design and analysis. Explicitly addressing my positionality has allowed me to develop a transparent and ethical research process that acknowledges the influence of my personal perspectives on the study's outcomes and conclusions.

1.8 An Overview of the Thesis

Following this introductory chapter, Chapter 2 provides a comprehensive review of relevant areas of research. It explores various aspects, including the potential barriers faced by Muslims on campus due to their religion and beliefs, the impact of the Prevent strategy, the transformation of religion into a perceived risk on campus, the ability of English HEIs to communicate their protection of religion and belief effectively, despite confounding factors. The chapter concludes by identifying gaps in existing research.

Chapter 3 outlines a comprehensive research methodology that investigates the perceptions of Muslim students in English universities regarding the communication of policies protecting religion and belief. The research design incorporates a case study approach, employing questionnaires, interviews, timeline maps and document analysis. The study also implements a mixed-methods approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative methods to enhance the validity and reliability of the findings. Ethical considerations play a crucial role in safeguarding participant rights, focusing on the assurance of confidentiality, and obtaining informed consent. Additionally, the research design takes into account the institutional context

by including three different universities, each with their own unique challenges and opportunities related to religious practices and beliefs.

Chapter 4 presents the findings regarding Muslim students' perceptions of English university policies protecting religion and belief, as derived from the questionnaire and interview data. Chapter 5 examines how the three universities communicate their policies for protecting religion and belief to Muslim students, utilising data from questionnaires, interviews, and the analysis of EDI reports. Chapter 6 reflects on both the barriers and the effective aspects of the settlement process for Muslim students on university campuses. Adopting a balanced approach, the focus shifts to identifying both the barriers and opportunities encountered by Muslim students in the communication of policies regarding the protection of religion and belief on campuses. Finally, Chapter 7 presents the conclusion to the thesis. This chapter summarises the implications of the findings and provides recommendations for future research.

Overall, this thesis offers a comprehensive exploration of the research topic, delving into the perceptions of Muslim students in English universities regarding policies aimed at protecting religion and belief. Through a meticulous analysis of the findings, this study provides valuable insights that contribute to the understanding of communication policies in relation to religion and belief. Furthermore, by taking a holistic approach, this thesis offers a well-rounded understanding of the topic and articulates practical implications for various stakeholders.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Reviewing the literature is a crucial stage in the research process because it helps define the context and importance of the study. Scholars such as Cooper (1998), Hart (1998), McMillan and Wergin (1998) and Zawacki-Richter et al. (2020) have all emphasised how critically evaluating existing knowledge is vital to guide future research endeavours. This literature review analyses the existing literature on policies protecting religion and belief in higher education (HE) campuses in England. Specifically, the focus of this review will be on communication policies within universities.

The following sections are structured into four primary topics. The first section focuses on the justifications for conducting this study. It explores what is currently known about the perceptions of Muslim students through the lens of their Satisfied settling, as well as a selection of theories that link Satisfied settling to the overall student experience in HE. The second section reviews studies that delve into the measures implemented by English campus communications to safeguard the religion and beliefs of Muslims. It specifically addresses how the Equality Act (2010) imposes a duty on English universities to protect religion and belief, as well as the implementation of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) strategies at the English campus level. Moving on, the third section discusses what is known about how English HEIs communicate their policies concerning the protection of religion and belief, and the conflicts with Islamic epistemologies that may arise in that process. Finally, the fourth section comprises a discussion of the literature seeking to understand the capacity of English higher education institutions (HEIs) to communicate their protection of religion and belief effectively, given confounding factors. It examines the transformation of religion into a perceived risk object on English campuses, and the potential barriers faced by Muslims in relation to expressing religion

and belief on English campuses. Finally, this chapter summarises the main themes and trends found in the existing literature and identifies gaps in current knowledge. This doctoral research project aims to address these gaps, as the literature review chapter serves both to “identify gaps in the existing research” and “provide a foundation for future research” (Hart, 1998, p.3). Additionally, by clearly articulating the gaps in current knowledge, this study can make a compelling case for why their study is necessary and how it contributes to advancing understanding in the field.

2.2 Investigating the Literature Context and Justifications

2.2.1 Diversity in HEIs: Unveiling the Multifaceted Landscape

A recent United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) report entitled in 2022, “What you need to know about inclusion in education”, promoted the concept of inclusive education, which ensures that all students, regardless of their abilities, disabilities, cultures, languages, beliefs, or backgrounds, feel respected, included, and supported in their learning environment. The report argued that HEIs and governments need to adopt a proactive approach to retaining students from ethnic minorities, refugees and other marginalised and underserved groups in order to promote social justice and address systemic social, economic and racial inequalities (UNESCO,2022). Furthermore, this should be done without imposing assimilationist pressures which demand these students to forsake their cultural experiences and identities; indeed, such assimilationism is “a kind of violence that must stop”, according to Ruiz Bravo López in UNESCO report (2021, p.33).

The Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI) report in 2020 compared the UK with other developed nations and found that while the UK performs well in some areas such as female participation, it lags behind in others, for example, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) student attainment. Certainly, in the UK, the commitment to fostering a diverse

campus environment has had a profound impact on shaping student life. Diversity is not only acknowledged but actively celebrated and integrated into the fabric of campus life (Akel, 2021), and this has fostered higher levels of comfort with cultural diversity among students and a willingness to embrace open-minded environments, according to a report by the Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Development (2016) and a study by Rahman and Alwi (2018). Research has also shown how the HE experience provokes changes in personal values and moral development. Myyry, Juujärvi and Pessa (2013; 2017), for example, found that the process of university students developing these traits involves various interactive experiences, such as social interactions with peers, engagement with parents, participation in educational institutions, and active involvement in social activities. These experiences broaden their understanding of cultural differences and shape their attitudes, ultimately leading to the development of open-minded campuses environment. Overall, their study revealed that the values and moral reasoning fostered through HE, form an interconnected functional system (Myyry, Juujärvi & Pessa, 2013; 2017).

Furthermore, as Johnson and Johnson (2009) argue, constructive controversy involves distinct phases of presenting a controversial issue, assigning opposing positions, engaging in open discussion, and reaching a synthesis of diverse perspectives. This process, they say, increases motivation, engagement and achievement, improves relationship quality and psychological well-being, and encourages the discovery of new information (Johnson & Johnson, 2009). The "Guide to Free Speech on Campus" by Silverglate, French and Lukianoff (2012) provides guidance that is generally applicable to students worldwide who wish to exercise their right to free speech. The guide includes recommendations such as understanding legal protections, being aware of common restrictions, advocating for free speech rights through peaceful means, seeking legal assistance if rights are violated, and engaging in civil

discourse while respecting others' free speech rights, even when opinions differ (Carter-Francique, 2023; Silvergate, French & Lukianoff, 2012).

The conventional perception of universities as progressive institutions that foster innovative thinking and intellectual growth has been subject to scrutiny, however, due to concerns surrounding their capacity to adapt to the changing needs of students (Gaston, 2023; St. Amour, 2020; Woodgates, 2018). The increased number of international students is a direct outcome of this global interconnectedness and interdependence, fostering a greater exchange of diverse values, beliefs, ideologies, and individuals across national and cultural borders (Chen, Tabassum & Saeed, 2019). In the specific context of English campuses, the growing presence of Muslim students brings with it a host of intricacies that present both challenges and opportunities. According to Guest et al. (2020), the challenges faced by Muslim students on university campuses include Islamophobia, discrimination, and a lack of understanding and support. According to Saeed (2019), Islamophobia is defined as an irrational fear of Islam for no cause other than to despise it. Western media created an irrational fear of Islam in its population, so everyone hates Islam and Muslims and thinks all Muslims are terrorists. However, Muslims are victims of terrorism too (Khan, 2016). According to Sherwood's study, there was a notable surge of 326% in faith-based hate crimes targeting British Muslims within a single year (Sherwood, 2016).

In addition, the UK government's Prevent strategy has led to some students modifying their engagement to avoid being labelled as extremists. Guest et al.'s (2020) report also identified opportunities for positive change, however, with universities playing a leading role in promoting interfaith dialogue and challenging stereotypes about Islam and Muslims. Their report concluded by recommending that universities take proactive measures to create a more inclusive and welcoming environment for Muslim students.

2.2.2 Characteristics of the Muslim Population of the UK

According to Motadel (2014), the proportion of Muslims in the overall population in England has grown consistently since World War II. This increase can be attributed to several factors, including immigration, a higher than average birth rate among Muslims, and a notable number of conversions to Islam. Additionally, it is worth noting that a significant majority of the mosques in England were established post-World War II. This highlights the relatively recent establishment of Muslim communities and institutions in Western Europe, and the role of migration in shaping these communities. It also suggests that the history of Islam in Europe is a complex and multifaceted one, and that it cannot be reduced to a single narrative or set of experiences.

According to the Muslim Council of Britain, Muslims are becoming more dispersed across England. Their report, “British Muslims in numbers”, provides data showing that the majority of Muslims in England live in inner-city areas such as Greater London, the West Midlands, the Northwest, and Yorkshire and Humberside, and there are 35 Local Authority Districts with a Muslim population of 10% or higher (Muslim Council of Britain, 2015).

Accurate population data regarding religion and belief was unavailable until 2017, when the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) mandated the collection and reporting of such data by HEIs (Advance HE, 2018; Umar, 2023). Nonetheless, Serafino (2020) indicated that there were 2.8 million Muslims in England in 2011, which accounted for around 5% of the country's population at the time (Serafino, 2020). This made Islam the second-largest religion in the UK (Humanists UK, 2013; Islam, 2023; Pericoli, 2023; Tobin et al., 2023; White, 2012). By the time of the 2021 UK Census, the Muslim population in England numbered 3,801,186, representing approximately 6.7% of the total population.

Turning to Muslims in the student population, HESA data from 2020 shows a remarkable 90% increase in the number of Muslim students in English universities between the periods 2009–10 and 2019–20 (HESA, 2021). Consequently, Muslims constituted 8.5% of the overall international student population in the country for 2019/20, indicating a rise from 7.9% in the previous year. Nonetheless, the HESA data also shows that the largest religious group among students enrolled in HEIs in the UK during the academic year 2020/21 was that class ‘No religion’, with a staggering 2,334,475 students (HESA, 2021).

It is important to note that although Muslims are often perceived as a homogeneous group by the non-Muslim majority (Modood & Thompson, 2022), they in fact exhibit great diversity in terms of demographics, history and politics. The self-identification of many Muslims as ‘just a Muslim’ indicates that sectarian identities, including the distinction between Sunni and Shia Muslims, may be unfamiliar or of limited importance to them (Panjwani, 2017; Vince, 2021). The primary difference between Sunni and Shia Muslims lies in their beliefs about the rightful leaders of the Muslim community, resulting in variations in religious practices and interpretations of Islamic law. In the UK, the majority of Muslims are Sunni, but there is also a significant minority of Shia Muslims, along with other groups like Sufis, Ahmadiyya’s, and Salafis, each with their own distinct beliefs and practices, making the Muslim community diverse and complex. Scharbrodt (2019) discussed the experiences of Shia Muslim minorities in the West, highlighting their efforts to maintain their Shia identity in non-Muslim societal contexts (Scharbrodt, 2019). Mazumder (2022) analysed the relationship between British colonialism and Islamic sectarianism, with a focus on the largest Muslim minority in British India, which includes Shia Muslims (Mazumder, 2022). Corboz (2019) examined a discourse on Islamic unity within the British Shia’s scene, which suggests the presence of Shia Muslims in the UK (Corboz, 2019). Weller and Cheruvallil-Contractor acknowledged the diversity and heterogeneity of Muslims in the UK, including different

identities and ethnicities (Weller & Cheruvallil-Contractor, 2015). Although the literature offers insights into the experiences and representation of Sunni and Shia Muslims in the UK, it does not provide precise percentages for each subgroup.

2.2.3 Attitudes Towards Muslims

The presence of Muslims in non-Islamic societies, including England, has sparked debates, controversies and fear, with associated instances of hostility towards them. Akram (2019), in his study on “Issues of Muslim Minorities in Non-Muslim Societies”, highlighted some of the key challenges faced by Muslim minorities in non-Muslim societies, including issues such as identity, integration and discrimination. This was confirmed by Ewart, Cherney and Murphy (2017), they analysed media coverage of Islam and Muslims in Australia, a non-Islamic country, and found that it was predominantly negative. The study further revealed that this negative portrayal in the media was linked to an escalation of hate crimes targeting Muslims, as well as a decline in social cohesion and trust between Muslims and non-Muslims. They highlighted how participants perceived problematic news coverage about them and their experiences in a non-Islamic country as potentially fostering social division and fueling discrimination against Muslims. Moreover, the Brexit referendum significantly impacted hate crimes, showing a spike of approximately 15-25% in the initial quarter post-referendum, notably in regions that supported leaving the European Union (EU) (Paterson, Walters & Brown, 2019). Furthermore, there was a noteworthy surge in racial hate crimes in England and Wales following the referendum (Carr et al. 2020). These conclusions indicate that political legitimisation plays a role in predicting hate crimes (Piatkowska & Lantz, 2021).

Nyhagen (2015) agreed that a significant portion of non-Muslims harbour negative attitudes towards Muslims, which further complicates the relationships between Muslims and non-Muslims. The study data are based on qualitative interviews conducted with Christian and

Muslim women in Norway and the UK. The sample size for the study included a total of 40 Christian and Muslim women, with 10 women from each group in each country were interviewed. It is important to note that the findings are not generalisable to the entire population, as the sample size is typically small, and the focus is on understanding specific experiences and perspectives rather than making statistical inferences.

The association of Muslim students with acts of terrorism has resulted in them being viewed as vulnerable to radicalisation according to Mercer-Mapstone, Islam and Reid (2021). Similarly, a qualitative study interviewing twenty-five British Muslim students from various universities in the UK revealed a prevalent theme of securitisation and the portrayal of Muslim students as a “suspect community”, subjected to monitoring and policing across different universities (Zempi & Tripli, 2023, p.232). They argued that Muslim students in English universities are constantly monitored as part of the Prevent Duty, creating a culture of suspicion and surveillance on campuses. This surveillance function of Prevent is problematic, turning universities into modern-day panopticons and subjecting Muslim students to disciplinary scrutiny in determining acceptable and unacceptable behaviours, thoughts and actions (Zempi & Tripli, 2023). The concept behind a panopticon is to allow a single watchman to observe all inmates of an institution without them being able to tell whether they are being watched or not (Serdar,2023).

There have, for example, been instances in which Muslim students in the UK have faced requests for surveillance by lecturers and university staff, indicating the involvement of the universities themselves (Dood, 2006). Danvers (2021) argued that surveillance has permeated pedagogical interactions, restricting critical thinking and impeding freedom of expression, particularly for Muslim students who are often deemed susceptible to radicalisation. One example from the research study is a quote from a teacher named Kristianne, who expressed concern about discussing aspects of terrorism in the classroom for fear of being seen as

promoting radicalisation. Kristianne stated, “We purposely don’t discuss radicalisation, for a good reason. Which is just in case there were to be someone in the room who might be susceptible in the future. I don’t want them to have me in the back of their mind when they are deciding they want to become a terrorist. So, in that respect, I stay away from some of the... I deal with facts” (p.13). This quote illustrates how the Prevent strategy can lead to self-censorship and avoidance of certain topics, which can limit critical thinking and discussion in the classroom (Danvers, 2021).

According to statistics published by the Home Office, there has been an increase in Islamophobia, particularly in England. Islamophobia, here, refers to a pattern of behaviours and attitudes characterised by anxiety, fear and hostility towards Muslims (Pedrason et al., 2023; Samari, 2016; Shiddieq & Pradana, 2023). Brown and Saeed’s study (2015) highlighted that there is a dominant perception that radicalisation is the central issue on English campuses, and the Prevent strategy is viewed as essential in addressing negative perceptions of Muslims and Islam. They also suggest, however, that further investigation is needed to determine whether the way HEIs implement the Prevent strategy contributes to negative stereotypes of Muslims or exacerbates the issue of Islamophobia. The United Nations (2021), for example, has raised concerns about the potential impact of the Prevent strategy on freedom of expression, as well as whether it unfairly targets specific communities, such as the Muslim community.

More broadly, a recent study by Bunglawala et al. (2021) showed that over 70% of Muslims who disclosed mental health problems had been victims of Islamophobia. This was based on a survey of 729 young British Muslims aged 18-30 conducted between April and June 2019 by the Islamic Society of Britain and research consultancy Muslim Engagement and Development. The report concludes that Islamophobia can impede the full participation of young British Muslims in society, as it increases the likelihood of future employment issues for individuals with mental health problems and higher engagement in criminal activity for those with

behavioural disorders, ultimately resulting in hindrances to employment, increased criminal involvement, social isolation, relationship difficulties, and a diminished quality of life (Bunglawala et al., 2021).

In 2010, Allen reviewed existing research evidence that included commission reports exploring the state of Islamophobia in the UK and Europe between the period 2000 to 2010. Allen (2010) posited that Islamophobia had its origins in Britain and suggests that these experiences could create a hostile and unwelcoming environment for Muslims on campus and could negatively impact their academic and social experiences.

2.2.4 Challenges Faced by Muslim Students in English Universities

Collett (2022) reports a rise in no-platforming practices in English universities, challenging the notion of secularity and raising concerns about potential religious discrimination within these institutions. While similar practices have occurred in the past, the term ‘no-platforming’ and its widespread adoption as a policy can be traced back to the late 2010s. Collett’s work prompts a re-evaluation of the assumption that universities are becoming more secular with minimal religious discrimination, considering the historical association between HEIs and Christian dominance. The adoption of no-platforming is driven by factors such as the influence of social media, heightened sensitivity to offensive speech, and the demand for safe spaces on campus. These practices aim to protect students from harm, encourage open dialogue, and hold speakers accountable for views perceived as harmful or offensive (Collett, 2022).

The report by Codiroli McMaster (2020) published by Advance HE acknowledges the diversity within the Muslim community and the need to consider the intersections between religion and belief and other identity characteristics, such as gender, class and geography. For example, the report noted that Muslim women in traditional dress faced particular challenges

in HE, such as feeling excluded from group work or being singled out because of their appearance. The report also highlighted the underrepresentation of Muslim students at the most academically selective institutions, which may be related to differences in students' backgrounds and experiences by religion. Additionally, the report noted that Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Black African people are more likely to have grown up in and live in persistent poverty than White British people, which may contribute to attainment gaps for Muslim students. The report also explores the underrepresentation of Muslim students in highly selective institutions and the overrepresentation of Jewish students in Russell Group universities (Codioli McMaster, 2020).

Similarly, Mohiuddin (2017) argued that Muslim students lack proper support and are hesitant to speak out due to the fear of becoming targets of harassment on campus. He contended that, despite the attempts by liberal institutions in Europe to accommodate the religious needs of Muslims, they face significant obstacles, including the rising Islamophobia fuelled by politics and media, anti-terrorism legislation, and security policies that encroach upon the civil liberties and freedoms of Muslim communities. Mohiuddin's research also delved into the challenges faced by Muslims in Europe regarding social integration, encompassing issues related to citizenship, immigration policies and the politicisation of Islam. His study underscored the paradox of a liberal understanding of citizenship, which advocates for diversity but regards differences as matters of private practice rather than public concern. Furthermore, he suggested that the global politicisation of Islam presents a greater challenge for multicultural societies than for others (Mohiuddin, 2017).

2.2.5 Perceptions of Muslim Students Through the Lens of Satisfied Settling

The discussion in the preceding sections shows that the experiences of Muslim students in HEIs are a topic of growing interest. One framework that offers insights into their unique experiences

and challenges is that of ‘satisfied settling’. According to both Tan et al. (2016) and Silva et al. (2017), there are noticeable discrepancies in defining the concept of student satisfaction. Tan et al. (2016) refers to Duarte et al. (2012) which used a satisfaction index to compare student satisfaction in HE services but lacks a comprehensive definition. Tan et al. (2016) then goes on to provide an overview of service frameworks utilised in the HE context like the SERVQUAL, 3P and 4C models. SERVQUAL assesses service quality based on five dimensions and identifies the expectation-perception gap. The 3P model focuses on provider, customer and other interactions, while the 4C model emphasises co-creating experiences with customers. Critics have argued that SERVQUAL neglects affective aspects, while 3P and 4C inadequately address social and cultural context (Tan et al., 2016).

The origin of the word ‘satisfaction’ suggests a notion of reaching a settlement, akin to settling a bill, and this holds implications for the way the purpose of HE has been redefined in market-oriented terms (Skea, 2017). This viewpoint, according to Skea, emphasises the exchange value of a degree, where students pay substantial tuition fees to acquire transferable employability skills in anticipation of increased earnings upon entering the job market. Such a transactional perspective is reflective of the neoliberal rhetoric ingrained in the modern English HE sector, where universities are increasingly seen in terms of measurable inputs and outputs. The market-driven approach in HE, where students are viewed as customers and employable graduates as outputs, has been criticised for prioritising efficiency and competition over values like EDI (Lowe, 2023). There are also concerns that this neoliberalism may prioritise certain student groups over others, neglecting the broader social and cultural dimensions of HE that play a crucial role in fostering EDI (Skea, 2017). Neoliberalism, with its focus on efficiency and competition, may have initially exacerbated inequalities in education (Olssen, 2020). However, it is important to recognise that the emergence of EDI initiatives coincides with the rise of neoliberalism and the internationalisation and massification of HE (MacKenzie et al.,

2023). While neoliberalism may have initially lacked diversity, the current landscape of HE includes a greater emphasis on EDI than ever before (Yu, 2021). This suggests a more nuanced relationship between neoliberalism and EDI, where EDI initiatives have been implemented alongside neoliberal policies. It is crucial to consider the historical context and the complex interplay between neoliberalism, internationalisation, and EDI in understanding the contradictions and complexities of the current HE system (Sperka & Enright, 2019).

A more recent paper by Skea (2023) expands on the challenges entailed in using student satisfaction measures as the sole measure of university quality in HEIs. He argues that current satisfaction measures like the National Student Survey have limitations as they primarily focus on the extent to which students' needs and expectations are met, resulting in a narrow perspective. Drawing upon Martin Heidegger (1962), his paper explores the potential for ontological unsettlement in education, specifically the contention that transformative and educational experiences depend upon the embracing of unsettlement and dissatisfaction. Skea concludes by calling for the re-evaluation of unsettlement's role in HE, emphasising genuine inquiry, self-discovery and ontological understanding (Skea, 2017, 2023).

Applying these ideas to the task of understanding the experiences of Muslim students potentially offers a way to gain fuller insights into their sense of belonging, identity and overall satisfaction within the university environment. Muslim Islam, Lowe and Jones (2018) mentioned that Muslim students in English HEIs frequently experience feelings of being overlooked, disregarded and marginalised within the broader university community. Nevertheless, some studies have indicated that, despite the obstacles faced, Muslim students are capable of fostering a sense of belonging through their interactions with peers, staff and the wider community (Islam, Lowe & Jones, 2018), and Islam (2021) further observes in this regard that a sense of belonging in HE is strongly connected to student success, progression and retention. Overall though, as Islam and Mercer-Mapstone (2021) show, Muslim students

often find themselves navigating a complex landscape of identities as they strive to balance their religious and cultural beliefs with the expectations and demands of the university environment, and this process of identity negotiation can influence their overall satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their university experience. Thus, according to Naparan and Balimbingan (2020), Muslim students exhibited remarkable academic achievement while simultaneously facing psychological distress related to representing Islam and navigating the challenges of the university environment. This duality of experiences significantly influences their overall satisfaction with their journey in non-Islamic HE.

Building on these ideas, the concept of Satisfied settling refers to the state of contentment and acceptance experienced by students while simultaneously seeking personal growth and enhancement. From an Islamic perspective, this concept aligns with the teachings stated of the Holy Qur'an on attaining gratitude, contentment and faith in the wisdom and decree of the divine. Surah Al-Baqarah (2:152) in the Holy Qur'an, the verse reminds believers to find inner peace and satisfaction by being content with what they have. The verse emphasises the importance of gratitude and encourages believers to remember Allah and His blessings, rather than complaining or being dissatisfied. By cultivating gratitude, individuals can achieve a sense of fulfilment and avoid denying the blessings bestowed upon them.

By introducing Satisfied settling as a framework, educators and researchers are able to evaluate the extent to which students feel integrated and satisfied within their new cultural context. Cultural integration theory emphasises the importance of individuals feeling a sense of belonging and satisfaction within a new cultural environment. It recognises that successful integration involves more than just academic achievement or gaining knowledge; it also involves adapting to social norms, customs and values.

An important previous study that has applied the concept of Satisfied settling to a student population is that of Islam and Mercer-Mapstone (2021). They interviewed nineteen Muslim students at HEIs in England, that these students unconsciously accepted an experience that falls below their expectations. The researchers gathered qualitative data to investigate the existence of this phenomenon. They identified a climate of perceived Islamophobia, in which Muslim students had low expectations due to majoritarian norms perpetuated by prior educational experiences, leading them to self-accommodate. This cognitive process resulted in self-disempowerment and a passive student experience, in which students no longer rely on the university for adjustments but settle or seek provisions elsewhere. The concept of ‘Satisfied settling’ is crucial in interpreting the data, as it contextualises experiences of contentment despite the presence of under-stimulating or inadequate accommodations (Islam & Mercer-Mapstone, 2021).

Another relevant study is that of Islam, Lowe and Jones (2018). Their research sought to gain insight into Muslim students’ sense of belonging and what matters to them while at the University of Winchester. The rationale for their study was to find out more about the experiences of Muslim students since Muslim students are often referred to as ‘hard to reach’, implying that it is the students who do not engage with the HEI, rather than the HEI not engaging with the students. Their findings revealed that many Muslim students in the study felt silenced and on the periphery of student life, but that simple adjustments could engage Muslim students more fully and enhance their university experience. They suggested that having a network to share ‘insider knowledge’ so that those with similar experiences could help newer Muslim students navigate the Institution. Additionally, some Muslim students expressed a desire for more social spaces and events, such as lectures and talks that would allow them to learn more about their faith and connect with other students. Islam, Lowe and Jones’ research methods were primarily qualitative in nature, using semi-structured interviews to gather data

supported by multiple methods of recruitment, including weekly VLE posts, flyers/leaflets, and snowballing. The significance of the Muslim Prayer Room as a mode of recruitment is also discussed in the article. Their study used a grounded theory approach to analyse the data collected from the interviews. A total of 24 Muslim students participated in the project. However, their research does not provide specific recommendations that were made to improve the sense of belonging and engagement for Muslim students in the context of a modern university.

2.2.6 Theories Linking Satisfied Settling to the HE Student Experience

The current body of literature on student satisfaction relies heavily on concepts from various disciplines. Nonetheless, Benjamin and Hollings (1997) expressed concern about the lack of “theoretical underpinnings” (p.213) specifically tailored to comprehending both the phenomenon of student satisfaction and the integration of foreigners into a culture. The theoretical underpinning of the satisfied settling perspective surpasses mere comfort or contentment within a physical setting. This perspective acknowledges the significant influence of one's surroundings on their overall sense of well-being and satisfaction, emphasising the intricate link between personal fulfilment and a stable, inclusive community. The concept of 'satisfied settling' was detailed in a study by Islam, Lowe, and Jones (2018), where they delved into Muslim students' perceptions of belonging and involvement at a UK university. The research shed light on how minor adjustments made by HEIs can effectively engage and enrich the university experience for these students. Mark (2013) highlighted the importance of prioritising student satisfaction in education policies, comparing it to the crucial role of satisfied customers in successful businesses. To remain competitive in a globally changing landscape, universities must focus on delivering quality education that aligns with students' current needs. He added that implementing a customer-centric approach is essential, requiring

educators to shift from viewing students as products to embracing a service-oriented mindset that values students' active participation in shaping their educational experiences and enhancing overall educational quality in HEIs.

In exploring power dynamics within societies, Spivak's question, "Can the Subaltern speak?", sheds light on the importance of engaging in dialogues across racial backgrounds and social classes to foster understanding and connection. By actively seeking out and amplifying the voices of marginalised groups, according to Spivak, it becomes possible to challenge and disrupt dominant narratives that perpetuate inequality. It is through these dialogues that a more equitable and inclusive understanding of society can emerge. This challenge involves bridging divides, navigating power differentials, and establishing mechanisms that promote mutual understanding and respect. The goal is to create a space where everyone's voices are valued, even if their ideas and opinions are unfamiliar, requiring time, trust, and a commitment to addressing barriers to inclusivity. This challenge is highlighted in Spivak's work and serves as a call to recognise and overcome the obstacles that prevent marginalised voices from being heard and understood (Spivak, 2023).

Similarly, Mahmud and Gagnon's (2023) study revealed that fostering a growth mindset can combat prejudice and discrimination, making it an essential tool in anti-racism efforts. Integrating implicit theories of intelligence and bias beliefs can significantly reduce stereotypes and biases, promoting unbiased recruitment and learning for all students. Educational leaders play a crucial role in addressing racism and promoting an inclusive environment (Mahmud & Gagnon, 2023).

While these theories are relevant, they may not fully encapsulate the complex experiences of Muslim students in diversity and inclusion initiatives within university settings. Cultural integration is crucial, as it elucidates the journey of cultural adaptation and integration necessary for Muslim students as they navigate diverse and possibly unfamiliar university

environments. According to Edwards (2024), this promotes social cohesion by facilitating interactions among diverse cultural groups, breaking stereotypes, fostering empathy, and nurturing respect, ultimately cultivating inclusivity and tolerance within society. He also suggested that individuals seek to find equilibrium and contentment by integrating into a new cultural setting while maintaining aspects of their own cultural identity (Edwards, 2024).

Biliński (2021) suggested also that Islam's enduring importance among Western Muslims stems from its connection to ethnic identity, indicating successive generations maintain strong religious bonds. With ongoing Muslim immigration and fertility rates that are typically higher than those of the native population, a stable Muslim presence is assured in the West. He noted that the distinctiveness of Muslims is maintained not only through religious affiliation but also their markedly higher religiosity, often leading to discrimination that solidifies their unique identity. He mentioned that some Muslim religious practices trigger discrimination by Westerners (for example, employers are less likely to hire Muslims because they need to provide religious facilities such as separate prayer rooms or prayer breaks). Unless Western attitudes shift, continued discrimination may reinforce the distinct Muslim identity and uphold the observance of high religiosity. This discussion aligns with the aspects of cultural integration theory, which highlights how cultural differences can impact integration processes and identities within societies (Biliński, 2021).

Furthermore, Kogan, Fong and Reitz (2020) stated that different religions also impact cultural values and orientation, influencing behaviours such as crime and deviance. While major religions share fundamental moral principles like benevolence and conservatism, they differ in the degree of emphasis on these values and the consequences of nonconformity. In addition, the social integration of various minority groups can be influenced positively or negatively by their religious doctrines, particularly in relation to societal attitudes toward gender roles, sexual orientation, alcohol consumption, and dietary habits as discussed by

various authors (e.g., Carol, Peez & Wagner, 2020; Kogan & Weissmann, 2020; cited in Kogan, Fong & Reitz, 2020).

In examining the connection between cultural integration theory and the satisfied settling lens, it becomes clear that the theory supports the idea that individuals must find contentment and fulfilment in their settled environment, regardless of cultural differences and challenges. For Muslim students, this process entails integrating into the university community while safeguarding their religious beliefs, thus achieving a state of satisfaction and harmony within their academic setting. Hamzah (2023) highlighted that the Islamic viewpoint on integration accentuates the significance of fostering positive relationships through acceptance and cooperation to build a cohesive and harmonious community. Ensuring satisfaction and peace for Muslim students in their academic environment entails skilfully blending into the university culture while upholding their religious identity. This balance is facilitated by institutional strategies that promote mutual understanding and respect among all individuals involved.

However, one limitation of Cultural Integration in the context of Muslim students involved in diversity and inclusion initiatives in universities is their oversight of the potential conflicts between cultural integration and religious practices. Basnet (2024) confirmed that this oversight creates a challenging environment for Muslim students, who may find it difficult to navigate between maintaining their religious identity and adapting to the broader cultural expectations of the university setting. He concluded that implementing cultural diversity in education faces several challenges, such as resistance from traditional educational structures, lack of institutional support, and pushback from learners and parents who may be uncomfortable with unfamiliar cultural perspectives (Basnet, 2024).

In addition to Cultural Integration, integrating frameworks such as critical race theory (CTR), feminist theory, and Social Constructionism can offer a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by Muslim students in and environments. CTR can

illuminate how systemic racism and discrimination intersect with religious identity, influencing students' experiences of inclusion and exclusion. Mac Ghail and Haywood (2017) argued that when studying issues of inclusion and exclusion, it is important to be careful about interpreting new forms of class identity solely through traditional categories of ethnicity, as this can oversimplify complex social dynamics

By integrating these diverse perspectives, a more holistic approach can address the multifaceted nature of Muslim students' experiences and perceptions within university settings. For example, Islam and Mercer-Mapstone (2021) introduced additional theories that contribute to a deeper understanding of their findings, particularly regarding the significance of explicitly acknowledging the concept of satisfied settling. Their conceptualisation of satisfied settling draws on key themes within CTR, which aims to illuminate, name, and critically examine the cultural and structural dynamics of racial domination. They shed new light on the power dynamics at play in the phenomenon of satisfied settling. It unveils the structural oppression, institutional biases, and self-disempowerment experienced by Muslim students in non-Muslim educational settings, contributing to a broader examination of equity and inclusivity within HE (Islam & Mercer-Mapstone, 2021).

Furthermore, Mahmud and Islam (2023) used CRT, this time alongside feminism, and Du Bois' (1897) concept of double consciousness. CRT is often used to analyse and critique the ways in which law and legal institutions perpetuate racial inequality. Feminism is a diverse set of theories and practices that seek to understand and challenge gender-based oppression and inequality. Feminist theory is often used to analyse and critique social, political, and economic structures that perpetuate gender-based oppression. Du Bois' concept of double consciousness refers to the psychological experience of feeling as though one's identity is divided into two parts, resulting in a sense of 'twoness' (p.9), where individuals are both aware of their own unique identity and of the societal stereotypes and prejudices associated with their marginalised

group. This duality manifests as a deep conflict in self-perception. On one hand, individuals possess an understanding of their own thoughts, feelings, and experiences, which may differ from the dominant narratives and societal expectations. On the other hand, they are acutely aware that society often views them through a lens influenced by stereotypes and biases. As a result, individuals with a sense of double consciousness may constantly navigate two different perspectives of self. They may feel compelled to adopt or perform aspects of the dominant culture to fit in, often at the expense of their authentic identity. This internal struggle arises from the need to reconcile their own self-perception with the external perceptions imposed upon them. Muslim female students may have different experiences and perspectives compared to male students when it comes to settling and facing discrimination in the UK. Research has shown that Muslim women face unique challenges and experiences in British society, including issues related to cultural diversity, identity, and discrimination (Shakoor, Samara & Abu-Rayya, 2022; Uddin, Williams & Alcock, 2022; Hunt, Franz & Nigbur, 2021; Mahmud & Islam, 2023).

Furthermore, Mahmud and Islam (2023) examined the experiences of Muslim staff in British HEIs and aimed to challenge Islamophobia, arguing that Islamophobia has become institutionalised and mainstreamed through media, politics and legislation. Their paper discussed the challenges faced by Muslim academics due to their religious identity, including lack of representation and being ‘othered’ (p.6). It also highlighted the microaggressions faced by Muslim academics and suggested measures such as providing spaces for religious expression and collecting data on Muslim staff and students. They employed an autoethnographic reflexive approach to address these issues (Mahmud & Islam, 2023). Within their discussion, they also examined the experiences of Muslim academics in navigating acculturation, highlighting the potential tensions that may arise between their cultural and religious identities and the expectations of the dominant culture. Acculturation here refers to

the process through which individuals or groups adopt the cultural norms and practices of a dominant or host society (Mahmud & Islam, 2023). According to Niens et al. (2013) and Karim (2021), acculturation concentrates on the process of cultural adaptation and integration when individuals from different cultural backgrounds interact with each other. It involves adapting to a new culture while preserving one's own identity, influenced by factors such as age, personality, language skills, and cultural characteristics. Berry's (1997; 2003; Berry et al., 2006) model outlines four strategies—assimilation, separation, integration and marginalisation—that allow individuals to maintain aspects of their own culture. In the context of this thesis, however, the focus is on the communication of religion and belief policies to Muslim students, rather than broader cultural communication or tracking the change, although communication plays a role during the acculturation process. Thus, understanding culturalised religion as a multidimensional phenomenon related to secularisation and diversification is crucial for future research (Astor & Mayrl, 2020).

Furthermore, feminist theory can provide insights into gender dynamics within the context of religious beliefs, addressing unique challenges faced by Muslim women on campus. Social Constructionism can help analyse how societal beliefs and norms contribute to the construction of religious identity and influence interactions within the university community.

Therefore, Algan et al. (2012) found that Muslim minorities, particularly Pakistanis and Bangladeshis, are more likely to identify with a British national identity compared to other ethnic groups, regardless of their place of birth. They also noted a trend where the differences in behaviours between ethnic minorities and white natives are less distinct among individuals born in the UK than those born abroad, suggesting a trend towards cultural integration that challenges common public perceptions. The speed of cultural integration varies across different aspects, with religion potentially experiencing the slowest rate of change. This prompts the question of whether these ongoing processes will lead to uniform behaviours or if persistent

differences will endure. While the limitations of statistical analyses only allow insight into past trends, the influential forces shaping immigrant community behaviours in the UK signal an evolving transformation that demands further examination.

While cultural integration theory primarily focuses on individual-level processes of cultural adaptation and integration, potentially overlooking broader systemic factors that may influence Muslim students' satisfaction and settlement within university communities. Manning and Georgiadis (2012) critiqued the theory for focusing too much on concessions to minorities without emphasising their responsibilities for integration, with events like the 2005 London bombings highlighting integration challenges. The former chairman of the Commission for Racial Equality noted that multicultural practices could lead to segregation rather than unity, prompting policy changes mandating new citizens to display knowledge of language, culture, and history to align with societal values (Manning & Georgiadis, 2012). Other critical aspects, such as institutional policies, social structures, power dynamics, and historical contexts, that play a significant role in shaping the experiences of Muslim students, may not be fully addressed by cultural integration theory alone. Therefore, a more holistic approach that incorporates multiple theories and frameworks is essential to gain a thorough understanding of the complex factors influencing Muslim students' perceptions and experiences in university environments.

2.3 Ensuring that Communications on English Campuses Protect Muslims' Religion and Beliefs

The aim of this section is to address the challenge of protecting Muslims' religion and beliefs in the context of communication strategy on English campuses. It explores the importance of promoting an inclusive and respectful environment in which Muslims feel safe to practice their faith and express their beliefs. While Guest et al.'s (2020) report provided evidence of positive interfaith relations and understanding across campuses, it nonetheless concluded that

prioritising the protection of Muslims' religion and beliefs on English campuses requires a comprehensive approach that combines education, awareness, sensitivity and the provision of necessary resources. Specifically, it recommended that students' opinions should be sought about the policies that shape the cultures they inhabit. Ghani and Nagdee (2019) came to a similar conclusion in their research revealing stronger evidence of understanding across universities and positive interfaith relations specifically among learners.

According to the report entitled, "Response of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland" (n.d.), the UK government has made a commitment to supporting Muslim communities. It is worth noting that educational institutions operating under the Education Act (1996) also have specific obligations in relation to the promotion of inclusivity and freedom of speech. Under the Education Act (1996), these institutions are required to ensure freedom of speech and academic freedom, while also creating welcoming environments for students of all religious faiths (Ahmadi et al., 2019). In addition, the monitoring authorities within universities have an obligation to ensure student performance and to identify and report any unusual activities, including involvement in violence and terrorism, to the Department for Education (UK Government, 2015).

According to Woodlock (2016), the UK government's commitment to supporting Muslim communities extends to the development of policies and practices that are sensitive to their needs and beliefs. These efforts also aim to combat discrimination and marginalisation that Muslim students and staff may face. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that the success of these initiatives relies on the active engagement of HEIs with Muslim students and staff. HEIs must demonstrate a willingness to listen to their perspectives and incorporate them into policy development and decision-making processes. By involving the Muslim community in these processes, HEIs can ensure that their efforts are effective, relevant, and inclusive (Woodlock, 2016).

Muslims in HE can feel isolated and marginalised, particularly in contexts where their beliefs and practices are not fully understood or respected. Romanowski, Alkhateeb and Nasser (2018, p.1) alluded to the ‘Penguin’ immigration paradigm of curricula, policies and textbooks for foreign educational systems. Their study delineates the extent to which these foreign elements of schooling are imposed on Muslim communities despite their lack of compatibility with ‘the desert’ Islamic culture. This proclaimed Dr. Khalifa AlSuwaidi, the opening keynote speaker, at the “Education in Gulf Cooperation Council Countries: Educational Creativity and Aspirations” Forum in (2016), further he claimed that these systems are not subjected to sufficient analysis, evaluation or scrutiny. These challenges and the imposition of foreign educational elements are examples of factors that hinder the inclusive and supportive environment that is essential for the UK government's commitment to supporting Muslim communities in HEIs.

Previous theories adopted by Pipes (1990) endorsed a perspective asserting that the fundamental factor influencing the future relations of Muslims and Westerners depends on people’s attitude towards liberalism and tolerance for religious, spiritual and cultural beliefs and values of people from diverse backgrounds. Pipes negates a reductionist perspective that draws from demographic residency and statistics and instead evokes divergent institutions, beliefs and skills. In accordance with Pipes, research concerning Muslim assimilation has focused on cultivating beliefs, institutional cultures and attitudes that endorse spaces for varied Muslim ideologies and practices.

Hussain’s (2016) study was conducted at Bradford University in England, focusing specifically on a select group of five young British Muslims who were living and studying at the university. His study utilised a generative narrative interview method, aiming to delve into the participants’ subjective experiences of HE and develop a comprehensive understanding of their identities. A key aspect of this understanding was recognising the diverse nature of

Muslim students and avoiding generalisations or treating them as a homogeneous group. His study shed light on the challenges faced by Muslim students, including conflicts between religious holidays and university schedules, as well as potential clashes between campus environments and their religious principles (Hussain, 2016).

Arshad-Ayaz and Naseem (2017) collated the proceedings of a 2016 symposium entitled, “Teaching About Extremism, Terror, and Trauma”. The symposium served as a platform where various stakeholders, including academics, students, teachers, community organisations, think tanks, non-governmental organisations, artists, media and citizens, came together for critical conversations regarding issues pertaining to extremism and radicalisation. One suggestion put forth by the authors is the creation of “invited spaces” (p.6). These are spaces established by institutions, authorities, governments, intergovernmental agencies, and non-governmental organisations with the explicit intention of involving citizens in decision-making structures. In certain settings, these spaces are backed by legal or constitutional guarantees and are considered by state actors as platforms that invite citizens and their representatives to engage in inclusive and authentic discourse on matters related to extremism and radicalisation (Arshad-Ayaz & Naseem, 2017).

Niyozov and Pluim (2009) indicated that Western institutions are frequently criticised for disregarding Muslim rituals and traditions such as prayer times and fasting and the prohibitions involved in recreational activities such as swimming, camping, overnight trips, and co-educational physical activities Henrico (2012) suggested that treating all religions equally can prevent bias and discrimination, fostering a more inclusive society. However, this view may overlook how dominant religious groups, like Christian churches, have influenced laws and policies (Dalacoura, 2014). It is important to consider the impact of religious values and norms on individuals' academic work and other aspects of their lives (Bulutgil, 2022).

Islam and Mercer-Mapstone (2021) reported research conducted at three post-92 HEIs in England in which they emphasised the importance of universities taking into account the specific needs of Muslim students and implementing appropriate accommodations, such as prayer spaces and other resources to support their spiritual needs, while also ensuring that policies and practices were inclusive and non-discriminatory. Drawing on the perspectives of Bourdieu (2011), Putnam (2000) and Coleman (1988). they asserted that mosques, similar to other associational networks, play a vital role in facilitating socio-political integration and fostering cohesion. Mosques serve as powerful tools for promoting norms of reciprocity, building trust, teaching organisational skills, and facilitating collective efforts towards achieving community goals. This underscores the importance of recognising the value and role of places of worship in community-building and social cohesion.

In their research, Islam and Mercer-Mapstone (2021) discuss how universities often believe that they should maintain a strictly secular ethos, separate from religious institutions. Citing Weller et al. (2013) they argue that this contradicts the reality that, since many university students and staff maintain religious beliefs, campuses are sites for religious practice, tension and discussion. They also reference Stevenson (2013, 2017) to emphasise how universities have falsely portrayed themselves as secular institutions, neglecting religious diversity in favour of discussions on race, gender, and/or class. Furthermore, Barber (2010) is referenced to argue that religion, as a marker of diversity, often takes a backseat in discussions compared to topics like race, gender, sexuality and class.

Niyozov and Pluim (2009), meanwhile, conducted research in various locations on different aspects of Muslim students' education in the West, such as the experiences of Muslim students in public schools, the challenges faced by Muslim teachers in Islamic schools, and the ways in which Muslim parents and teachers work to advocate for their children and students. Recommendations offered by their study include the need for schools to provide more inclusive

curricula that reflect the diversity of their student populations. They argue that this means incorporating Muslim perspectives and contributions into the curriculum and providing opportunities for students to learn about Islam and Muslim cultures. They also recommend that schools work to create more welcoming and accommodating environments for Muslim students, such as by providing prayer spaces and accommodating dietary restrictions. Additionally, the studies highlight the importance of teacher training and professional development to help academics better understand and meet the needs of their Muslim students.

In the realm of communication policy within universities, Guest et al. (2020) found that, in English universities, policies regarding equality often reach Muslim students through informal channels and student societies, rather than being explicitly recognised and implemented by the institutions themselves. This included policies related to prayer spaces, dietary requirements and other faith-based provisions. Their report recommends that universities should increase consultation with Muslim students about these issues, and that there should be Muslim student and staff representation on university equality and diversity committees and at chaplaincies wherever possible (Guest et al., 2020).

Modood, Triandafyllidou and Zapata-Barrero (2006) argued for perceiving the relationship between Muslims and the English community in terms of ethnic equivalence. They stressed the importance of exposing Muslim students to values that align with their Islamic tradition, identity and faith, allowing for individual expression within the public, social and cultural spheres and providing them with the opportunity to learn and engage with values that are in harmony with their Islamic tradition, identity, and faith. On a multi-faith campus in a Western society, it is essential to create spaces and opportunities for dialogue, interfaith initiatives, and education about different faiths and beliefs. This allows individuals to learn from one another, break down stereotypes, and build bridges of understanding. It is through

dialogue and interaction that misconceptions can be challenged, and a sense of communal harmony can be fostered, even amidst differing belief systems.

Robinson and Gardee (2022), meanwhile, delved into the experiences of Muslim youth in the UK and other countries, specifically focusing on the factors that have contributed to feelings of anger, revolt, and exclusion among some individuals. Their book explored various aspects including acculturation strategies, cultural identity, perceived discrimination, and radicalisation among Muslim youth. This exploration takes place within the context of the rise of Islamophobia and the politicisation of Islamic identity. They addressed the implications for social work practice when working with Muslim youth, emphasising the importance of education and training within a multidisciplinary framework. They revealed that many young Muslims have encountered social exclusion, discrimination, and marginalisation, leading some to adopt extremist ideologies as a means of expressing their frustration and anger. To mitigate these risk factors, they suggested that social workers can play a crucial role by engaging with Muslim youth and their families, establishing trust and rapport, and providing extensive support and guidance. Their book includes a case study that focuses on a radicalised Muslim youth in France who was at risk of joining a violent extremist group. In this case, the social worker employed a layered approach to assess the youth's risk factors, working closely with the individual and their family. The social worker collaborated with other professionals and agencies, including the police and the local mosque, to develop a comprehensive intervention plan that addressed the youth's social, emotional, and spiritual needs. This intervention plan incorporated components such as mentoring, counselling and community engagement activities (Robinson & Gardee, 2022).

Newsome and Cooper (2016) discussed the experiences of eighteen international students in a British university, including first-hand accounts from Muslim students, and an equal number of male and female students. Based on semi-structured, in-depth, informant-style

interviews where each participant was interviewed at least twice over a period of six months between 2007 and 2008, they found that the international students in the study faced a wide range of personal and practical challenges. These included, but were not limited to, adjusting to a foreign language, threats to safety, financial difficulties, alienation, isolation, bewilderment, confusion, unpredictable encounters, and limbo status as being neither insiders nor outsiders. They also faced challenges related to day-to-day living, social norms, cross-cultural gender relationships, anxiety, depression, stress, cultural fatigue, unfamiliar social activities and lifestyles, feelings of worthlessness, frustration and homesickness. Loneliness was a particularly serious challenge for individuals who came from collectivist cultures.

According to the London Metropolitan University Centre for Equity and Inclusion (2021), 16% of Muslim university students felt insecure wearing clothing that immediately identifies them as Muslim because such clothing habits have become symbolic and can subject wearers to overt judgment (Chen, Tabassum & Saeed, 2019).

Muslim women often find themselves constantly justifying their right to wear religious attire (Akel, 2021). Discrimination against Muslim students is prevalent on campuses, with women who wear hijabs particularly subjected to ridicule and unequal treatment by other students (Abbas, 2007; Choudhury, 2017). Verbal abuse, bullying and physical attacks also pose significant challenges for visible Muslim women belonging to minority populations (Ahmad, 2003).

Glue (2020) explores various free expression issues within universities and university colleges. These include the face veil ban in HEIs, the practice of no-platforming, the use of trigger warnings and safe spaces, the UK's Prevent strategy, discussions surrounding religious attire, equality, trust, freedom of expression, and the perceived legitimacy of academic freedom. Glue argues that while some individuals may find certain types of attire offensive,

provocative, or indecent, it does not necessarily cause harm to others or restrict their freedom. The criteria for accepting or rejecting clothing should be based on whether or not it limits the rights of others, rather than focusing solely on causing offense. It is important to acknowledge, however, that clothing can have implications for communication beyond speech, which can be of significance in academic settings (Glue, 2020). Many religious traditions have their own distinctive laws, customs, and levels of religious observances (Harjanto et al., 2023). It's worth noting that many countries, not just Muslim countries, face dilemmas around tolerating and assimilating differences.

Recent Official statistics from the Home Office indicate that approximately 45% of religious hate crimes targeted Muslims in the year ending March 2021 (Home Office, 2021). Jumadi (2021) highlights in this context that stopping hate crimes requires more than just stricter laws and awareness campaigns, as the root cause lies in the manipulation of individuals' thinking patterns. Jumdi recalls that this was demonstrated as far back as 1969 when the schoolteacher Jane Elliott conducted the now-famous blue-brown-eyed experiment with her students. She divided her class based on eye colour and favoured one group over the other, leading to noticeable changes in behaviour and academic performance. Although deemed unethical due to its negative psychological consequences for participants, Elliot's experiment resulted in participants becoming more aware of discriminatory statements. This how putting ourselves in someone else's position not only allows us to gain an understanding of their experiences, but can unlock new cognitive pathways, fostering a more liberal, empathetic and unbiased mindset (Jumdi, 2021; Ordeman, 2022; Sader, 2022).

In light of these challenges, Mercer-Mapstone, Islam and Reid (2021) argued that universities must use multiple communication channels to reach various student groups. Student union representatives can play a vital role in promoting the value of equality and free expression of beliefs among university students. Although it is often argued that university

experiences foster mutual understanding and respect among individuals with divergent viewpoints, including those of different faiths explicit discrimination, casual racism, and unconscious bias continue to persist in some English universities (Brown & Saeed, 2015; Ezzi, Teal & Izzo, 2014).

Hanafi et al. (2020) argued that retaining communication values associated with Islam such as respectful communication enables students to interact adequately with others. Practising equality and free expression of identity while communicating with students from diverse backgrounds can strengthen their foundations. Aside from implementing rules and procedures, universities should provide resources and assistance to foster inclusion among students with religious and belief characteristics. This may involve creating prayer rooms and other facilities to address the spiritual needs of students, as well as offering mentorship and support programmes to help students feel connected and supported within the university community (Ahmed & Khan, 2016). Holland (2016) asserted that programmes, particularly those implemented in educational settings, can foster connections between individuals of diverse origins, social groups and religious beliefs. Engaging students in moderated dialogue has been proven to be effective in reducing bias and facilitating the acquisition of new knowledge.

Sandberg (2011) presented an insightful and concise evaluation of the relationship between law and religion in England. His analysis delved into the mechanisms through which English law governs religious practices, taking into account various perspectives, including human rights and discrimination law. Furthermore, the Equality and Human Rights Commission conducted a report in 2016 that delved into the adequacy of Great Britain's legal framework for equality and human rights in safeguarding individuals with religious beliefs. The report revealed that the definition of religion or belief outlined in the Equality Act is sufficiently broad, ensuring comprehensive protection for a wide array of religions or beliefs

(Perfect, 2016). It is worth noting that, in England and Wales, legislation exists that explicitly prohibits hate speech rooted in religious motivations, as well as acts aimed at inciting religious hatred through verbal expressions or other means (Office of International Religious Freedom, 2023).

Yilmaz (2016) highlighted the post-modern focus on using law to shape society. Post-modernity challenges the assumption of universality in legitimating discourses, emphasising the diversity and cultural relativity of society. This is evident in the works of postmodern scholars such as Baudelaire, Habermas, Jameson, and Lyotard (Tavares, 2022). They argued that simplifying thought is not sufficient to understand the complexity and unity of society. This proliferation of social codes relating to ethnicity, gender, culture, and religion results in stylistic and discursive heterogeneity. In the context of the UK, it is worth noting that secularism and the decline of religion have been long-term trends. This means that the influence of religious institutions and religious norms on society has decreased, leading to a more diverse range of beliefs and practices. The decline of religion has contributed to a changing landscape where multiple identities, perspectives, and value systems coexist. Yilmaz also discussed the French model of secularism, which differs from the Anglo-Saxon model. The French approach to secularism is a nuanced structure that seeks to harmonise the ideals of religious and state separation, neutrality, freedom of belief, and equality (Brabet et al., 2019). In a wider EU context, the EU embraces secularism founded on democratic values, human rights, and the rule of law, striving to reconcile secular principles with respect for the diverse religious and cultural landscape across member nations. The advent of postmodernity and legal pluralism carries considerable implications for minority groups and epistemological relativism. Legal pluralism recognises the coexistence of diverse legal frameworks and the necessity to accommodate the practices of minority communities. The recognition of legal pluralism, however, is often undermined by the dominant legal system favouring its own norms and values. Epistemological

relativism challenges the idea of a universal truth, recognising multiple truths and perspectives, yet the dominant legal system tends to prioritise its own norms, often eroding the recognition of epistemological relativism (Yilmaz, 2016). While the Equality Act places a duty on English Universities to protect religion and belief as exemplified by the recognition of legal pluralism in the UK, current trends like populism and nationalism could undermine this recognition, along with epistemological relativism. These trends favour the norms and values of the dominant group, potentially marginalising and excluding minority groups.

It is vital to strike a balance between recognising the potential risks of epistemological relativism and multiculturalism, as argued by opponents, and the importance of accommodating the practices of minority groups. This balanced approach can help foster social justice and equality while maintaining a cohesive and inclusive society. To promote social justice and equality, it is essential to recognise and accommodate the practices of minority groups in the England. The amalgamation of interculturalism and multiculturalism shapes governmental policies and civil society organisation dialogues, while cosmopolitanism is evident in civil society's advocacy for a more compassionate asylum system and EU involvement in governing cultural diversity (Dupont, Sealy & Modood, 2023). Within the educational realm, racial discrimination and structural barriers impede the professional advancement of Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) educators, necessitating transformative leadership to combat racial disparities (Miller, 2020). Addressing racial inequalities and injustices in England has been largely symbolic and insufficient, underscoring the need for comprehensive and sustained policies aimed at social justice and equality (Parsons, 2022).

2.3.1 Equality Act (2010) Duty on English Universities to Protect Religion and Belief

English HEIs have a responsibility to communicate matters related to religion and belief effectively, while also ensuring compliance with legal frameworks that protect religious freedom and protect students' rights. The Equality Act enacted in 2010 prohibits discrimination based on religion or belief in educational settings (Fell & Dyban, 2017; Mason & Minerva, 2022; Weller et al., 2013). The Act mandates universities to implement policies and procedures that aim to prevent and address instances of discrimination, harassment and victimisation arising from religion or belief (Government Equalities Office, 2010). According to the Equality and Human Rights Commission (2010,2021a), the legislation aims to protect the rights of individuals regarding their religion or belief within academic institutions. The Act prohibits universities from engaging in discriminatory practices against students or staff based on their religion or belief. This includes areas such as admissions, education and employment. Furthermore, universities are obligated to take appropriate measures to ensure that students and staff with religion or belief are not disadvantaged in their studies or religious practices (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2010,2021a). According to this Act, the term 'religion' encompasses any religious affiliation, including the absence of religion. Similarly, 'belief' encompasses both religious and philosophical beliefs, as well as the absence of belief (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2021a). The Act came into force on 1 October 2010, consolidating and simplifying over 116 separate pieces of legislation into one Act to protect individuals with specific characteristics from discrimination (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2018). Before the Equality Act, various pieces of legislation in the UK addressed discrimination. These included the Race Relations Act 1976, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, the Equal Pay Act 1970, the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, and the Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003.

In its introductory passage, the Act highlights its main purpose of “reducing socio-economic inequalities” (p.189) through streamlining and updating equality laws (Equality Act 2010, cited in Fell and Dyban, 2017, p.189). Furthermore, the Act ensures that engaging in discriminatory practices against individuals with protected characteristics is unlawful (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2021a).

Weller (2018) focuses on the issues and options concerning religious freedom for groups identified as ‘religious minorities.’ The research emphasises the need to consider the significant impact religious minorities themselves have had on driving changes in UK law and social policy, expanding the scope and substance of religious freedom. This includes HEIs ensuring inclusive and non-discriminatory policies and practices, as well as creating a welcoming and inclusive environment for students and staff (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2018).

The study conducted by Hussain, Rizvi and Sheikh (2022), meanwhile, highlighted the impact of legislation on changing views towards society and religion, emphasising the shift towards treating everyone equally and fairly. Under the Equality Act, English HEIs are legally obliged to promote equality and prevent discrimination based on religion or belief. While discrimination in various forms has gained increased attention in recent years, it is worth noting that religious discrimination represents one of the earliest forms of discrimination (Hussain, Rizvi & Sheikh, 2022).

Moreover, HEIs are required to foster positive relationships between individuals who share protected characteristics and those who do not. In that regard, Stevenson’s (2013) analysis of institutional policies related to religion and belief reveals that many primarily focus on practical initiatives such as dress codes, dietary requirements and religious communities, while addressing issues of racism or intolerance to a lesser extent. His research was conducted

in a post-1992 university in the UK, focusing on the social and academic experiences of religious students in this university. He conducted semi-structured interviews with twelve religious' students from diverse faith backgrounds, these students, predominantly Muslim, but also from Sikh and Jewish backgrounds, are marked out as different by the clothing or jewellery that they wear, which can make them feel both 'seen' and 'unseen' on campus. His analysis of these interviews focused on themes of in/visibility, silencing and self-silencing. His research found that religious students face invisibility, exclusion, and a culture of silence on campus due to their religious appearance, the lack of open discussions on religious inclusion, self-silencing practices, limited recognition and absence of religious spaces, all of which present challenges in balancing academic and social life (Stevenson, 2013).

In the context of religious freedom and accommodation, it is important to note that schools are not legally required to offer separate worship opportunities for different religions and beliefs represented among their students (Equality Act introduction, in UK legislation, 2010). This highlights the practical challenges faced by educational institutions in meeting the diverse religious needs of their students while adhering to legal requirements. Furthermore, Humphreys (2010) anticipated that the consideration of religious beliefs would be crucial in research ethics protocols, particularly concerning individuals whose religion or belief system prohibits the consumption of animals. This highlights the need for research ethics committees to design protocols that are inclusive and do not inadvertently discriminate against individuals due to their religious or belief-driven dietary restrictions.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission has conducted extensive research and policy work that has served to reveal differing perspectives on the level of protection afforded to religious belief within the current legal framework. Some proponents argue that religious belief is inherently unique and warrants greater protection than what is currently provided.

These voices claim that a failure to acknowledge this distinctiveness implies a hierarchy of rights, placing characteristics such as sex and sexual orientation above religion or belief in terms of protection. Conversely, there are those who argue that religion or belief receives excessive protection, resulting in disadvantages for other protected characteristics as outlined in the Equality Act of 2010 (Perfect, 2016). On the other hand, proponents of the current legal framework contend that it offers equitable protection for all groups. They emphasise that principles of reasonableness, justification, and proportionality ensure fairness and balance for everyone involved (Donald, Bennett & Leach, 2012).

2.3.2 Implementing Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategies at the English Campus Level

Traditionally, universities have implemented EDI strategies to comply with legal requirements, such as anti-discrimination laws and equal opportunity policies. Compliance with legal obligations is an important factor for institutions to avoid legal repercussions and demonstrate their commitment to creating an inclusive environment (Pizarro Milian & Wijesingha, 2023).

This perspective is often rooted in ensuring that universities meet minimum standards for EDI practices and prevent discrimination within their institutions. However, it is worth noting that the specific motivations and priorities of universities may vary, and some institutions may have had a genuine commitment to EDI prior to legal requirements or alongside them. Universities, by complying with the Equality Act, gain the authority to eliminate barriers related to communication, caste, or religious affiliation among students (Office for Students, 2022). The government, responsible for developing the Equality Act, strongly encourages universities and organisations to uphold its provisions to ensure fair treatment and opportunities for all (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2012, 2014).

Now, however, there is a pressing need for institutions to undergo a cultural transformation to embed values of inclusion, integrity, compassion, and collaboration (Leeds University, 2022). The EDI strategy serves as a solid foundation for the university's overall strategy, values and principles of community, culture and impact. Its purpose is to provide guidance and direction in addressing challenging issues related to enhancing equity, diversity and inclusion on campus and making a positive global impact (Leeds University, 2022). The significance of EDI has increased on a global scale, as it aligns with governing philosophies, recent social movements, and the profound impact of the COVID-19 pandemic (Kim, 2020; Marinova et al., 2021).

UNESCO's guidelines for inclusive access to education have influenced countries worldwide in shaping their own inclusion and equity policies (Verkerk, 2023). In the UK, for example, the Athena SWAN charter was launched in 2005 by the Equality Challenge Unit, which is a charity organisation that works to advance equality and diversity in HE and research. The initiative was initially focused on advancing gender equality in science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and medicine disciplines, but it has since expanded to address broader diversity and inclusion concerns. For example, the initiative now includes a Race Equality Charter that aims to improve the representation, progression, and success of BAME staff and students in HE (Advance HE, 2018, Wolbring & Lillywhite, 2021).

There is evidence to suggest that implementing EDI strategies can effectively address discrimination and marginalisation faced by Muslim students on English campuses. Cheruvallil-Contractor (2015) emphasised the importance of inclusive policies and practices regarding religion and belief to mitigate these concerns. To create an inclusive atmosphere, universities should ensure that students, regardless of their religious views, have access to a welcoming environment. One approach is to allow students to establish religiously affiliated student clubs (Williams, 2018), providing them with spaces in which to practise their faith and

fostering community (Graham, 2017). Furthermore, colleges can designate religious observance days (Kerr, 2016) and offer various spiritual support programmes (Scott, 2015). It is crucial for all students, regardless of their religious beliefs, to feel comfortable on campus, and colleges should make sincere efforts to accommodate diverse religious backgrounds. Mayrl and Oeur (2009), however, caution against decontextualising students when studying religion in HEIs, advocating for a more nuanced understanding that considers the diverse institutional contexts and their interaction with the religious engagements of undergraduate students. Islam in particular is a holistic way of life that therefore has a significant impact on daily routines, encompassing practices related to food, hygiene, and social interactions (Hassani & Moghavvemi, 2019). Both Habermas (2012) and Wiafe and Gariba (2023) argued that the expressive power of religious ideas enhances a harmonious coexistence among individuals, respecting the unique dignity of each person. In some cases, religious ideas can be harnessed to promote exclusion, prejudice, discrimination, or even violence against individuals or groups who hold different beliefs or identities. History has shown instances where religious doctrines or interpretations have been used to justify acts of oppression, intolerance and conflict. It is important to note that these negative outcomes are not inherent to religion itself, but rather arise from the ways in which religious ideas are interpreted, applied and institutionalised within a specific cultural and social context. Religious extremism, radicalism, or misuse of religious teachings can contribute to divisiveness, hostility, and disregard for human dignity.

As opined by Frankfurt (2018), equality is an important value that determines that each individual must be treated equally in terms of various opportunities such as their education and job. Moreover, equality is also related to the legal system in which rules and regulations are framed by the way the overall mechanism works in order to provide adequate equality to the individuals. It also includes the belief that no-one should have fewer opportunities due to the place where they were born, the communities they are coming from, their social beliefs and

attitudes, and any type of disability they possess. Equality is a value shared by all religions, but with varied meanings. In Islamic thinking, everyone is treated equally provided they satisfy the necessary conditions of opportunity. It finds that “God has favoured some of you over others in the provision of means” (al-Nahl, 16:71). In a similar context, Frankfurt (2018) argued that this value is greatly impacted by the way the Islamic people are treated in the Western and various other nations.

Universities are also encouraged to make reasonable adjustments in enrolment and educational facilities to foster engagement between diverse groups (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2010b). Thus, universities in England are required to act responsibly and transparently while providing training and recreational facilities for diverse groups so that diversity and inclusion can be fostered while meeting the objectives of equality in providing HE (UK Government, 2015).

A report published by the University of London (2022) highlighted that that university was founded on the fundamental principles of providing quality education to students without discriminating on the basis of gender, race, social background, age, sexual orientation, and religion so that the education can remain correlated to merit only. In order to foster diversity and inclusion in the university, the University of London also formulated the Equality and Inclusion Strategy 2021-25 that encompassed within it a performance matrix intended to inform the process of enrolling and teaching students with dignity and respect, as well as promoting transparency and data collection (University of London, 2022).

It is important to note, however, that EDI strategies can only aim to protect religion and belief on campus if they are put into place and followed. Research has shown that making policies that are inclusive is not enough to create meaningful changes (Davies et al., 2017). Instead, universities need to consult with students and staff on a regular basis to make sure that

their needs and points of view are taken into account (Department of Education. Office of Planning, Evaluation & Policy Development, 2016). In his study, Rodriguez (2022) pointed out the challenges experienced by equality and diversity practitioners in institutions and emphasises the importance of providing them with increased support and recognition to drive institutional change for EDI strategies. His research provides a voice for colleagues affected by these issues, who often encounter feelings of silencing, intimidation and marginalisation within their institutions (Rodriguez, 2022).

In addition to the analysis of policies and strategies, measuring diversity poses certain challenges, making it difficult to track overall progress in EDI initiatives. The Gartner Inclusion Index (2021), however, offers a comprehensive assessment by utilising seven dimensions of inclusion through a set of seven questions. This approach enables leaders to gain insights into individual perceptions, facilitating informed decision-making and preventing common pitfalls such as delayed action plans and excessive reliance on survey results (Romansky et al., 2021).

Furthermore, the Diversity and Equity Campus Climate Survey in the University of Iowa (2022) serves as a valuable instrument for collecting perspectives from students, faculty, and staff on issues such as institutional climate, support for diversity and equity, as well as experiences with discrimination and harassment. By utilising this survey, institutions can obtain essential information to evaluate the level of support for EDI within their campus environment. This data can further inform and strengthen support systems, policies and practices aimed at promoting EDI within the institution (University of Iowa, 2022).

2.4 English Universities' Policies Protecting Religion and Belief: Conflict with Islamic Epistemologies

EDI policies can sometimes be in conflict with the epistemologies (i.e., the theory of knowledge) of certain religious groups, such as Islam. One possible area of conflict could be

in the treatment of religious texts or materials. For example, some Islamic epistemologies place a strong emphasis on the importance of the Qur'an and the Hadith (sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad); and to a lesser extent the consensus of jurists on a certain issue concerning the Islamic Law in shaping belief and practice (Bakir, 2023). Although Islam's epistemology is centred on God, in the sense of Allah as a source of knowledge and truth, it is also centred on people, in the sense that humans are the perpetrators of knowledge-seeking (Atmaja & Mustopa, 2020). As such, there may be concerns about the handling or treatment of these religious texts in a university setting, particularly if they are not being handled with the proper level of respect and reverence. Engebretson (2009) explains that religious believers' life-worlds encompass their beliefs, values, history and daily rituals, all of which are integral to their individual identities. The term 'life-world' here refers to the overall framework in which individuals experience and make sense of their lives. This understanding draws from the philosopher Husserl's concept of the life-world and highlights how religious beliefs are deeply intertwined with various aspects of believers' lives.

Simultaneously, the discipline of Islamic epistemology examines the nature of Islamic knowledge and the justification of belief (Azram, 2011; Rifai, 2021). While the Sunni sect constitutes around 90% of the global Muslim population, with Shiites forming the majority of the remaining Muslims, it is crucial to recognise that both groups share the same religious foundation. The disparities between them primarily revolve around matters of succession, authority and the interpretation of the law. Often, universities have dedicated chaplaincies or interfaith organisations that facilitate conversations and collaborations between different religious groups, promoting understanding, cooperation and a shared sense of belonging on campus. Despite the emergence of the Shi'a as a distinct group after the passing of the Prophet, it is important to note that these differences do not hinder their practise of the religion (Abdo, 2017; Hussain & Alami, 2005). Some Islamic epistemologies may require certain forms of

dress or behaviour, such as the wearing of hijab and veil (Piela, 2021; Rauf, Shahabuddin & Aleem, 2020). Al-Ghazali (1997), a prominent Muslim theologian (Watt, 2020), emphasised the significance of wearing hijab as an essential aspect of Islamic piety and modesty. According to his teachings, the hijab serves as a means for Muslims to demonstrate their steadfast devotion to their faith. Similarly, the avoidance of certain activities or substances, such as participation in gambling or the consumption of pork or alcohol, is seen as a way to protect the individual from engaging in actions that are considered sinful or harmful in Islamic teachings. The word 'Halal', therefore, derived from Arabic, signifies what is considered permissible or lawful in accordance with Islamic law (Ismail et al., 2023, p.49).

Muslim women may face some barriers when dealing with foreigners in HEI environments that are not subject to the rules of Islam (Schröer & Ürek, 2022). While it is necessary to point out that Islamic doctrine allows all Muslim women to work provided the conditions that do not violate Islamic rules, and adheres to moral or ethical values, and provided that their primary responsibilities within the family are not negatively impacted (Miles & Benn, 2016; Qardhawi, 2014). In short, commenting on Khosrojerdis' study, Nurasyiah et al. (2021) highlight the Islamic epistemology around Muslim women in the verses of the Qur'an. These verses emphasise the perfect nature of Islam and provide an explanation of the dignity and importance that women hold within the religion. They provided evidence from the Qur'an and Sunnah to show that Islam recognised the significance and dignity of women, even when other religions did not. For example, they cite verses from the Qur'an that emphasise the perfect nature of Islam and provide an explanation of the dignity and importance that women hold within the religion. They also referred to the Sunnah, which is defined as any words, actions, and revelations of the Prophet Muhammad as a messenger of God to be followed by all mankind (Nurasyiah et al., 2021).

In the Holy Quran, men and women in Islam are considered equal, with the same rights and obligations, as stated in Surah An-Nisa verse 1 that addressed the issue of women's rights and inheritance. The Quran verse states: "O mankind, fear your Lord, who created you from one soul and created from it its mate and dispersed from both of them many men and women. And fear Allah, through whom you ask one another, and the wombs. Indeed, Allah is ever, over you, an Observer". This verse emphasises the importance of treating men and women equally and with respect, as they are both created by Allah and have important roles to play in society. The verse also highlights the importance of family ties and the obligation to care for one's relatives, including women. In the context of research on women's empowerment and family poverty, this verse can be seen as an example of how Islamic teachings emphasise the importance of treating women with dignity and respect, and how this can contribute to reducing poverty and improving the well-being of families and communities. In addition, in terms of women's roles in economic activities, Allah provides examples and guidance in the Qur'an, specifically in Surah Al-Qasas verses 23-25 which narrates the story of Prophet Musa, who arrived at a well in Midian and found two women who were holding back their herd of animals because they could not water them until the other shepherds were done. This story is often cited as an example of how women can play an important role in economic activities, even in traditionally male-dominated fields such as animal husbandry. By helping these women water their animals, Prophet Musa demonstrated that men and women can work together to achieve common goals and that women should not be excluded from economic activities based on their gender.

It is worth noting a clarification of the position of women. In certain Islamic communities, community norms limit individuals' freedom, especially for women, veering away from Islamic teachings. 'Broken Verses' by Kamila Shamsie (2018), analysed through Sara Mills' framework, explores character portrayal of women. The novel emphasises women's

thoughts, emotions, vulnerability and physical attributes, while men are depicted by their physical strength, personalities and dominating attitudes. Detailed descriptions of women focus on sensuality and charm, including both complete and fragmented body descriptions. The story delves into traditional gender norms within a male-dominated society, highlighting differences in attitudes, beliefs and priorities beyond physical appearance.

Considerations arise when attempting to reconcile the emphasis placed on specific beliefs and practices within certain branches of Islamic epistemologies with the academic landscape of English universities. Accommodating these divergent perspectives can pose challenges, particularly in the absence of explicit policies or procedures designed to support students and staff in navigating these intricacies. In such circumstances, Muslim individuals may find themselves compelled to make a choice between their religious convictions and their academic or professional pursuits, resulting in substantial obstacles to their well-being and achievement (Sayeed, 2019). Accommodating these practices on campuses setting may require the development of policies and procedures to ensure that all students and staff feel welcome and included (Syed & Ozbilgin, 2019). Simultaneously, the need for religion is considered a powerful instrument of socialisation, which substantially impacts individuals' education and values. As Aslan and Hermansen (2015) argue, religion presents itself as a form of the social curriculum. This statement implies that the social curriculum, which is strongly influenced by religious law, may confront the official curriculum as well as the regulated education of a host country. This situation has become a matter of interest to scholars and researchers due to the increased presence of Islam and Muslims in European countries (Farahani & Salehi, 2013; Ricucci,2023). Islam and Muslims have received heightened attention and scrutiny in recent years due to geopolitical events, migration trends, and cultural shifts. The perceived clash between Islamic traditions and Western values has intensified public discourse and academic interest in the Islamic presence within European countries, including its impact on education.

Masoud (2022) explored the process of identity formation among Muslim students in UK universities, focusing on the impact of Islamic cultural characteristics such as names, clothing rules and eating habits. These distinct aspects separate them from other non-Christian cultural groups within the British community. Masoud also sheds light on the detrimental effects of the mainstream model of Islamophobia, which according to him, promotes racism and narrow-mindedness in UK universities, ultimately reflecting the failures of supremacist groups in promoting exclusionary and discriminatory beliefs. Furthermore, the study highlights the profound impact of specific historical events, such as the Rushdie Affair, the Gulf War of 1990/1991, and the 2001 inner-city riots involving South Asians, on the evolution of Muslim identity in the UK. It is important to recognise that while the Gulf War of 1990/1991 is specifically mentioned, other significant events like the Iran-Iraq war of the 1980s or the 2003 Iraq War could also have influenced the development of Muslim identity in the UK. These historical events, along with various socio-cultural factors, political dynamics, and media portrayals, collectively contribute to the intricate process of shaping Muslim identity in the UK. Even though the issue of international HE has been extensively covered in the literature, too little emphasis has been put on how religion and belief policies are impacting the link between HEs and Muslims (Iatagan, 2015).

Furthermore, the English public domain has been relatively expanded to encompass the rights of new religions, acknowledged the potential for polarity between these religions (Di Stasio et al., 2019). In essence, the adoption of planning principles and tools that recognise the diversity of educational frameworks and students enables universities and academics to be more effective in policy making, as stated by Operti (2017). This means that by embracing a comprehensive approach to education, institutions can create greater opportunities for learning and expand their impact.

2.5 English HEIs' Capacity to Communicate Religion and Belief Protection under Confounding Factors

The diversity of beliefs represented within the HEIs is one of the confounding factors that can affect an institution's ability to communicate and uphold religion and belief protection effectively. With a diverse student and staff population, it can be challenging for an institution to ensure that all students feel included and supported and to provide support for all beliefs equally, especially if such support requires adaptation of curricula and methodologies accordingly (Claeys-Kulik et al., 2019; Qazi, Sharif & Akhlaq, 2022). To enhance dialogue and engagement with ethnic minority populations, it is advisable to form a task force responsible for organising inclusive events, seminars, and conferences. This recommendation, as proposed by Awan, Blakemore, and Simpson (2013), aims to foster a more diverse and inclusive environment. Moreover, these values serve as the foundation for moral and ethical judgments. They guide individuals in discerning between right and wrong, and distinguishing the concept of good and bad. These values are universally applicable across different cultures, societies, and historical periods, as emphasised by Hreha (n.d). Continuing the discussion on inclusive values, it is important to highlight Gandhi's perspective on religion and education. Gandhi firmly believed that the true essence of religion lies in the act of serving humanity. In line with this belief, he advocated for the creation of a unique educational system called 'Nai Talim' or 'basic education,' which drew inspiration from the fundamental principles found in various religious traditions (Devi, 2019).

There is also another confounding factors of limited resources. Providing support and accommodations for a wide range of beliefs can be resource-intensive, and institutions may not have the capacity to meet the needs of all individuals (Thurber & Bandy, 2018). Smith and Jones (2010) confirmed that many HEIs have difficulty effectively upholding their legal duty to protect the rights of students and staff to freedom of religion or belief due to a lack of

understanding and awareness of the relevant issues, as well as limited resources and conflicts between the rights of different individuals. Taylor and Patel (2012) also confirmed that HEIs are facing growing pressure to offer support and accommodations for various religious and belief-based needs, and that this can be a significant strain on resources and may necessitate the development of innovative approaches in order to accommodate the needs of all students and staff.

According to Bayrakli and Hafez (2017), the campaign for Brexit in the UK may have increased anti-Muslim views. Apart from economic considerations, social factors also contributed significantly to the outcome of the vote. One key issue was class alienation, whereby certain sections of society felt marginalised by societal changes brought about by globalisation. Moreover, prejudices against immigrants and Muslims further fuelled support for Brexit. Anti-immigration sentiments were widespread across Europe but reached ‘fever pitch’ during the campaign period leading up to the referendum in 2016 (Faulkner, Guy & Vis, 2021; Nundochan, 2018 cited in Simpson & Startin, 2023). In addition to the confounding factors mentioned earlier, it is important to acknowledge the rhetoric employed by politicians in framing the idea of leaving the EU. This rhetoric positioned Brexit as a way to control immigration and safeguard the native British culture and values. The narrative presented strongly resonated with individuals who held negative perceptions towards foreigners, particularly Muslims, who were sometimes unfairly associated with terrorism and perceived cultural decline (Green, 2020).

The issue of identity and the perceived failure of multiculturalism has indeed been a subject of much discussion. As Cattle (2006) points out, the ‘Muslim question’ often becomes a focal point within this broader debate. It is crucial to acknowledge that multiculturalism has been both praised for its ability to promote cultural diversity and criticised for potentially

creating separate societal silos. After the 2001 riots in northern England Muslims were accused of being responsible for social problems and threats to national security and identity by living in self-segregated communities or “parallel lives” (Cantle, 2006, p.88; 2001). More recently, Muslims have been accused of harbouring “regressive attitudes” (Casey, 2016, p.128). Casey suggested that there is a perception among some in Britain that certain religious practices, particularly those associated with Islam, are incompatible with modern British values. This perception is linked to fears of the unknown and unfamiliar, which can be seen as a manifestation of Gothic and racial discourses. He notes that “Public concerns about the increasing visibility of Islam in Britain may be driven by practical concerns but also by anxiety and fear of the unknown” (p.128). This suggested that there is a sense of unease or discomfort with the presence of Islam in Britain, which may be linked to a lack of understanding about the religion and its practices.

Furthermore, Casey noted that “Before the early 2000s, both the Saudi state and private Saudi citizens are reported to have actively promoted a Saudi interpretation of Islam overseas, including in Britain” (p.128). This suggests that there may be a perception that certain interpretations of Islam are being imposed on British Muslims from outside the country, which can be seen as a threat to British values and identity.

In her editorial, Rizvi (2022) shed light on the historical context, revealing the extensive and enduring impact of epistemicide and necropolitics on marginalised communities, perpetuating a deficit-based understanding of them within educational context. She emphasised the importance of challenging oppressive knowledge systems and embracing diverse perspectives in an educational context. Rizvi’s research aimed to confront the hidden curriculum that sustains racism within educational research and presents innovative strategies dedicated to achieving racial justice. She emphasised the principle of the incompleteness of all

knowledge, advocating for the co-presence and critical questioning of these oppressive systems (Rizvi, 2022). The editorial does not present traditional research findings but instead suggests reflections, unlearning and dialogue as means to advocate for racially-just epistemologies and methodologies and to foster positive change in the educational research landscape. It draws on existing research and scholarship to emphasise the significance of prioritising diverse perspectives and promoting racially-just approaches in educational research. The editorial also cites bell hooks and Hill Collins, who discuss empowering marginalised communities to challenge dominant systems of knowledge through ‘talking back’. This term refers to the act of questioning and resisting established systems and constructions of knowledge by marginalised groups (Rizvi, 2022).

According to Azzaakiyyah (2023), external factors such as public opinion, media representation, and societal identity play a role in complicating matters further, particularly in relation to social movements, and often influence how certain beliefs or religions are viewed and treated. Consequently, even if HEIs adhere strictly to regulations safeguarding religious freedom, negative perceptions outside academia could undermine effective implementation inside classrooms. Fürst et al. (2021) indicated that the media, including social media platforms, have the potential to disseminate misinformation and exacerbate polarisation on matters related to religion and belief. In today’s society, social media and rapid technological advancements have become “a double-edged sword”, as they can foster connections and unity among people, while also carrying the potential to negatively impact the mindset of Muslims and perpetuate negative stereotypes related to certain religions or beliefs (Aleem et al., 2023, p.1185). The negative focus on Muslims and Islam has become significantly mainstreamed and accepted, not only through the media but also through political rhetoric and the so-called secular and anti-terrorist laws (Kundnani, 2014; Mahmud & Islam, 2023; Winter, 2017).

Baker, Gabrielatos and McEnery (2013) provided an extensive analysis of the representation of Islam in the British press from 1998 to 2009. They used a corpus of 200,037 newspaper articles to examine the portrayal of Islam and Muslims in different newspapers, years and contexts, and identified a predominance of negative and conflict-oriented representations of Islam and Muslims and discussed the implications of these findings for media and society. They argued that newspapers have the power to influence society and set the agenda for socially significant issues (Baker, Gabrielatos & McEnery, 2013).

According to Pratt (2016), current media portrayals of Islam, coupled with long-standing biases, contribute to a distorted view of Islam. Pratt highlighted that the prevailing image of Islam in popular and political discourse lacks an appropriate or authentic hermeneutical guide (Pratt, 2016).

Allen (2016) also discussed how the British media has often portrayed Muslim communities negatively, contributing to the normalisation of Islamophobia and the perpetuation of false narratives about Islam and Muslims. His study argued that the media has a responsibility to report on issues related to Islam and Muslims in a fair and accurate manner, and that this can be achieved through better education and training for journalists, greater representation of Muslim voices in the media, and closer collaboration between Muslim groups and the media (Allen, 2016). On the other hand, Allen highlighted that certain newspapers did cover positive stories besides stories related to the abuse received by Muslims. For instance, *The Sun* newspaper ran a front-page headline declaring, "Islam is not an evil religion". This headline symbolised a positive shift away from the perception that all Muslims are associated with violence and reflects a level of responsible reporting following the events of 9/11.

Baker, Gabrielatos and McEnery (2013) study on the representation of Islam in the British press analysed representations around frequently-cited topics such as Muslim women

who wear the veil and “hate preachers” (p.24), referring to religious leaders or figures who are perceived to promote extremist or hateful views. His study aimed to provide an objective picture of media attitudes towards Muslims and Islam by analysing over 140 million words of newspaper articles on the subject. He used corpus linguistics and discourse analysis methods and incorporated research on journalistic practices, readership patterns, and attitude surveys to answer questions such as what journalists mean when they use phrases like 'devout Muslim' and how did the 9/11 and 7/7 attacks affect press reporting. He found that the representation of Islam and Muslims in the British press was often negative and stereotypical, with Muslims being associated with terrorism and extremism (Baker, Gabrielatos & McEnery, 2013, p.24).

The prevalent attitude linking a lack of religious understanding with violence and discrimination seems to indicate that religion itself cannot be the issue; rather, the issue is that individuals are uninformed about it (Robertson, 2022).

On the other hand, in today's interconnected world, the opportunity for intercultural knowledge has expanded through the use of virtual exchanges. These exchanges, facilitated by synchronous video platforms, have been explored by researchers such as Zou et al. (2022), who found that they can effectively foster intercultural learning experiences. This emerging approach allows students to engage in meaningful dialogue and gain a deeper understanding of diverse cultures by identifying 'rich points' within their own cultures (Zou et al., 2022, p.91). This approach to virtual exchanges also holds promise for universities as a means to effectively communicate their policies and values towards students. Such exchanges can serve as a platform to facilitate dialogue and understanding between students and university administration, ultimately fostering a more inclusive and informed campus community. The preceding section has explored the shifting perception and treatment of Islam, which has resulted in the development of negative stereotypes and misconceptions. This transformation

poses challenges for Muslim students within the university environment, specifically in terms of how universities communicate their policies amidst various confounding factors.

2.5.1 The Transformation of Islamic Religion to Risk Object on English Campus

In recent years, there has been a noticeable shift in the perception and treatment of Islam, characterised by the prevalence of negative stereotypes and misunderstandings that distort the true essence of the faith (Guest et al., 2020). This observation is supported by a national survey conducted by Guest et al. (2020) as part of the “Re/presenting Islam on campus” research project. The survey provides valuable insights into how Muslims experience university life in the UK and how their non-Muslim peers perceive them. Due to the extensive scale and strong representativeness of the survey, its findings can be considered representative of the entire HE sectors.

This view is also supported by Bothwell (2018), who argued that this transformation has resulted in changes in the behaviour of Muslim students, including an increase in self-censorship. These changes can be attributed to the implementation of the government's Prevent strategy, which is part of its counterterrorism policy. Consequently, Muslim students have expressed that they feel as if they are constantly under suspicion and marginalised on UK campuses.

Furthermore, Bothwell's study uncovered instances of prejudice against Muslims in specific campuses, including biases among university staff members. Additionally, explicit verbal and physical discrimination, tensions between different faiths, and incidents of racism were documented. Muslim participants identified clothing and physical appearance, such as hijabs and beards, as markers that could potentially label them as suspicious. Additionally, the study shed light on the vulnerability of perceptions about Islam to distortion caused by media

bias and inaccurate reporting. Bothwell's research findings were based on a national survey of over 2,000 students at UK universities. His study also entailed qualitative research conducted at six universities, involving interviews with approximately 300 students, academics and other staff, as well as staff and student focus groups, and observations of classes and campus events (Bothwell, 2018).

The Prevent strategy, introduced by the UK government under the Counterterrorism and Security Act 2015, is a multifaceted approach implemented to address radicalisation and extremism across various sectors, including educational institutions such as universities. By addressing the increasing presence of extremism, including but not limited to Islam, the Prevent strategy aims to safeguard individuals and promote community cohesion. Cesari (2021) draws attention to the securitisation of Islam resulting from the Prevent strategy. This perspective argues that Muslims are disproportionately targeted as a suspect community and subjected to heightened scrutiny of their beliefs and practices, a treatment not extended to other religious groups. This has raised concerns about the potential stigmatisation and alienation of Muslim students within the HE system. Cesari also referenced the influential work of Samuel Huntington, whose 1993 paper in Foreign Affairs, and subsequent book *Clash of Civilisations*, have significantly shaped public perceptions of religion, particularly Islam, in international conflicts. Huntington argued that Islam is uniquely incompatible and antagonistic to the core values of the West, making his 'Clash of Civilisations' concept a prominent aspect of political discourse in Europe. This narrative perpetuates the idea that Counter-terrorism efforts are necessary to safeguard Western political values (Cesari, 2021). Ricucci (2023) affirmed that there is a notable focus on the symbols, traditions and potential alterations that arise during the migratory journeys of followers of a religion, whereby Muslims frequently encounter scrutiny following both local and global incidents.

The education system in England now bears the responsibility of preventing radicalisation, as defined by Prevent, which identifies extremism as “vocal or active opposition to fundamental British Values” (Prevent strategy, 2011, p.107). The Department for Education (2014) outlined these values as encompassing democracy, the rule of law, individual freedom, respect for others, and tolerance of diverse religions. Moreover, the emphasis on British values and the implementation of the Prevent strategy signifies the government’s increasing influence over the educational system in England since the enactment of the Education Reform Act (1988) and the establishment of the National Curriculum (Winter, 2017). However, the study conducted by Winter et al. (2022) suggested that the emphasis on these values can sometimes veer towards a nationalistic perspective. The term ‘British Values’ may carry connotations of exclusion or the prioritisation of a particular national identity, which can elicit criticism and concerns about inclusivity.

The prevailing emphasis on these Values, coupled with the implementation of the Prevent strategy, has been criticised for potentially increasing surveillance on Muslims and exerting pressure on them to demonstrate unwavering loyalty to these fundamental principles (Habib, 2017). While the initial threshold mentioned refers to displaying active and vocal opposition to British Values, the subsequent mention of ‘unwavering loyalty’ may suggest a stricter expectation, potentially leaving little room for passive opposition or critical questioning of these values. It's important to note that the extent to which individuals are coerced or expected to display loyalty might vary in different contexts and interpretations of the Prevent strategy.

The transformation of Islam from a religion to a perceived threat on campuses, coupled with the implementation of the Prevent strategy, has raised concerns about the potential exacerbation of discriminatory practices (Balazard & Peace, 2022). While steps have been

taken to promote increased diversity and implement EDI policies, there is recognition that discriminatory practices may still persist in certain contexts, including universities.

In Jamal-Uddin's (2020) study, the Counterterrorism and Security Act is discussed as the driving force behind the Prevent strategy. This Act also, however, mandates educational institutions to uphold individual liberty, the rule of law, and promote mutual respect and tolerance for different beliefs and faiths. Jamil-Uddin's study focused on London schools and how teachers and school directors perceive the implementation and planning of British values in the curriculum. One key concern raised by Jamal-Uddin is the negative impact of the Prevent strategy on students and staff of various faiths and beliefs, particularly in reinforcing negative stereotypes about Muslims and encouraging mutual surveillance within universities. This supports the assertion made by Fenwick and Choudhury (2011) that these efforts reinforce the prevailing belief among Muslims that they are regarded as a "suspect community" and are unjustly targeted solely because of their beliefs (Fenwick & Choudhury, 2011, p.11). Moreover, students may also face temporary exclusions and even deportation as part of these measures. Additionally, restrictive measures have been implemented, including regulations on weapons and explosives, as well as the retention of internet data (James & Janmaat, 2019). It is generally expected that educational institutions have policies and protocols in place to restrict access to dangerous items that could pose a threat to the well-being of students and staff.

Kyriacou et al. (2017) conducted a survey that revealed insights into British Muslim students. Although the sample used was not fully representative or generalised to all British Muslim university students, the participants expressed a range of concerns regarding the Prevent strategy on campus. The respondents believed that this strategy could have negative repercussions on how British Muslim students perceive themselves and how they are perceived by others. It is worth noting, however, that the study did not address the topic of de-radicalisation, suggesting that there might be scope for educational improvements on campus.

Interestingly, a majority of the study participants expressed a willingness to see the Prevent strategy strengthened and more successful, rather than outright rejecting it. The study found also that some participants believed that the strategy had the potential to be effective in preventing extremism and promoting community cohesion, but that it needed to be implemented in a way that was fair, transparent and respectful of human rights. Some participants also suggested that the strategy should be rebranded or renamed to avoid the negative associations with the term 'Prevent' (Kyriacou et al., 2017). The participants who expressed a willingness to see the Prevent strategy strengthened and more successful may have done so because they believed that it could help to address the problem of extremism and radicalisation in their communities. They also recognised, however, that the strategy had some flaws and limitations, and that it needed to be implemented in a way that was sensitive to the needs and concerns of the Muslim community.

Many other scholars have argued that the Prevent strategy disproportionately affects Muslim communities and risks undermining trust and cooperation between these communities and the authorities (Qurashi, 2018). Jones (2017) highlighted that the targeting of religious ideologies as a risk factor for radicalisation has also been criticised for oversimplifying the complex and multifaceted causes of radicalisation and for failing to address the root causes of terrorism (Jones, 2017). Quraishi (2018) also confirmed that there have been numerous instances of universities and colleges attempting to restrict or monitor religious expression and practice on campus in order to comply with the Prevent strategy. For instance, he mentioned that in 2015, the University of East Anglia cancelled a research seminar on Islamophobia, citing concerns that it could be seen as promoting extremist views. Similarly, in 2016, the University of Central Lancashire cancelled a talk by a prominent human rights lawyer, apparently due to fears that it could breach the Prevent duty. This has raised concerns regarding the potential

chilling effect on academic freedom and the use of Prevent as a tool for censorship and surveillance (Qurashi, 2018).

Gagnon (2019) discussed the harmful impact of divisive policies like the Prevent duty in the UK and the Professor Watchlist in the US. According to her, such policies fuel racism, Islamophobia and anti-intellectualism, restricting academic freedom and free speech. The resulting surveillance exposes scholars and students to harassment and violence. She advocated for collective action and unity within the academic community to protect academic freedom and promote social justice. Through analysing social media and articles, Gagnon uncovered resistance against these policies and themes like humour as protest, racial profiling, and the burden of suspicion. She also focused on Sophie Scholl's courageous act of peacefully protesting against hate and intolerance to show how this serves as a powerful inspiration for academics and students to stand up against such injustices and work towards creating meaningful change. Despite being only a 21-year-old undergraduate student, Scholl paid the ultimate price for her unwavering commitment to fighting against hatred (Gagnon, 2019).

Despite these criticisms, the Prevent strategy has received some support from scholars and practitioners. Lewis (2018) argued that the existing literature on Prevent has neglected insights from those who deliver the strategy, creating a gap between critics and supporters (Lewis, 2018). McCann (2019) provided a detailed assessment of the shift in emphasis within the Prevent strategy to include right-wing extremism, based on his experience as a senior police officer (McCann, 2019). Parker, Chapot and Davis (2019) discussed the controversies surrounding Prevent, including the perception of targeting British Muslims, but also highlighted the significant changes in the strategy over time (Parker, Chapot & Davis, 2019). Additionally, the study by Emiteg and Abokhres explored the concept of preventive strategy in international protection, emphasising the role of responsibility for prevention in reducing conflicts (Thomas, 2020). Furthermore, some have argued that the strategy has helped to

prevent radicalisation and terrorism by providing a framework for addressing the underlying factors that contribute to radicalisation (Younis, 2021). Others have argued that the strategy has helped to build trust and cooperation between Muslim communities and the authorities, and that it has been successful in providing support and interventions for individuals at risk of radicalisation. This has been supported by such as Djumantara et al. (2022), Mythen and Baillergeau (2021), and Mazerolle et al. (2020). These authors highlight the importance of context-sensitive and multi-agency approaches in engaging individuals at risk and reducing the risk of harm. They argued that understanding the structural, institutional, and environmental factors is crucial in addressing radicalisation effectively. By adopting intersectoral and multiagency responses, involving partnerships between different agencies and entities, counterterrorism policies can better address the complex and varied nature of radicalisation processes and risks. As Heath-Kelly (2013) put it, the Prevent strategy deals with limiting students' exposure to hazardous ideas.

Nonetheless, this theme of "breeding grounds for terror" has already had a real effect on university culture (Thorne & Stuart, 2008). This impact was observed before the introduction of the Prevent strategy. Zempi and Tripli (2023) contend that English universities' strategies to identify and report students deemed 'vulnerable' (p.1) to radicalisation have resulted in the securitisation and policing of Muslim students. Their study, based on the experiences of 25 self-identified British Muslim university students, revealed a problematic aspect of the Prevent strategy, where universities are seen as "modern-day panopticons" (p.2) due to the surveillance function it entails. This created a sense of constant scrutiny and discipline, as the inmates never knew when they were being watched (Zempi & Tripli, 2023). The absence of a public authority in the UK with the ability to effectively oversee British universities brings into focus the potential extent of malpractice within these institutions. Although, the Department for Education is one such entity responsible for overseeing and

regulating universities, as well as schools and other educational institutions. As stated by Sabir (2011) and Jones (2011), as cited in Awan (2012, p.1175), “Because there is no public authority in the whole of the UK that can hold British universities to account, only a public inquiry can reveal the possible extent of malpractice” This highlights the need for a comprehensive investigation to address any systemic issues and ensure the protection of religious rights on campuses.

2.5.2 Potential Barriers to Religion and Belief Faced by Muslims on English Campus

In spite of the purported positive effects that religion has on people, practising Islam can nonetheless result in negative social consequences for Muslims who live in Europe and other non-Islamic countries (Woodlock, 2018). Friedman and Saroglou (2010) noted that religion could also be a cause of stigma among minority groups. This is especially true for immigrants settling in a new host culture where their religious identity is one that is stigmatised (Friedman & Saroglou, 2010).

Historically, Muslims in Britain have struggled for formal recognition of their religious rights against a background of growing anti-Muslim attitudes in British society in general (Ansari, 2003). Ansari also noted that the challenges faced by Muslims in non-Islamic countries reached a significant point in the 1980s during the Salman Rushdie case, when British Muslims, outraged by the perceived blasphemous content of the Satanic Verses, petitioned the government to ban the book. Haddad and Balz (2008) provided additional support for the perspective that, while Muslims perceived the protests against Salman Rushdie’s *The Satanic Verses* as an exercise of their right to freedom of speech as British citizens, native-born Britons interpreted these events as an indication of the Muslim community's intolerance towards dissent and as a failure to understand the liberal tradition of free speech. The protests did attract

international attention and sparked debates about freedom of speech and the limits of religious tolerance in Western societies.

Ansari (2002) noted that the campaign led by Muslims, which at times involved violence, suggested a lack of appreciation for British cultural sensitivities and respect for the rule of law. The book-burning incident in January 1989, along with the media's endorsement of Khomeini's fatwa imposing a death sentence on Rushdie, further alienated public opinion. These actions reinforced existing negative stereotypes and images of Muslims as intolerant and unable to resolve conflicts through peaceful means (Ansari, 2002). This aligns with the observations of Benn and Jawad (2003), Field (2007), Falkenhayner (2014), Mishra (2012) and Dauda (2020), who also noted an escalation in Islamophobia following Ayatollah Khomeini's 1989 fatwa calling for the killing of Rushdie, as well as after the 9/11 attacks (Haddad & Balz, 2008). According to Haddad and Balz (2008), the attack on Salman Rushdie in the US in 1990, which nearly took his life, was not an expression of free speech. Rather, it was an act of violence committed by extremists who believed that Rushdie's book was blasphemous and offensive to Islam. The later attack on Rushdie in the US was carried out by a Lebanese American man, and there is no evidence to suggest that Iran or any Iranian proxy was involved (Simon, 2023). This incident further fuelled the debate about freedom of speech and religious tolerance in Western societies and highlighted the need for greater understanding and dialogue between different cultures and religions. It is important to recognise that Muslims, like any other religious or cultural group, are not homogenous and have diverse views and opinions on various issues. It is therefore inaccurate to talk about Muslims or British Muslims as a monolithic group with uniform beliefs and attitudes. It is important to engage with individuals and communities on a personal level and to avoid making sweeping generalisations based on stereotypes or assumptions.

In addition, a number of prominent events, such as the bombings that occurred in London on July 7, 2005, and the suicide bombing that occurred at the Manchester Arena in 2017, as well as vehicle rammings and stabbings near Westminster in England, have contributed to the recent spike in hostility and rising islamophobia. Following these events, governments and authorities have implemented various measures aimed at preventing radicalisation and ensuring national security. However, the steps taken to address these concerns can sometimes result in unintended consequences and a heightened level of scrutiny and surveillance, which has led to significant reactions from religious groups, particularly Muslim communities (Sealy & Modood, 2022).

The subsequent statement from Chen, Tabassum, and Saeed (2019), further explains that when students, especially those who are Muslim, enter a new culture, they may experience an intense sense of loneliness. This feeling of cultural shock can trigger a 'flight or fight' response, where individuals prioritise defending themselves against cultural and psychological harm, as referenced from Newsome and Cooper (2016, p.197).

Mercer-Mapstone, Islam and Reid (2021) have argued that Muslim students pursuing higher studies in Western universities may receive fewer opportunities than their native counterparts owing to ethnic discrimination. Further, Cowden and Singh (2017) have revealed that Islamic students feel about there is inadequate encouragement for them, whether it be about taking specific subjects or about extracurricular activities. Because of this, they are made responsible for their difficulties in integrating into the English society, which has led some of them to give up on pursuing success. It follows that universities have a duty to support and ensure equal outcomes by formally communicating policies on religion, belief, and equality, for instance, via publications.

Stevenson et al. (2017) also highlighted some potential barriers faced by Muslim students, such as limited access to high-status universities due to factors like regional disparities, discriminatory admissions practices, or the fear of being part of a minority group affecting their choices. Their report offered several recommendations to tackle social mobility challenges faced by young Muslims. These included providing flexible assessment timings during Ramadan, promoting representation of Muslims in the media, normalising no-alcohol spaces in universities, hiring culturally competent careers counsellors, and implementing 'blind' recruitment practices to reduce name-based discrimination in applications (Stevenson et al., 2017).

The preceding statement discusses the challenges faced by Muslim students in terms of limited access to high-status universities and the potential impact of factors such as regional disparities, discriminatory admissions practices, and the fear of being part of a minority group on their choices. The subsequent statement builds upon this discussion and highlights additional barriers faced by Muslim students. Onay (2022) highlighted, however, that many Muslim students lack awareness or hesitate to seek assistance due to distrust in the welfare process, discouragement from bureaucratic systems, and fear of being targeted. This emphasis on security contributes to the isolation of Muslim students, refuting the assumption that universities are immune to prejudice and discrimination (Onay, 2022).

According to Khan (2016), Muslims face a range of barriers related to their religion and belief. He indicated that one is discrimination and Islamophobia, which can manifest in the form of negative attitudes and behaviours from others, as well as in policies and practices that are not inclusive or supportive of Muslims. In this regard, a report by Guest et al. (2020, p.4) also mentioned that HEIs are a "potential force" against this increasing Islamophobia. Akcapar (2013, p.86) argued that Muslim emigrants worldwide are viewed as a 'potential threat'. Similarly, Orton (2016) suggested that contemporary issues involving conflicts between

individuals, groups or countries frequently involve complex social, psychological and political dynamics related to religion. As relationships evolve over time, emerging concerns arise, hindering meaningful dialogue and communication among individuals from diverse backgrounds in specific contexts. This is confirmed by Stevenson's (2018) report, which claimed that this negatively impacts Muslim students in areas such as communication with others, self-esteem, confidence, motivation and ambition. Consequently, he added that Muslim students try to conceal their religious identity and may leave school, leading to struggles in fitting in and/or demotivation (Stevenson, 2018).

Ghani and Nagdee alluded in their report findings published by the National Union of Students (2018) that the media and government rhetoric about Muslims has intensified views of an enemy within, strengthening the narrative of suspicion regarding Muslims. This has led campuses have become the main site for novel securitisation of religion as well as its regulation in public spaces. Moreover, English media platforms that are typically reserved for hegemonic discourse and projection of dominant beliefs and values have a wide outreach (DiMaggio, 2009).

Another potential barrier for Muslims on campus is the lack of resources and support to meet their spiritual and religious needs according to Dimandja (2017) phenomenological study based on interviews with ten Muslim international students on American college campuses. He found that Muslim international students draw on a variety of personal and cultural resources to navigate the challenges they face on American college campuses. For example, many students reported relying on their faith and religious practices to cope with stress and maintain a sense of community. Others drew on their prior experiences with adversity, such as growing up in war-torn countries or facing discrimination in their home countries, to develop resilience and coping skills. Additionally, many students reported seeking out support from peers, mentors and campus resources, such as international student services

and Muslim student associations, to help them navigate academic and social challenges. The research also revealed, however, that Muslim international students demonstrate resilience and resourcefulness in navigating these challenges. They are able to adapt to new situations, overcome obstacles, and seek out necessary resources and support. The study suggests that factors such as their religious and cultural backgrounds, past experiences with adversity, and academic motivation contribute to their resilience and resourcefulness (Dimandja, 2017).

Chen, Tabassum and Saeed (2019), meanwhile, mentioned barriers as including a lack of prayer spaces or other resources to support Muslims' spiritual practices, as well as a lack of guidance and support from university staff in navigating the challenges of balancing their faith with their academic and personal lives (Chen, Tabassum & Saeed, 2019).

Shaheen et al. (2023) aimed to understand how non-Muslim students can become more appreciative of their Muslim peers, given the challenges that Muslim students often face on college campuses. The presence of communication barriers poses challenges for Muslim students, as they often require additional support from university administrations to accommodate their religious practices. Their study found that students who attended two or more formal social activities and had opportunities for informal social interactions with peers from different walks of life experienced pronounced change in their appreciation of Muslims. (Shaheen et al., 2023).

Tamea and Downes (2023) studied the experiences of Muslim students in one post-92 university in England. These students, comprising 8% of the student population, encounter numerous challenges, including high dropout rates, limited career prospects, and the lowest earnings among faith groups. The lack of inclusivity led to disappointment, resentment and limited access to post-graduate employment. Limited alternative student finance options and institutional factors such as drinking culture and non-inclusive mental health services further

marginalise them. Islamophobia and the Prevent Duty contribute to a climate of anxiety. Trust issues exist between Muslim students and Student Unions with experiences of discrimination and discomfort at alcohol-related events. They emphasised the need for inclusive spaces, Halal food provision, cultural competence training, micro-affirmations, equality assessments, representation, and improved reporting structures. Muslim students faced intersectional barriers resulting in high dropout rates, limited professional job opportunities, and lower graduation outcomes compared to other faith groups. Their study explored how Muslim students navigate their needs and provides critical reflections and recommendations to support their empowerment, aiming for true equity in race and religion on campus (Tamea & Downes, 2023).

Mahmud and Gagnon's (2023) research emphasised the importance of shifting away from attributing disparities in student outcomes solely to individual deficiencies and recognising the systemic factors that contribute to inequality in HE. By delving into psychological theories like implicit theories of intelligence and sociological theories such as unconscious bias, the study offers valuable insights into the multifaceted nature of the racial attainment gap. Their study on implicit bias and racial disparities in student outcomes in UK HE sectors includes universities in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The study, based on a sample of 658 first-year undergraduate students, highlighted the need to move beyond the student deficit model to examine institutional racism as a factor contributing to differential outcomes. By analysing structural and institutional processes, discrimination and practices, their research suggested that addressing and acknowledging these factors can help alleviate disadvantage. They found persistent biases and stereotypical beliefs about racialised minorities, leading to an awarding gap between White students and BME students in UK HE. According to the OfS in 2019, 80.9% of White students were awarded a 'good' degree compared to 67.7% of BME students, resulting in an attainment gap of 13.2%. Furthermore, the largest attainment gap was

observed between Black and White students, with an attainment gap of 23.4%. The disparities in degree attainment between White students and BME students, particularly Black students, as highlighted by Mahmud and Gagnon's research and data from the OfS, underscore the urgency for systemic change within institutions to combat structural inequalities. Their study also concluded that institutions reinforce their dominant power and culture through policies and practices, neglecting to recognise the privileges enjoyed by majority groups (Mahmud & Gagnon, 2023). While Mahmud and Gagnon's study (2023) may have indicated persistent biases and a gap between White students and BME students in the UK HE system, it is crucial to acknowledge that educational performance and outcomes can differ based on individual circumstances and backgrounds.

2.6 Summary and Research Gaps

This literature review chapter has offered a detailed analysis of existing policies and strategies aimed at protecting religion and belief on English HE campuses. Although certain universities in England have taken initiatives to foster diversity and shape inclusive societies, Muslim students often face challenges related to integration in non-Muslim contexts (Loakthar, 2023). While some universities have made efforts to create safe and supportive environments for people from refugee backgrounds to study and thrive, the way support is delivered may have negative consequences (Haque et al., 2023). It is important for universities to adopt good practices that promote refugee access and inclusion, enabling people to make active contributions to university communities (Fitzpatrick, 2023). However, not all universities may have implemented such initiatives, and there may be variations in the level of support provided (Mahmud & Islam, 2023). The experiences of Muslim staff members in UK HEIs are often overlooked, and there is a need to expose and challenge the continuous victimisation of Muslims within these spaces (Doggette, 2022). While private, faith-based institutions may have

conducted campus climate surveys to assess diversity, equity, and inclusion needs, it is not clear if all universities have done so.

The Equality Act obligates institutions to promote equality and prevent discrimination, but the experiences of Muslim students suggest that more needs to be done to address their specific needs and ensure their full inclusion. Muslim students have highlighted the need for practical resources and guidance to navigate the university environment, such as the Manchester Muslim Medical Student Guide, which provides support and advice tailored to their experiences (Haque et al., 2023). Universities should recognise the importance of staff awareness and develop inclusive practices that go beyond legal compliance to create truly inclusive environments for all students (Koutsouris, Stentiford & Norwich, 2022).

There is, however, a dearth of research evaluating the effectiveness of university policies in meeting the specific needs of Muslims as outlined in the Equality Act (2010). The Act prohibits discrimination based on religion or belief in educational settings and mandates universities to implement policies and communicate them. A significant gap can be observed in the context of the study of communication of protection Islamic values, particularly in the context of non-Islamic universities (Guest et al., 2021; Hussain, 2016; Jamal Uddin, 2020). As detailed throughout the literature, researchers and academics have used numerous observations and theories. This study addresses the current limitations of evaluating HEIs' communication of strategies through the amplification of Muslim voices. While the study in question focuses on the impact of Muslim students' perception of how their universities communicate policies for protecting religion and belief in English education, it does not specifically examine tools or frameworks that could foster a critical framework for improving communication in the context of religion and belief within pedagogical settings. This represents a gap in the study, as it misses the opportunity to explore potential strategies, mechanisms, or approaches that could enhance communication channels and promote a deeper understanding of religious protection in

educational environments. Examining tools such as dedicated forums, training programs, collaborative initiatives, and digital platforms can provide valuable insights into cultivating effective communication strategies that uphold religious protection while fostering inclusivity and a positive learning environment. Since universities play a significant role in promoting religious, cultural and ethnic diversity, shaping the fabric of society, it is important to ensure that the on-campus policies that protect religious freedom and promote a sense of EDI are effective and well-communicated. This is especially important given the challenges and opportunities presented by the growing presence of Muslim students on English campuses.

Many studies have discussed the increase in Islamophobia in England and its impact on Muslims' well-being and participation in society (Arshad-Ayaz & Naseem, 2017; Brown & Saeed, 2015; Danvers, 2021; Jones, 2017; Mercer-Mapstone, Islam & Reid, 2021; Pedrason et al., 2023; Samari, 2016; Shiddieq & Pradana, 2023; Younis, 2021; Zempi & Tripli, 2023). Some studies have also shown that the Prevent strategy has had a significant impact on the transformation of religion into a risk object on university campuses (Brown & Saeed, 2015; Cesari, 2021; Habib, 2017). In particular, concerns have been raised about the impact of the Prevent strategy on freedom of expression, and about whether it unfairly targets the Muslim community (United Nations, 2021). While the Prevent strategy has gained some praise (Younis, 2021), its efficacy and effects on human rights have been heavily criticised. The gap that could be addressed is the need for a comprehensive and balanced examination of the Prevent strategy, specifically in relation to its impact on freedom of expression and its potential disproportionate targeting of the Muslim community.

Collet (2022, p.1) also mentioned the emergence of 'no-platforming' practices and the need to re-evaluate the notion of secularity within English universities, calling for an examination of the dynamics of religion and belief protection policies within the university system. Furthermore, some studies have addressed the challenges faced by Muslim students in

adapting to new cultures and communication manners in non-Islamic universities. This highlights the importance of effective communication about protection of the rights of Muslim students, including in respect to their beliefs.

In responding to these gaps, this study focuses on the experiences of Muslim students in HEIs through the lens of satisfied settling. It explores the concept of student satisfaction and argues for a broader perspective that takes into account ontological unsettlement and transformative learning experiences (Skea, 2023). Skea's paper challenges the dominance of student satisfaction measures and criticises the influence of neoliberal ideals in HEIs. He emphasised the importance of considering the needs of students as learners rather than solely focusing on customer satisfaction (Mayo, 2013; Skea, 2023). Arising from this, this chapter calls for a reevaluation of the role of unsettlement and prioritisation of genuine inquiry and self-discovery in HEIs. It outlines the selection of theories used to understand the satisfaction and settling experiences of Muslim students in HE and highlights the need for theories that specifically address the concerns of Muslim students regarding communication policies that protect their religion and beliefs. This research intends to tackle this issue by utilising appropriate frameworks that specifically address the concerns of Muslim students regarding communication policies, in order to enhance the understanding of their satisfaction and settling experiences in HE and propose measures for improvement.

Underlying the research is the objective to fill the gap in the literature surrounding knowledge of the experiences and perspectives of Muslim students within the context of EDI strategies in HE. The study emphasises the need for a comprehensive approach to protect the religion and beliefs of Muslim students on English campuses, including education, awareness, sensitivity, and necessary resources. Efforts should involve developing policies that combat discrimination and marginalisation, engaging with Muslim students in decision-making processes, and promoting effective communication and inclusivity.

In the case of studying Muslim students in non-Islamic HE and their perspectives and satisfaction, there is a need for more qualitative studies that use creative arts-based approaches like timeline mapping (Nahar & Nayak, 2023). By using more creative and reflective approaches, researchers can better understand the lived experiences of participants and address aspects of their own identity in a more holistic and nuanced way. Therefore, exploring this gap through qualitative research methods could contribute to the existing knowledge and understanding of Muslim students in non-Islamic HE. This study therefore identifies gaps in research, including gaps in research designs and approaches to data collection and analysis.

Addressing challenges faced by Muslim women (Abbas, 2007; Ahmad, 2003; Akel, 2021; Choudhury, 2017; Newsome & Cooper, 2016) such as discrimination related to attire, is also crucial. Multiple communication channels should be employed to promote equality and free expression of beliefs, while resources and support programmes should be used to foster inclusion and understanding. Overall, English law provides protection against religious discrimination, and universities have a duty to uphold these rights. It is important to note that while the above-mentioned theories have been utilised in research related to settling, their application has been limited. This research, therefore, will put a particular emphasis on the experiences and perspectives of Muslim students within the context of how EDI strategies contribute to their satisfaction and sense of settling, aiming to fill this gap in the literature.

In light of the limited application of the theories in settlement-related research, this study aims to bridge the gap by focusing on the experiences of Muslim students. The experiences of Muslim students in relation to policies protecting religion and belief at English universities have been underexplored in the literature. This study aims to bridge this gap by investigating the perceptions of Muslim students regarding these policies, how universities communicate these policies to Muslim students, and the specific opportunities and barriers Muslim students encounter in understanding and engaging with these policies on university

campuses. The study focuses on three different universities in one metropolitan area in England. By examining the experiences of Muslim students and the influence of EDI strategies on their satisfaction and sense of settlement, this research aims to provide valuable insights to the literature and address the RQs related to the perceptions, communication, and experiences of Muslim students regarding policies protecting religion and belief at English universities.

Chapter 3. Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a detailed account of the research methodology used to investigate how Muslim students perceive policies protecting religion and belief. It offers a comprehensive discussion of various aspects of the research methodology, including the research questions (RQs), and the strategy, approach, design and methods used in the study. The stages of the research, including the pilot studies and the main study, are also described, as well as the institutional contexts that were involved in the study (a Russell Group university, a post-92 university and a church-affiliated university). In addition, ethical considerations, study limitations and boundaries, participant and sampling methods, and data collection tools, such as self-administered questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, timeline maps, equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) reports analysis are all discussed. This chapter also outlines the research challenges encountered throughout the study, and provides details of the quantitative, qualitative and document analysis methods used to analyse the data. The aim of this chapter is to offer a comprehensive overview of the research methodology employed and the process of obtaining findings to address the RQs centred on Muslim students' perceptions of the policies protecting religion and belief at English universities, communication strategies utilised by universities in disseminating these policies to Muslim students, and the opportunities and barriers faced by Muslim students in comprehending and engaging with these protective policies on university campuses.

3.2 Research Strategy

This research used an exploratory strategy; in other words, it sought to explore the perceptions of Muslim students in English universities on how those universities communicate their policies for protecting religion and belief. This strategy interpreted the social world through the subjective experiences of individuals (Ryan, 2018) and did not seek to test hypotheses or determine causal relationships between the research variables.

This study is frequently used to collect data to further the understanding of a particular subject and can be used to describe a particular social setting and/or the characteristics of a particular group (Creswell, 2021; Trochim, 2006). In the case of this study, RQ1 sought to understand the perceptions of Muslim students about the policies on religion and belief in English universities through a statistical and thematic analysis based on a questionnaire and interviews. RQ2 sought to address how the three selected universities communicate their policies on religion and belief to Muslim students by first using document analysis to identify the communication strategies used by the universities and then using interviews to explore the perceptions of the Muslim students about these strategies. Finally, RQ3 sought to understand the barriers faced by Muslim students in respect to the communication of policies protecting religion and belief through interviews and timeline mapping.

3.3 Research Paradigm

For this study, I chose to adopt the research paradigm of pragmatism. I aimed to delve into the subjective experiences, interpretations, and contextual factors that shape the perceptions and experiences of Muslim students regarding on-campus policies protecting religion and belief. The research design and methods are in harmony with this paradigm, employing RQs and a methodology guided by a lens of 'satisfied settling'. When investigating the perceptions of

Muslim students on religion and belief policies in English universities, a mixed methods approach was utilised, combining statistical and thematic analyses through triangulation research tools, all within the overarching philosophical framework shaping this research paradigm.

According to Nagendrakumar and Madhavika (2023), beliefs, knowledge, and scientific concepts are provisional and are shaped by their practical application in ongoing experiences. However, there are concerns associated with pragmatism as a research paradigm. One concern is that pragmatism is often seen as a paradigm of convenience rather than a principled approach (Hampson & McKinley, 2023). Another concern is that pragmatism takes a consequentialist view of good research and truth, which may overlook other important aspects (Allemang, Sitter & Dimitropoulos, 2022). Additionally, pragmatism assumes that the answers to epistemic questions lie 'somewhere in the middle', which may limit the exploration of alternative perspectives (Brézillon & Turner, 2022). Lastly, pragmatism prioritises the RQ over ontology or epistemology, potentially neglecting important philosophical considerations (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019). Furthermore, pragmatism is sometimes treated as a prerequisite for mixed research, which may limit the adoption of other paradigms (Shah, Shah & Khaskhell, 2018).

In discussing pragmatism as a research paradigm, it is vital to acknowledge its limitations alongside its practicality. While pragmatism values useful outcomes for real-world issues as it serves as a guideline for clarifying the contents of study propositions by tracing their practical consequences (Ormerod, 2024), such as research questions, this can sometimes overshadow crucial philosophical and ethical considerations. The relationship between belief and action, as highlighted by Cheryl Misak's *Cambridge Pragmatism*, demonstrates that practical solutions may overlook the deeper philosophical roots. Aikin (2018) notes that an action-oriented focus can prioritise immediate results over ethical implications and theoretical foundations.

Despite pragmatism's benefits like flexibility and practicality, researchers need to navigate its limitations for robust and ethical outcomes (Omodan, 2024). To overcome these limitations in the study, especially in potentially neglecting deeper philosophical and ethical aspects, I employed various strategies, such as highlighting ethical considerations, incorporating official EDI questionnaires and reports, piloting the study, engaging with participants, utilising member checks, promoting dialogue through interviews for a comprehensive and inclusive research approach and using mixed methods. By incorporating a mixed-methods approach that combines quantitative and qualitative methods, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the experiences of Muslim students in HE. Despite these criticisms, pragmatism offers significant advantages, particularly in mixed methods research, by valuing the multiplicity of worldviews and fostering the development of viable solutions to complex problems (Hampson & McKinley, 2023). This approach allows for triangulation of data collection methods, enhancing the credibility and richness of the research findings. Moreover, by engaging in member checking and ensuring the accuracy of results, the study strives to mitigate the risk of oversimplification or overlooking critical aspects of the research.

I chose pragmatism over other paradigms such as post-positivism and social constructionism, because of its flexibility and compatibility with the study's objectives. Pragmatism also prioritises the importance of the research questions and the practical implications of the findings over strict adherence to any single methodological tradition (Hampson & McKinley, 2023). Moreover, to accommodate multiple worldviews, which is crucial for capturing the diverse experiences of different groups, such as Muslim students, without being limited to one way of thinking or one type of knowledge (King, 2023), this aligns well with the aim of understanding the experiences and challenges faced by Muslim students in HE.

In selecting pragmatism as the research paradigm for this study, I opted for a practical orientation and adaptable approach that aligned effectively with the study's objectives. Pragmatism, known for prioritising practical outcomes and valuing the application of theories to real-world issues, offers several advantages over alternative paradigms such as post-positivism and social constructionism.

This paradigm is adept at turning challenges, such as the abundance of qualitative data, into opportunities, fostering meaningful, impactful, and ethical research (Gillespie, Glăveanu & de Saint Laurent, 2024). In contrast to post-positivism's emphasis on objectivity and generalisability, pragmatism recognises the significance of context and the fluid process of knowledge construction, thereby acknowledging its dynamic nature. While post-positivism prioritises objectivity and causality, it constrains the researcher's ability to encompass subjective experiences and diverse interpretations of reality. It also faces criticism for its inability to fully address the subjective and intersubjective nature of social phenomena, as seen in intercultural communication studies where it fails to move beyond soft essentialism and does not adequately consider the ideological construction of culture (Holliday & Macdonald, 2020).

Thus, it hinges heavily on empirical evidence and might fall short in fully capturing the nuanced, context-dependent essence of educational research. Therefore, while post-positivism offers a more nuanced approach than positivism, it still struggles with integrating subjective experiences and ideological constructs that shape Muslim students' realities into its framework, thereby limiting its applicability in fully understanding and addressing the complexities of social and cultural phenomena.

Similarly, social constructionism underscores the impact of social processes on reality, whereas pragmatism adopts a more action-oriented stance, prioritising the practical implications of research findings. It underscores the significance of grasping how knowledge and reality evolve through social interactions (Ulianov, 2022). Despite social constructionism's

strength in unveiling social processes and power dynamics within educational settings, it occasionally disregards the practical implications and applications of research outcomes, which can limit its utility in addressing real-world educational challenges (Vaiciuniene & Kazlauskiene, 2022)

In summary, the decision to adopt pragmatism was influenced by the following factors: its focus on practical solutions, which is ideal for addressing specific challenges encountered by Muslim students in HE; its methodological flexibility, supporting the integration of mixed methods for a more holistic exploration of RQs through both quantitative and qualitative approaches; its encouragement of interdisciplinary perspectives, allowing for diverse insights from various fields to enhance research outcomes, particularly in educational studies where multiple influences shape student experiences; and its acknowledgment of the significance of context in shaping knowledge and understanding, crucial for capturing the varying challenges and requirements of Muslim students across different educational settings. On the other hand, post-positivism, as an offshoot of positivism, emphasises a more traditionally scientific and empirical approach, centered on objective observation and measurable data.

3.4 Research Approach

The unit of analysis in this study was a case study of three specific universities in England. The case study approach was used to allow the perceptions of Muslim students in each university to be explored in depth (Wimalaratne & Kulatunga, 2022).

3.4.1 Multiple Case Studies

This study employed an exploratory multiple case studies analysis of three selected universities in a metropolitan area in England to explore each university's campus in real-life settings (Dothan, 2023). This approach assisted me in better comprehending the challenges and

practices associated with religion and belief protection policies among Muslim students (Kucan & Palincsar, 2023) on their respective campuses. By focusing on the 'how' and 'why' questions, this approach aligned perfectly with my study (Funk & Hinojosa, 2023; Hunziker & Blankenagel, 2024). It entailed providing a detailed account of a specific phenomenon without drawing comparisons across multiple cases. It involved outlining the characteristics, actions, policies, and procedures relevant to the phenomenon (Dothan, 2023). The objective of a case study is to comprehend and analyse the particular context and factors influencing the phenomenon under investigation (Caraker, 1995). This type of study may entail gathering qualitative data through interviews, observations, and document reviews (McCarville et al., 2022). In this scenario, I employed triangulation mixed methods data collection tools (see Section 3.9).

By employing an exploratory multiple case studies, I was able to conduct cross-case analysis to identify variations and similarities among cases, which contributed to the development of a strong theoretical framework when I investigated student satisfaction across different universities within a metropolitan area. This research approach allowed for a thorough exploration of the perspectives of Muslim students towards their educational experiences at various universities (Ćwiklicki & Pilch, 2021). It also had some limitations, however. Specifically, it “cannot provide statistical estimates of the prevalence of the phenomenon in the population or test hypotheses about relationships between variables” (Yin, 2014, p.13,2018). This means that since this research concentrates on a specific subject and group of students within specific universities, the findings may not be applicable to other groups or situations, or even to Muslim students in other English universities.

3.5 Research Methods

A clear research design is essential for ensuring that a study is conducted in a systematic and precise way; this also helps to ensure that the results of the study are valid and reliable. This section outlines the methods that were used to collect and analyse data, as well as the procedures that followed from them. Table 3.1 provides a brief summary of the methodologies considered for the study.

3.5.1 Mixed-Method; Triangulation

This was achieved through a mixed methods approach—a type of triangulation strategy that specifically involved combining qualitative and quantitative methods (Sadan, 2014; Tzagkarakis & Kritas, 2023). In this case, these methods included a questionnaire, timeline mapping, interviews and document analysis. By integrating visual timelines with semi-structured interviews, deeper layers of experiences were uncovered, offering insights beyond what could be captured through verbal communication alone (Gauntlett, 2007; Shirani & Henwood, 2011). Further details on this are provided in section 3.10.

Triangulation strategies can provide a more comprehensive and accurate understanding of the study problem (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2021), by helping to corroborate and validate the findings (Morse, 2015; Punjani et al., 2023) and by providing “complementary or converging evidence on the research” (Creswell, 2021, p.25).

Table 3.1*Summary of the Methodology for the Intended Study*

Methodology	Key Approach/Method
Research Paradigm	Pragmatism
Research Strategy	Exploratory
Research Approach	Multiple case studies
Institutional Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Russell Group university: Emerald University. ▪ Post-92 university: Modern University. ▪ Church-affiliated university: Faith University.
Research Method	Mixed method; triangulation
Data Collection tools	An online self-administered questionnaire, face-to-face semi-structured interviews, timeline maps, and EDI reports analysis.
Data analysis	Descriptive statistics and thematic analysis.
Applications	SPSS@28, Microsoft forums, Microsoft Excel, Otter.ai and NVivo. 27.
Participants	Muslim students
Sample Design and Size	A total of 150 participants completed a questionnaire using a convenience sampling method. Of these, 50 participants were from each university, and 6 participants from each university were selected for interviews using a purposive sampling method. In total, 18 participants were interviewed.

3.6 Research Ethical Considerations

In November 2020, I completed the "LJMU Research Ethics Training" and received a certificate of completion (see Appendix I). This experience provided me with the background to ensure adherence to ethical guidelines and practices in my research. Furthermore, the research proposal for this study obtained LJMU Research Governance Approval (UREC reference: 21/EDN/020) based on the description outlined in the minimal risk registration form. After the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, circumstances changed, and face-to-face interactions became possible once again. A new ethical approval form reflects this shift and implements changes to accommodate the transition from online to in-person interactions. The new ethics form was approved with UREC reference: 23/EDN/002.

Prior informed consent was obtained from all potential respondents before conducting the full-scale data collection process. To minimise anxiety among participants, personal data like names, addresses and telephone numbers was not collected. This ensured voluntary participation and encouraged students to provide honest answers (McNabb, 2015). The collected records were carefully secured on a laptop protected by a password. After the transcription process, the records were promptly deleted to ensure the confidentiality and privacy of the participants' information. To maintain the anonymity of research participants, interviewee pseudonyms were created by the researcher. The universities involved in the study were given pseudonyms—Emerald, Modern and Faith—and these pseudonyms were consistently used throughout the transcription process to ensure the confidentiality of the data sample.

To further guarantee the confidentiality and anonymity of research participants, I employed a specific naming approach based on the first letter of each university's name. Participants from the university referred to as Emerald were assigned pseudonyms that commenced with the letter 'E'. Similarly, participants from the university designated as Modern were given nicknames that began with the letter 'M', and participants from the university named Faith were given nicknames that started with the letter 'F'. This naming strategy ensured that participant identities remained protected throughout the transcription process. It also maintained consistency and confidentiality, with the pseudonyms reliably representing their respective selected universities. This deliberate approach enhanced the privacy of participants and safeguarded the integrity of the collected data.

The questionnaires were administered online via the Microsoft Forms website, and respondents were required to review and agree to a consent statement before proceeding with the survey. Only those who completed the questionnaire were given the opportunity to take part in follow-up voluntary face-to-face or online interviews. Additionally, participants were

asked to provide their consent by signing an online consent form specifically designed for the interviews (see Appendix IV).

3.7 Research Stages

This research study consisted of two main stages, each of which was important in its own right and contributed to the overall success of the study.

3.7.1 Stage one: Pilot study

The first stage was a pilot study. This involved conducting a small-scale version of the entire project in order to test the feasibility of the proposed research design and methodology. This included determining whether the RQs were sufficiently clear and well-defined, whether the research methods were appropriate and practical, and whether the data collection and analysis procedures were adequate and reliable. In the pilot study stage, I aimed to identify any issues or difficulties that could undermine the main study, and make any necessary revisions. I also sought to gain a better understanding of the study population and the research context, again making any necessary adjustments to the main study accordingly (Fitch & Smith, 2014; Teresi et al., 2022).

In order to set up the pilot study for this research project, the focus was on selecting Muslim students studying in English universities within a specific metropolitan area. Three different universities were chosen for the study, and the Islamic societies in those universities were contacted through a combination of email and Instagram. In addition, social media channels, such as Facebook, Telegram, Instagram and WhatsApp, were used to seek participants from the Muslim student community.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic during that time period (November 2021), the pilot study was conducted online, and I followed ethical protocols approved by the University

Research Ethics Committee (UREC) when approaching and contacting participants. In addition, a draft of the research questionnaire was completed by thirty-nine Muslim students studying in English HEIs. They were asked to apply, review and comment on the questions. To ensure a high response rate, a digital version of the questionnaire was created using Microsoft Forms and included a Quick Response (QR) code. This digital version was then posted on social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Telegram, Twitter, and Facebook within Islamic student groups in the universities selected for this study. Participants received an information sheet outlining the RQs and objectives. They were free to withdraw from the study at any time.

This design of the pilot questionnaire was rooted in the University of Michigan Campus Climate Survey on EDI (Sellers, 2019), as well as the 2020 climate survey on EDI created by Baker and Young at Evergreen State College (Baker & Young, 2020). These established models were selected due to their validity and relevance to the research objectives that are specifically focused on issues related to EDI. In order to customise these models to suit the particular context of the study, adjustments were implemented. The development of the pilot questionnaire was crafted to encompass four fundamental themes with the purpose of capturing the experiences of Muslim students within the campus environment. These themes included exploring access, experience, and learning opportunities in academic and social settings; delving into the dynamics of good relations, productive dialogue, and conflict management within the campus community; investigating the legal framework, institutional policies, and monitoring mechanisms concerning Muslim students, and evaluating the inclusivity of environments and facilities available on campus. To ensure alignment with these research themes, elements from existing EDI surveys were strategically integrated and modified to suit the specific context and objectives of the study. These modifications were based on concepts related to characteristics associated with religion and belief that are protected under the

Equality Act (2010), following guidelines from the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (2018). The statements were developed and modified to ensure their appropriateness for Muslim students in the English campus environment. This was done through a review of the Equality Act, EDI strategies, and associated literature studies (see Appendix IV).

Preliminary feedback on the pilot sample indicated that the questions were simple and clear but too long and time-consuming. It took approximately ten minutes to complete the questionnaire. The feedback also confirmed, however, that the study could be conducted effectively online using anonymous data collection. The feedback further highlighted questions that were not closely related to my subject, such as those on 'citizenship'. Accordingly, I removed some questions.

In addition, Likert-type questions are beneficial for their simplicity and effectiveness in measuring attitudes on a linear scale, commonly utilising a 5-point scale that spans from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree' (Muhenje, 2023). However, a common drawback often mentioned is the inherent lack of specificity and detailed insights, as individuals may interpret the varying degrees between response options differently (Doe et al., 2023). While Likert scales are typically treated as interval scales for statistical purposes, there exists inconsistency in research outcomes regarding the reliability of this practice (Tanujaya, Prahmana & Mumu, 2022). To address this limitation and provide a more comprehensive understanding, additional tools such as timeline diagrams, semi-structured interviews, and EDI reports were incorporated to delve into the data further. Positive feedback received from Muslim students regarding the study subject matter served as a motivating factor for undertaking more thorough and detailed research.

Pilot study participants are typically selected using a smaller sample size than in the main study since the purpose of a pilot is to test the study tools and refine research procedures

rather than to draw broad conclusions. Nonetheless, researchers aim for a sample size of at least thirty participants when conducting pilot studies in order to produce reasonable estimates (Connelly, 2008). Accordingly, there were only thirty-nine participants for this study, recruited through purposive sampling. Whereas in convenience sampling participants are selected based on their availability and accessibility, purposive sampling involves selecting participants based on specific criteria relevant to the RQs (see Section 3.9.1). The use of appropriate sampling techniques helped me to gather valuable data that informed the design and implementation of the main study. In addition, in this stage, the frequencies and cumulative percentages provide information about the distribution of participants across selected universities—referred to as Emerald, Modern, and Faith universities. For additional information, please refer to section 3.8 for more detailed explanations about these universities. These are set out in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2

The Frequencies for the Pilot Study

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Emerald	13	33.3	33.3	33.3
	Modern	13	33.3	33.3	66.7
	Faith	13	33.3	33.3	100.0
	Total	39	100.0	100.0	

As can be seen in Table 3.2, there were thirteen participants from each university (33.3% of the total). The percentages column indicates the proportion of participants in each university relative to the overall sample size. The valid percentages column shows that there were no missing or invalid responses. Overall, these measurements provide a clear understanding of participant distribution among the groups in the pilot study and help in analysing the representation and proportions of the different universities in relation to the total sample size.

This is because the goal of a pilot study was to obtain a general overview of the data, rather than to collect a comprehensive dataset (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Morse & Niehaus, 2016).

The next step was to conduct a pilot study to test the second study tool—the interview questions. This involved identifying the specific information required to address the RQs. It was important to craft the interview questions thoughtfully in order to ensure that they elicited the desired information clearly and concisely. To ensure the validity of the research, however, it was essential to avoid leading or biased questions that may influence the respondents' answers. The pilot study helped to assess the clarity and relevance of the study's questions, and any potential issues arising from them that may need to be addressed. It also allowed me to refine the interview questions before they were used in the main study.

I proceeded to select a suitable sample of participants for interview from among those who had completed the questionnaire. I administered the drafted interview questions to a purposive sample of three Muslim students in order to test the interview questions and identify any unclear or inappropriate wording. Some participants provided uninformative responses, prompting me to add follow-up questions, such as “Please provide an example or reason for your answer”, and “Please explain why and how”. Based on feedback from participants, I revised the general questions and eliminated any duplicates or repetitions in meaning. I finalised the primary semi-structured interview questions and generated additional questions to address the RQs more fully (see Appendix V). This stage helped me to structure the questions into sections that included themes, which were then coded during the analysis process.

3.7.2 Stage Two: The Main Study

The primary stage of this research was my main study, which was designed to address the RQs and collect data from which to draw conclusions. It was therefore crucial that this stage of the

research designed well and conducted carefully (Bryman, 2016; Kumar, 2019; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2020). With the modified study tools from the pilot study, I initiated the formulation of the research framework to structure the study effectively. This involved defining the sample criteria, identifying the institutional context, and establishing ethical research procedures. The data collection for this study was originally scheduled to start in January 2023, during the second semester of the academic year. This timeline was chosen to allow participants to immerse themselves in the university environment, gain relevant experiences, and develop informed opinions on the study's key topics before being surveyed and interviewed. Moreover, the timing was strategically set to guarantee that participants had finished their first semester of study, aligning with the study's goal of including students who had completed their initial term at the university. This approach aimed to capture a comprehensive understanding of participants' experiences and perspectives by ensuring they had sufficient exposure to the academic and social aspects being investigated. The study included HE students from various academic levels, representing different stages of their academic journey. All Muslim students, whether classified as home UK students or overseas students, were incorporated into the study. By encompassing participants from both categories, the research aimed to capture a wide range of experiences and perspectives within the diverse Muslim student community in the university context.

3.7.2.1 Main Study Reliability Analysis

A reliability analysis was undertaken in order to make sure that the implemented tool measured the underlying elements reliably. SPSS®28 was used to assess the internal consistency of all dimensions through determination of the Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Cronbach's alpha was calculated as presented in Table 3.3. It is clear from the table that all dimensions exhibited acceptable alpha values, ranging from 0.70 to 0.92.

Table 3.3*Cronbach Alpha Values for the Questionnaire Used in the Main Study*

Items (Themes)	Cronbach's alpha
I. Access, experience and learning on campus	0.70
II. Good relations, productive dialogue and managing tensions on campus	0.92
III. Law, policy and monitoring on campus toward Muslim students	0.78
IV. Inclusive environments and facilities	0.79

3.7.2.2 Main Study Member Checking

Member checking is another way of establishing trustworthiness within qualitative research (Creswell & Miller, 2010) and is frequently employed as a strategy to ensure and uphold validity (Candela, 2019). Essentially, this involves sharing the findings with the participants and seeking their feedback so as to informally validate their understanding (Gray, 2018). In this study, the findings of the research were shared with the participants, and their feedback was carefully considered. It is worth noting that the feedback received was consistent and did not involve any critical remarks. Although I was prepared to be open to changing the findings or interpretation of the data based on the feedback, no revisions were deemed necessary. I also maintained transparency and accountability by clearly explaining how the feedback would be used to enhance the research.

3.8 Institutional Context

This research t into account the institutional context relevant to the main study. The case study was conducted in a metropolitan area in England, encompassing three specific universities. The selection process considered various factors, including the type of universities in the area. While other universities in the broader region were considered, the decision was made to include a Russell Group university, a post-92 university, and a church-affiliated university. These universities were chosen intentionally to ensure representation from different types of

institutions and to provide a comprehensive understanding of the experiences of Muslim students studying in English universities within the specific metropolitan area under investigation. This approach contributed to the richness and depth of the study, offering valuable insights into the diverse experiences of Muslim students across different university settings. Table 3.4 compares the main characteristics of the three universities.

Table 3.4*Comparative Analysis of the Institutional Contexts of the Case Study Universities*

Criteria	Russell Group Universities	Post-92 Universities	Church-Affiliated Universities
Study Sample	Emerald University	Modern University	Faith University
History	Founded in 1994 by 17 British research universities, including Birmingham, Bristol, Cambridge, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Imperial College (Academic Accelerator, n.d.)	Refers to universities created after 1992 (The Guardian, 2007). There are 69 post-92, or 'new', universities in England.	Universities that have a religious affiliation (UK Study Online, 2021).
Focus	The group's focus on research excellence is demonstrated by consistently high research income, publication output, and success at winning prestigious grants and awards (Russell Group, n.d.; Academic Accelerator, n.d.)	The post-92 group is dominated by institutions that were polytechnics or teacher training colleges before 1992. Their focus is on teaching both academic and vocational courses rather than on intensive research (Revell, 2018).	Although universities affiliated with the Church in England have expanded their focus beyond clergy training, they still maintain a significant link with the Church of England. Along with this association comes a unique mission and ethos that sets them apart from other universities (Gibbs, 2017).
Notable Characteristics	Sometimes labelled the UK Ivy League, produces some of the best research in the country (Academic Accelerator, n.d.)	Considered more effective than older colleges in terms of academic performance (The Guardian, 2007).	May have unique challenges and opportunities related to religious practices and beliefs for students and staff (UK Study Online, 2021)
University Policy	University policy priorities align with UK government policies and interests (Russell Group, 2022).	Most of them were established by a royal charter granted through the Privy Council, with an associated set of statutes (Council for the Defence of British Universities, n.d.).	Priorities align with UK government policies and interests. However, they have are associated with Christian denominations. (About Human Rights, 2015).

Muslim student population	According to the HE Statistics Agency (HESA) 2019/20 UK Performance Indicators for Governance, Russell group Universities reported that Muslim students made up 11% of their total student population (HESA, 2021).	According to the HESA data from the academic year 2019/2020, Muslim students made up approximately 13% of the total student population in post-92 universities (HESA, 2021).	According to HESA data for the 2019/2020 academic year, approximately 5% of students who identified their religion as Muslim were enrolled in universities that have a religious affiliation (HESA, 2021).
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Population of International Students	High population of international students (Masters Portal, 2023)	Moderate population of international students (The Guardian,2007).	Moderate population of international students (UK Study Online, 2021).
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Note: See Russell Group,n.d; Academic Accelerator,n.d; The Guardian, 2007; UK Study Online, 2021, Master Portal, 2023; HESA, 2021; Gibbs,2-17; Revell, 2018; About Human Rights,2015; Council for the Defence if British Universities

3.9 Participants and Sampling

This section provides details on the participant selection and sampling procedures for the main study. The sample was recruited from the population of students studying at the three selected universities. Only students who confirmed their religion as Muslim were included. Although “there are no rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry” there are some guidelines for reaching a better judgment (Patton, 2002, p.244). In this study, the target sample size was N=150 Muslim students, with n=50 Muslim students selected from each university. The participants were chosen for the first research tool using convenience sampling. Subsequently, N=18 participants, with n=6 from each university, were selected for the second research tool. This selection was done through purposive sampling, which involved choosing individuals based on specific criteria or characteristics. This method is often used when targeting a specific geographic area or a defined demographic (Battaglia, 2008). Improving transparency in reporting the site selection methodology can also help address the limitations of purposive sampling (Olsen & Vasquez-Rossi, 2023). Additionally, it was important to consider the limitations of purposive sampling and to supplement it with other sampling methods in order to ensure the reliability and validity of the research findings (Dillman, 2007). Figure 3.1 illustrates a summary of the demographics of participants who completed the questionnaires across the universities in my study.

Figure 3.1

The Demographic Distribution of the Main Study Questionnaire Participants

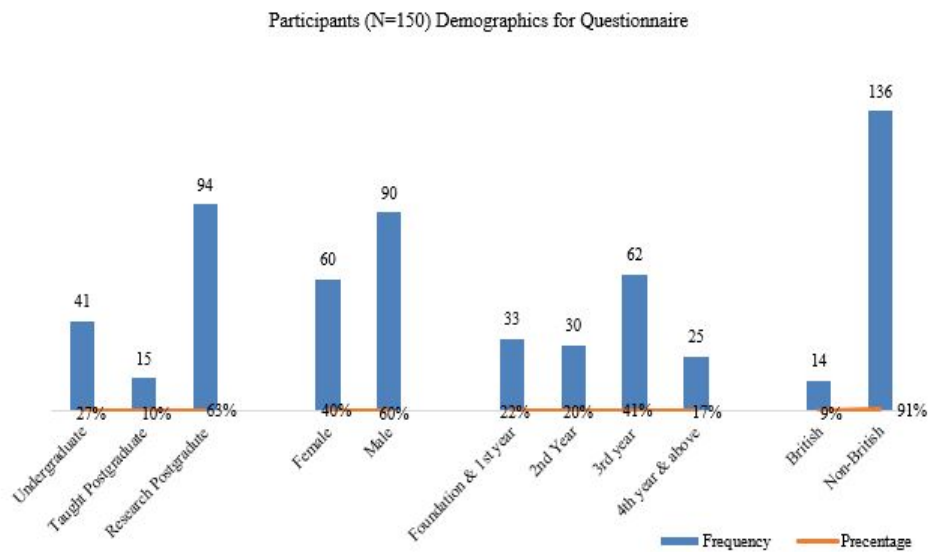


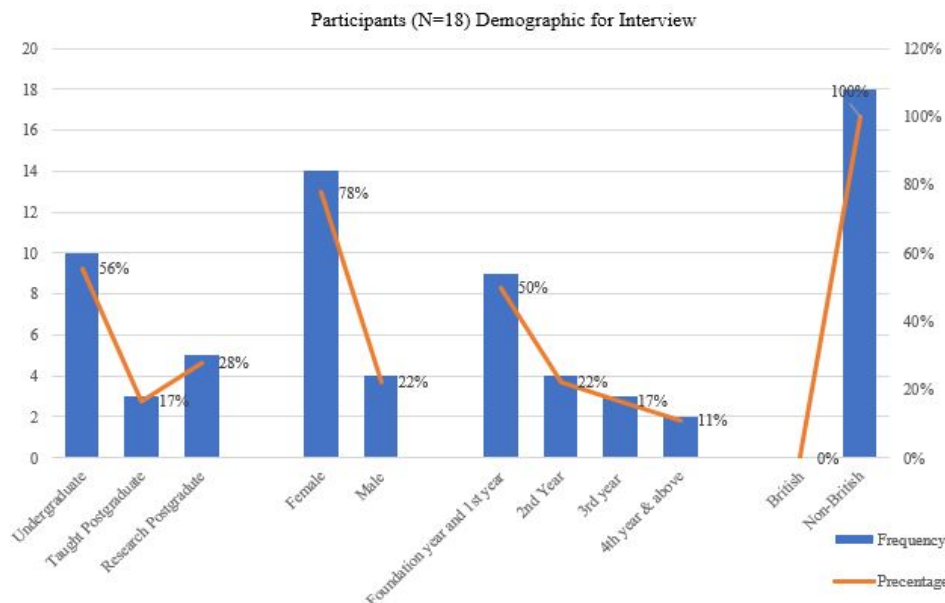
Figure 3.1 offers an insight into the participant demographics within the questionnaire segment of the primary study. The figure presents the frequency and percentage distribution across various student demographic characteristics. The data reveals that the majority of responses, constituting 63%, stemmed from postgraduate research students. Undergraduate participants contributed 27% of the responses, while taught postgraduate participants represented 10%. Examining the gender distribution, male participants accounted for 60% of the responses, with female participants making up the remaining 40%. Further exploration showed that 41% of the responses were from 3rd-year participants, followed by 22% from participants in the foundation year and 1st year. Participants in the 2nd year constituted 20% of the responses, while those in the 4th year and above contributed to 17% of the responses. In terms of nationality, 91% of the responses were from non-British participants, with the remaining 9% being from British participants. Considering the demographic profile outlined, it is crucial to analyse its implications for the study. The data collection predominantly features a higher representation of male participants, along with a substantial presence of research-oriented and

non-British individuals compared to the general profile of Muslim students in English universities.

In my study, I specifically employed purposive sampling to select participants who willingly agreed to participate in the interview and had previously completed the questionnaire. The aim of purposive sampling was to select accessible, information-rich cases, locations, institutions, or contexts that can provide useful data related to the study’s topic (Patton, 2014). It is often used in qualitative research, as it allows researchers to select participants who have relevant experiences or expertise on the topic being studied (Neuman, 2018). Figure 3.2 illustrates a summary of the demographic characteristics of the participants who completed interviews across the universities involved in the main study.

Figure 3.2

The Demographic Distribution of the Main Study Interview Participants



The majority of respondents were undergraduate students, followed by research postgraduate and taught postgraduate students. Female respondents constituted a significant portion,

outnumbering male respondents. When classifying respondents by academic year, the largest group was in the foundation year and 1st year, with smaller proportions in the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th year or higher. all respondents were non-British, with none of them being British. The total number of interview respondents was 18 participants. Demographic details for each university are presented in Table 3.5.

Table 3.5

Demographic Variables of the Universities in this Study

Selected Universities Demographic Variables	Emerald University		Modern University		Faith University	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Undergraduate	3	50%	2	33%	5	83%
Taught Postgraduate	1	17%	1	17%	1	17%
Research Postgraduate	2	33%	3	50%	0	0%
Female	5	83%	5	83%	4	67%
Male	1	17%	1	17%	2	33%
Foundation and 1st year	2	33%	4	67%	3	50%
2nd Year	1	17%	2	33%	1	17%
3rd year	1	17%	0	0%	2	33%
4th year and above	2	33%	0	0%	0	0%
British	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Non-British	6	100%	6	100%	6	100%
Total of (18) participants						

Table 3.5 provides a comprehensive overview of the demographic characteristics of interview participants in the main study. In terms of educational background, the majority (83%) of the participants from Faith university were undergraduate students, while Emerald university had an equal distribution of undergraduate, taught postgraduate and postgraduate research participants. Modern university had a higher proportion of undergraduate participants compared to other levels (67%).

When considering gender, a significant percentage of participants across all universities were female. At Emerald and Modern universities only 17% of the interviewees were male, whereas it was 33% at Faith university. The breakdown of participants by academic year varied

across universities. Emerald university had a diverse distribution across different academic years, while Modern university had a higher percentage of participants in the foundation or 1st year. Faith university had a relatively equal distribution across all academic years. It is noteworthy that all participants in the study were non-British.

Table 3.6 provides detailed characteristics of the interview participants, including their respective university, education level, gender, academic year, nationality, and assigned pseudonym.

Table 3.6

The Interviewees' Demographics in the Main Study

University	Level of Education	Gender	Year of Study	Nationality	Interviewee Pseudonym
Emerald	Research Postgraduate	Female	2nd year	Non-British	Eman
	Undergraduate	Female	Foundation year and 1st year		Esraa
	Taught Postgraduate	Female	2nd year		Ekram
	Undergraduate	Female	Foundation year and 1st year		Ebtehal
	Undergraduate	Female	Foundation year and 1st year		Estabriq
	Research Postgraduate	Male	Foundation year and 1st year		Ehaab
Modern	Research Postgraduate	Female	4th year and above	Non-British	Mai
	Taught Postgraduate	Female	4th year and above		Mariam
	Research Postgraduate	Female	2nd year		Maha
	Undergraduate	Female	Foundation year and 1st year		Maria
	Undergraduate	Female	Foundation year and 1st year		Malika
	Research Postgraduate	Male	3rd year		Mohammad
Faith	Undergraduate	Female	Foundation year and 1st year	Non-British	Fai
	Undergraduate	Female	Foundation year and 1st year		Fatima
	Undergraduate	Female	Foundation year and 1st year		Farah
	Undergraduate	Female	3rd year		Farida
	Undergraduate	Male	2nd year		Faisal
	Taught Postgraduate	Male	3rd year		Fahad
Total = 18 Interviewees					

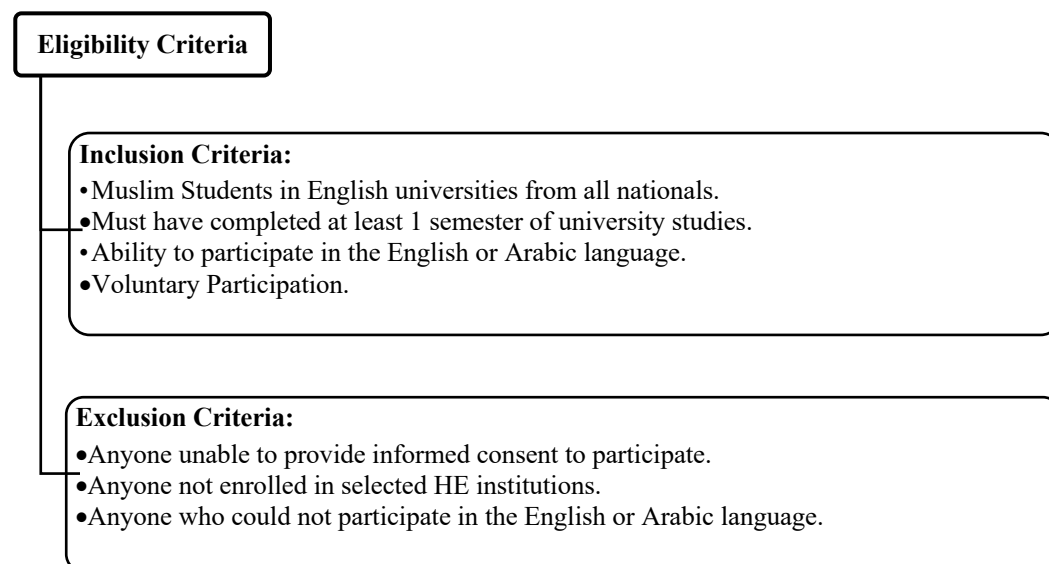
3.9.1 Eligibility Criteria

Eligibility criteria are an important in helping to ensure that the study participants were representative of the target study sample and that they were able to complete the study measures

without any undue risk. The criteria are usually defined in the study protocol, which is a document that outlines the details of the study participants (McElroy & Ladner, 2013). To begin with, inclusion criteria refer to the specific characteristics that a research participant must have to be eligible to participate in this study. Figure 3.3 indicates the eligibility criteria for participants in this study.

Figure 3.3

The Eligibility Criteria for Participants in the Study



Inclusion criteria were established to define the characteristics necessary for individuals to be considered eligible for participation in this study. These criteria included being a Muslim student in English universities from all nationalities, having completed at least one semester of university studies, possessing the ability to communicate effectively in either English or Arabic, and voluntarily expressing willingness to participate.

Similarly, exclusion criteria were established to identify characteristics that would make a potential research participant ineligible to take part in the study. These criteria included individuals who were unable to provide informed consent to participate, those who were not

enrolled in the selected HEIs, and individuals who were unable to participate in either English or Arabic languages. By specifying these inclusion and exclusion criteria, the study ensured that participants met specific requirements and contributed to the research objectives. It must be pointed out that the convenience sampling technique was used to recruit participants from specific Islamic societies within all selected universities. The rationale behind using this method was its practicality and accessibility, which allowed for the gathering of eligible Muslim students who met the study's criteria easily.

The use of inclusion and exclusion criteria provided a framework and structure to this research process, ensuring that the resulting findings could be attributed directly to the study itself, and avoiding making erroneous comparisons between different populations that were not be applicable to the study (Patino & Ferreira, 2018).

3.10 Data Collection Tools

Data collection tools in this research included various tools and techniques that were employed to gather information based on the RQs, study design, and target population. According to Trochim (2006, p.1) “the most appropriate data collection tool will depend on the RQ, the characteristics of the population being studied, the resources available to the researcher, and the research setting”. I used multiple data collection tools because triangulation methods increase the likelihood of achieving data saturation, and because multiple data collection tools allow for the collection of a greater amount of data from various methodological perspectives (Mwita, 2022). Figure 3.4 shows all the data collection methods used in this study.

Figure 3.4

The Data Collection Tools Used in this Study



The data collection tools of questionnaires, interviews, timeline maps, and EDI reports each brought unique strengths and limitations to the research process and yet together provided a more holistic understanding of the Muslim student experiences. The items and themes included in these tools were primarily developed in alignment with the research aim, objectives, and questions.

It is pertinent to highlight that questionnaire statements and interview questions were adapted from education EDI surveys, drawing upon sources such as those from West Orange Public School EDI survey in (woboe.org), The University of Iowa EDI survey (2020), and Baker and Young climate EDI survey (2020). This choice was informed by the need to utilise existing resources in the absence of specific surveys tailored to measure EDI in the UK context within a religious framework. Through other tools such as interviews, I was able to explore participants' experiences in greater depth, delve into their emotions and perceptions, and clarify any ambiguities that might arise from other data collection methods such as Timeline Maps.

I initially implemented self-administered online questionnaires as a convenient method for data collection. While ensuring response quality without direct professional guidance is a primary challenge, measures like structured development processes such as pilot testing, expert panel reviews, and exploratory factor analysis can address issues like the misunderstanding of questions and acquiescence bias, ultimately improving validity and reliability (Saunders & Kulchitsky, 2021; Leon et al., 2022). They are commonly used for large-scale data collection

due to their efficiency in reaching a wide audience and gathering quantitative data. They allow for standardised responses, making data analysis more manageable. The ease of administration, especially with the advent of online platforms, further enhances their appeal, allowing for rapid distribution and data collection (Beck, 2024; Iwaniec, 2019).

However, the use of questionnaires may oversimplify responses, potentially leading to biased results and a shallow understanding of participants' viewpoints (Beck, 2024). To mitigate these risks, researchers should prioritise the careful construction of questionnaires and conduct pretests with a sample of the target population to validate the clarity and effectiveness of the questions (Roopa & Rani, 2012). As a result, this study includes a pilot study to fulfil this aim (see Section 3.7.1).

Despite challenges, well-designed and responsibly administered questionnaires remain a potent tool for collecting extensive quantitative data (Jung, 2018). Furthermore, building questionnaires online and sharing them is convenient; technological advancements offer flexible and cost-effective platforms for managing complex questionnaires, overcoming traditional constraints of paper-based methods (Jung, 2018).

The next tool is interviews, particularly semi-structured ones, which provide rich, detailed data and allow for flexibility in exploring topics in depth. They facilitate rapport-building and enable researchers to probe deeper into participants' responses, but they can be time-consuming and may introduce interviewer bias (Punjani et al., 2023).

Prior to conducting the interviews in this study, timeline maps, whether used before or during interviews, provided a visual and interactive approach to data collection. They assisted participants in recalling and organising key events in chronological order, enriching the collected data and facilitating the interview process through a structured narrative framework (Baú, 2024; Punjani et al., 2023). It offered a visual representation of temporal sequences,

allowing me to track events, experiences, and changes over time. They provided a structured format for organising data and identifying patterns or trends. It also enhanced data visualisation and aided in communicating complex information effectively. However, the interpretation of timeline maps is subjective, as researchers must make decisions about what events to include, how to represent them visually, and the significance of each event. It can also have limitations, such as potential underreporting or inaccuracies in the timing of events, as seen in studies assessing health behaviours among high-risk populations (Wray et al.,2019).

In this study, I addressed these limitations by cross-referencing timeline data with other sources through triangulation data collection. I also followed- up with semi-structured interviews to clarify the maps and conduct member checking with participants to validate timelines findings, thereby avoiding any misunderstandings. The next step was to determine who would voluntarily participate in the semi-structured interviews to facilitate a deeper understanding of complex issues. This step provided an opportunity for in-depth exploration of participants' experiences, emotions, and perspectives. It allowed me to probe and clarify responses, uncovering rich qualitative data that may not be captured through other methods. Semi-structured interviews involve a short list of guiding questions supplemented by follow-up and probing questions that depend on the interviewees' responses, especially since participants often share sensitive information directly with the interviewer (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). It is important to address these concerns, such as minimising harm, safeguarding the interviewee's information, properly informing interviewees about the study's purpose and format, and mitigating the risk of exploitation (Crabtree & DiCicco-Bloom, 2006). Feeling like we are all in the interview together and showing that I, as the interviewer, am similar to the interviewee, can mitigate any discomfort (Josselson, 2013). For instance, as a Muslim researcher and a student studying at an English university, I can understand and relate to their experiences. However, this approach may lead participants to offer socially-desired

responses aligned with the interviewer's expectations, potentially biasing outcomes. Therefore, attentive and empathetic listening is crucial for effective interviewing (Anderson & Jack, 2015). Listening ought to be attentive, empathic, and nonjudgmental, aiming to encourage and stimulate conversation (Josselson, 2013). In addition, using timeline mapping tools before interviews can help participants express their thoughts and structure responses to RQs autonomously, without researcher influence. Employing timeline maps in this study enhanced the understanding of participants' experiences and challenges by visually illustrating qualitative data that aligned with the information that will be gathered during interviews. Timeline maps facilitated participants in articulating their experiences chronologically, aiding in self-expression and sharing without judgment (Basnet, Wouters & Kusurkar, 2023). Thus, timeline mapping exercises represented an innovative methodological approach that shifted power dynamics towards a more person-centered perspective (Basnet, Timmerman & Van der Linden, 2020).

In line with the findings of Kolar et al. (2015), the visual components of the timeline served as a guide for participants to navigate and share their experiences. Participants began by selecting the events they deemed significant for inclusion on the timeline. They could then categorise events as positive or negative using spikes or dips in a continuous-line timeline or columns and dates in a list-style timeline. Additionally, some participants expressed emotions by including emoticons and small diagrams for specific life events. By visually distinguishing life events in this way, participants were able to select topics they felt at ease discussing, empowering them to steer the direction of the interview content. This tool was user-friendly and structured, requiring only a large sheet of paper and multiple-coloured pens, or alternatively, technology such as a tablet.

According to the visual methods literature, combining timelines with detailed narrative interviews can improve the data collection process and data quality, especially when exploring

sensitive subjects or marginalised communities (Berends, 2011; Harper, 2003; Sheridan et al., 2011). Alternative creative tools or approaches that could have been considered instead of timeline maps included photo elicitation, diaries, or visual storytelling techniques. These methods provided additional layers of insight and engagement, offering diverse perspectives on the research topic. Visual methods are significant aids for presentations and effective ways to convey ideas to others (Berends, 2011). Timelines have been acknowledged as a concise method for recording and representing a large amount of data, particularly when compared to other visual techniques (Berends, 2011). However, the selection of a research method or technique should be influenced by research goals, objectives, the researcher's background, philosophical assumptions, and individual beliefs about the chosen methods (Saldana, 2014). Thus, the use of diverse methodologies significantly impacted the data collected, as illustrated by the timeline drawing exercise that showcased participants' life histories and emphasised the significance of visual elements.

In this study, EDI reports from selected universities were analysed through structural themes, focusing solely on addressing RQ2 for more details (see Section 3.10.4). Furthermore, I collected photographic evidence of public campus facilities with a focus on those related to Muslim belief. These photographs served as supporting material for the EDI document analysis. Following the recommendations of Azzarito (2023), who advocates for seeking verbal permission when photographing specific places or spaces, I incorporated this practice into my research methodology. By obtaining prior consent, I aimed to ensure the ethical and respectful use of these photographs. Furthermore, any identifiable information present in the photographs was appropriately anonymised to protect the privacy of the participants.

3.10.1 Self-administered Questionnaire

The first data collection tool in this study was a self-administered questionnaire, designed to gather quantitative data from participants in a convenient online manner. While this offered the advantage of anonymous administration, which increased the potential of obtaining reliable and accurate responses from participants (Sani, 2010), there were also some limitations associated with this tool. One potential limitation is the response rate, as not all participants may choose to complete the questionnaire or may leave some questions unanswered. I overcame this limitation by implementing a mandatory answer feature for each statement in the questionnaire. Additionally, participants were given the option to withdraw from the questionnaire by closing the instrument web page if they did not wish to complete it.

Another limitation was the potential for social desirability bias, where participants may be tempted to provide responses that they perceive as more socially acceptable or desirable. To minimise the impact of this bias, I designed the questionnaire to be delivered online via Microsoft Forms with QR code and well-designed statements, with clear and unbiased wording. Additionally, employing multiple data collection methods can help triangulate findings, further enhancing the credibility of the research (Pawłowski & Ackerman, 2017).

The questionnaire consisted of four sections that addressed the first and second RQs (see Appendix IV). Each section contained statements that participants were required to respond to using a 5-point Likert scale. The scale ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), with respondents selecting one response for each statement (Robbins & Heiberger, 2011). Through the implementation of these scales, valuable data were gathered by prompting respondents to express clear stances (Willits, Theodori & Luloff, 2016). This approach was particularly beneficial in this study as it enabled me to extract detailed insights and perspectives on the specific variables under investigation. Debates have been ignited over

the interpretation of the middle response, particularly in relation to its perceived neutrality (Nayak & Singh, 2021), as well as the potential for participants to select this option casually, leading to the risk of data becoming unreliable due to questionnaire fatigue or carelessness.

Krosnick's theory (1991) of survey satisfaction proposes that individuals without reconsolidated opinions or relevant information in memory are likely to respond with 'don't know'. While the middle response's ambiguous nature has been criticised by some researchers, it has also been recognised as a valuable source of qualitative data. Rather than dismissing it as quantitatively superfluous, it should be acknowledged as a separate distinct variable that provides relevant information worthy of analysis (Willits, Theodori & Luloff, 2016). The use of a mid-point neutrality item therefore remains a topic of debate, with its explicit inclusion dependent on individual researcher preferences (Abu Allam, 2011; Allan & Seaman, 2007; Garland, 1991). In the context of this study, the decision to incorporate such an item was guided by the recognition that the benefits it offers outweigh the potential drawbacks associated with its use. One key rationale behind using a mid-point neutrality item was to provide respondents with a neutral option, allowing them to express ambivalence or indifference towards a particular statement or question. This helped capture more nuanced responses and prevented respondents from feeling pressured to take a stance they were not entirely comfortable with. Additionally, including a mid-point neutrality item was crucial as exploring neutral attitudes was essential, particularly when studying topics where respondents may lack a strong opinion or when capturing sentiment distribution across a spectrum (Nighojkar et al., 2023).

3.10.1.1 Validity

A content validity assessment seeks to confirm the extent to which the questionnaire delivers responses that are directly related to the research objectives subject matter or content. It is important to ensure that tests used in the study have a high level of validity, as tests with low

validity may generate data that is unrelated to the measuring objectives (Erlinawati & Muslimah, 2021). In conducting this study, a correlation test was utilised to examine the relationship between the items, the total factor, and the questionnaire, as advocated by Hadd and Rodgers (2020). This test specifically aimed to assess the interrelation of variables within this study context, providing valuable insight into the connections present in the data and contributing to the thorough analysis of study's findings.

The analysis demonstrated that most of the items had good correlations with other items within the sub-construct, construct and variables. While there were a few cases, however, where the correlation values were either too low or too high, indicating either a lack of strong correlation or redundancy, the item-total correlations generally fell within the acceptable range of .30 to .70 (Carmines & Zeller, 1974; De Vaus, 2004). In addition, the content validity of both questionnaire statements and interview questions was assessed using statistical methods, ensuring that they encompassed the pertinent aspects of the study construct.

3.10.1.2 Reliability

In this study, reliability refers to the consistency and stability of study results. A reliable study produces the same results consistently, and internal consistency is an important aspect of reliability. Cronbach's alpha is a way of assessing the reliability and credibility of data, with a value below 0.7 suggesting lower reliability. As shown in Table 3.7, in this particular study, Cronbach's alpha values ranged from 0.71 to 0.90, indicating that the questionnaire had an acceptable level of reliability (Taber, 2018) based on the pilot study.

Table 3.7*Internal Consistency Reliability Analysis for Pilot Study*

Items (Themes)	Cronbach's alpha
I. Access, experience and learning on campus	0.71
II. Good relations, productive dialogue and managing tensions on campus	0.90
III. Law, policy and monitoring on campus toward Muslim students	0.80
IV. Inclusive environments and facilities	0.71

Additionally, the questionnaire included a question at the end, asking respondents to volunteer for an interview. Those who agreed became the sample for the interview, which represents the second data collection tool, and is described in the following section.

3.10.2 Semi-structured Interviews

The semi-structured interview served as the second tool after the questionnaire in this study, aiming to address all the RQs. It adopted a qualitative data collection approach by asking questions within a predetermined thematic framework, consisting of five themes. This framework included questions related to the research subject that were further explored during the interview (see Appendix V). Interviews are known to provide more detailed information compared to other survey formats (Flick, 2006; Sturgeon & Winter, 1999; Willke, Adams & Girnius, 1999). I formulated the interview questions after conducting a comprehensive literature review to gather essential additional information crucial for achieving the research objectives, insights that I might not have been aware of previously (Whiting, 2008).

Through this tool, I was able to gain data about the participants' perspectives and experiences regarding the protection of religion and belief policies on their campuses. It allowed for more detailed explanations and a deeper understanding of their perceptions, views, communication strategies, barriers and overall satisfaction. By delving into their responses, it was possible to identify comparable experiences and achieve concurrent validity, even though

reliability and validity can be challenging to quantify in this context (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1999). The interviews were conducted between January and March 2023, with each interview lasting approximately 45-60 minutes at agreed-upon locations convenient for the participants.

Although participants were given the option to choose between online or face-to-face interviews, considering the recent pandemic conditions caused by COVID-19, all expressed a preference for face-to-face interviews. The study's information sheet was provided in advance, and they were asked to draw a timeline map to explain their experiences and satisfaction before conducting the interview, as detailed in the following subsection.

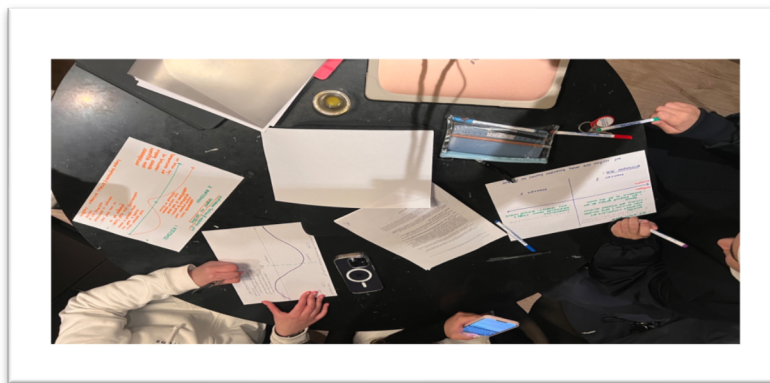
3.10.3 Timeline Maps

Timeline mapping was a third tool used for data collection in this study, specifically to address RQ 3. Timeline maps involve the creation of visual representations of events, activities, barriers or phenomena relating to a student's experiences across a period of their academic journey. Participants' timeline maps helped me to gather and organise chronological data, identify patterns, and analyse the progression and the satisfaction level of students in their university experiences. Montenegro and Jankowski (2020), for example, used this approach to facilitate conversations about the various methods students can employ, both inside and outside the classroom, to showcase their achievement of institutional learning outcomes. In my study it facilitated the exchange of experiences and events during the interviews (Rees, 2018; Roberts, 2020), and helped to organise the discussion, since the maps were prepared by the interviewees themselves prior to the interviews. By combining timelines with interviews, there was a possibility to enhance the data collection process and improve the quality of data. This is particularly valuable when dealing with sensitive subjects or marginalised groups, as noted by Berends (2011), Harper (2003) and Sheridan et al. (2011).

To help participants produce timeline maps, I brought my iPad, pens, and paper to the interview sessions. This additional support ensured that the process was completed before we started the interview (a process of about 15 minutes). Figure 3.5 captures participants engaging in the process of drawing their timeline maps.

Figure 3.5

A Photo Depicting Participants Drawing their Timeline Maps



It's important to point out that in Figure 3.5, depicting a group of students together, I took this photograph at the end after they had drawn their timelines individually to avoid bias. This helped maintain my participants' comprehension and responses, thus preventing potential distortions in the results. Another advantage of using timeline maps in my study was that it fostered rapport building by breaking down hierarchical barriers typically associated with research interviews. Participants were able to take ownership of their narratives, sharing their stories in a manner that made them feel comfortable.

Additionally, the timeline activity facilitated reflection and boundary-setting during the interview process. This enabled participants to navigate their university experiences, ensuring a safe and comfortable environment for sharing both positive and negative aspects of their journey. Lastly, the use of timeline maps allowed Muslim students to reflect on their settling

experiences, identifying areas of satisfaction as well as areas for improvement and challenges during their academic journey. This process permitted diverse expressions and perspectives, aiding in a deeper understanding of complex emotions on sensitive topics like religion and belief.

3.10.4 Thematic Analysis of EDI Reports

In this study, content analysis was employed to investigate the second RQ. It is a crucial research technique in the social sciences that allows for the analysis of data within a specific context (Krippendorff, 2018). It is widely used as a qualitative research technique (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) to examine the attention given to different aspects by groups, individuals, societies or institutions (Weber, 1990).

The main focus here was to analysis the initiatives, decisions and policies implemented by Emerald, Modern and Faith university in managing EDI on their campuses. These data collection tools can effectively assess the “values, intentions, attitudes, and cognitions” reflected in institutional messages (Duriau et al., 2007, p. 6). I utilised EDI reports analysis to reveal the attitudinal and cognitive facets of university policies and their operations. This method enables to explore complex issues in depth and detail, and to draw on a wide range of sources (Savage et al., 2013). By conducting this analysis, I gained a deeper understanding of the approaches taken by Emerald, Modern, and Faith university in promoting EDI on their campuses and how an analysis of reports can unveil underlying attitudes and cognitive aspects within organisational frameworks. This method enabled me to delve into complex issues and leverage various sources to enrich my findings and insights. Compared to other tools, like questionnaires or interviews, content analysis, as suggested by Harris (2001, p.195), serves as a ‘reality check’ of managerial decision-making. It provides valuable findings into the actual content and substance of managerial decisions. University bodies are responsible for assessing

and reporting on their institution's policies regarding EDI. This includes implementing corrective measures to ensure fair outcomes for everyone. As a minimum requirement, they should receive an annual equality monitoring report that outlines the actions taken (Committee of University Chairs, 2020).

The reason for utilising thematic analysis, specifically EDI report analysis, in the study about Muslim students' perceptions of how English universities communicate their policies protecting religion and belief, was to gain a comprehensive understanding of the policies and practices of each institution. By analysing these reports, I was able to examine how universities address and promote religious diversity, inclusivity, and the protection of belief among their student populations. Furthermore, it provided insights into institutional practices and a deeper understanding of the values, intentions, attitudes and cognitions reflected in the messages within them. This shed light on the strategies and efforts taken by universities to address the needs and concerns of Muslim students. It also allowed for a broader understanding of the context in which communication of religion and belief protection occurs, revealing the policies and practices implemented by universities to create inclusive environments for all students, including Muslim students.

Moreover, by comparing the reports from three different universities, I was able to identify variations in approaches to the communication of religion and belief protection, thereby addressing the RQ at hand. Finally, the findings from the reports analysis could be used to inform future decision-making and policy development within universities by helping me to identify gaps or areas where additional support or resources were needed to ensure better communication of religion and belief protection for Muslim students. This contributed to a better understanding of the experiences and perceptions of Muslim students in English campuses regarding the protection of religion and belief. The analysis entailed a thorough examination of the reports listed in Table 3.8.

Table 3.8*The EDI Reports Reviewed in this Study*

Universities	EDI Report Titles
Emerald	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. “Equality Framework Implementation Action Plan 2016-2026”2. “Our strategy 2026”3. “Diversity and Equality Annual Report 2020/2021”
Modern	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. “Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Priorities and An Action Plan For 2020-2024.”2. “EDI Report 2018/19: Equality and Diversity strategy 2016- 2020.”3. “Equality and Diversity Policy 2020”
Faith	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. “Equality and Diversity Objectives 2019-2024”

The EDI reports from Emerald university included three key documents. The first was the “Equality Framework Implementation Action Plan 2016-2026”, which outlined the university's ten-year plan for implementing equality and diversity measures. The second document, “Our Strategy 2026”, presented Emerald university’s strategic roadmap for achieving its goals in the realm of EDI. The third document, “Diversity and Equality Annual Report 2020/2021”, provided an in-depth analysis of the university’s progress and accomplishments in promoting diversity and equality during that specific period.

Moving on to Modern University, their EDI reports also spanned three significant documents. The first, “Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Priorities and An Action Plan For 2020-2024”, outlined the university’s identified priorities and associated action plans for fostering equality, diversity and inclusion over a four-year period. The second report, “EDI Report 2018/19: Equality and Diversity Strategy 2016-2020”, examined the university’s strategy in the previous academic year, aligning it with the institution’s overall EDI strategy. The third report, “Equality and Diversity Policy 2020”, highlighted the university’s policy framework for ensuring equality and diversity in all aspects of university life.

Lastly, Faith university's reports on equality and diversity included the document entitled, "Equality and Diversity Objectives 2019-2024". This report presented the university's specific objectives and targets in the areas of equality and diversity for a five-year time frame.

The chosen period of analysis for EDI reports in the selected English universities was 2016–2026. This selection aligns with the universities' annual planning cycle, avoiding unnecessary repetition in interventions and providing insights into their progress towards EDI goals. The availability and accessibility of relevant reports were also considered.

Engaging in prior thematic analysis aligning with Braun and Clarke's (2006) inductive framework emphasises experiential aspects and an essentialist theoretical approach. Blacker (2009) advocated for a thorough thematic portrayal for understanding key themes in study data. My participation in EDI conferences and workshops has honed my skills in evaluating EDI reports and has deepened my comprehension of fostering diversity and inclusivity, particularly concerning the experiences of Muslim students. As a Muslim student enrolled at an English university, my unique positioning has sparked a more thorough exploration of issues pertaining to inclusivity, religious accommodation, and cultural diversity within academic environments.

My perspective sheds light on the effectiveness of strategies aimed at supporting Muslim students, the impact of challenges faced within campus environments, and the overall inclusivity of academic settings for diverse student populations. This positioning significantly influences my interpretation of data related to interactions with peers, access to religious facilities, and the overall sense of belonging experienced by Muslim students on English campuses. As a Muslim student myself, I have a valuable lens through which to examine and understand the complexities, opportunities, and implications of being a minority student amid a diverse academic environment. By incorporating my lived experiences and insights, I aim to contribute nuanced perspectives to the research landscape.

3.11 Data Analysis

Data analysis is a process that involves organising and summarising data in order to draw meaningful conclusions and inform decision-making. This process can be accomplished through the use of statistical techniques, as well as other methods such as coding and thematic analysis. This section explains the overall approaches to the analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data in this study.

3.11.1 *Quantitative Data Analysis*

Analysis of quantitative data “involves identifying patterns, relationships, and trends in data and making inferences about the relationships between variables” (Polit & Beck, 2012, p. 657). The main quantitative data collected in the course of the study was from the structured online self-administered questionnaire. The questionnaire data was organised and entered into SPSS®²⁸ and descriptive statistics were used to describe the main features of the collected data. In this study, I employed statistical measures during the data analysis process, facilitating comparisons across different variables. The advantage of this kind of data is that its standardised nature makes it easier to recognise patterns and relationships, allows inferences to be made about large populations and allows for the comparison of results across studies (Neuman, 2018). By emphasising statistical analysis over subjective interpretation, quantitative data results are often perceived as more objective and unbiased, as noted by Trochim (2006). On the other hand, such data may not provide a deep understanding of underlying processes and meanings and “quantitative research is often criticised for its inability to capture the richness and complexity of social phenomena” (Yin, 2014, p.13,2018). Thus, in order to obtain a deeper understanding of the topic of the current study, I incorporated both qualitative and quantitative data analysis techniques.

3.11.2 Qualitative Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was employed to analyse the qualitative data collected in this study. In line with this, the study adopted a form of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2021) that emphasises the role of researcher subjectivity as a valuable resource for generating knowledge (Braun & Clarke, 2021). A qualitative study involves the deliberate use of data collection, description, explanation and interpretation, offering rich data based on human interaction (Williams, 2007). As recommended by Creswell (2021), the qualitative data analysis I undertook in this study followed several key steps, including organising and preparing the data, thoroughly reviewing the data from interviews, timeline maps and EDI reports, initiating a coding process, utilising coding to identify descriptions and themes, enhancing data presentation, and interpreting the significance of the data. Both interviews and timelines were thematically coded in accordance with the methodology suggested by King and Horrocks (2010). Moreover, this is recognised as a fundamental instrument in qualitative case studies (Yin, 2018; Merriam, 2015; Stake, 2010). Following these recommendations, I provided a detailed description and conducted qualitative data analysis to address RQ1. Subsequently, I analysed the data for RQ2 and RQ3.

I utilised NVivo version 8 to effectively organise and analyse transcripts through qualitative content analysis (Mayring, 2022). This was a way of exploring, describing and interpreting the meanings and experiences of individuals within a social context. It aligned with the idea of exploring social phenomena through the lens of those directly experiencing them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2021; Morse, 2021). This approach proved especially beneficial when investigating intricate social constructs, such as attitudes, beliefs, and values, within this specific context (Saldana, 2021).

I structured the process by initially providing clear instructions to participants regarding the creation of their timelines. Participants were tasked with visually representing their journey

as Muslim students in English HEIs, emphasising key events, experiences, and interactions related to religion and belief protection policies on campus. The timeline interview captures learning journeys, which represent the educational experiences over time, encompassing courses or learning processes, requiring reflection and connections to learning aspects from the interviewee (Adriansen, 2012). By guiding participants to divide their timelines into distinct stages of their academic journey and to mark significant events, my aim was to capture a comprehensive overview of their experiences and perceptions. During the interviews, these timelines served as visual aids to facilitate discussions and reflections on the participants' journeys. This allowed the participants to explain and analyse their timelines, providing valuable insights to the qualitative analysis of the study while helping to mitigate any biases from me as the researcher.

3.11.3 The Method of Thematic Analysis and the Process of Coding

In this study, the adoption of thematic analysis method was rooted in my acknowledgement of its aptness for delving into and articulating individuals' experiences, focusing on the dimension of a satisfied settled lens embedded within the gathered data. Thematic analysis is recognised for being an accessible and versatile approach that enables to achieve a deep contextual understanding of real-world issues by exploring people's beliefs, perspectives, and encounters, as expounded by Cernasev and Axon (2023). At the core of thematic analysis lies the essential role of coding, a process through which systematically organises and classifies the data into coherent themes, aligning with the insights of Pratt (2023). Coding involves the use of succinct labels to encapsulate crucial elements within the data, which arise organically from the data itself or be predetermined based on this research established theoretical frameworks. The primary aim of coding is to transform raw data into a more abstract understanding often culminating in a theoretical narrative, thereby fostering the cultivation of discovery and

theoretical inquiries. While content analysis can be carried out using human or computer-based coding methods, thematic analysis differentiates itself by emphasising the interpretation of a collection of messages (Neuendorf, 2018). For RQ1, investigating Muslim students' viewpoints on an English university's regulations protecting religion and belief, the identified themes include access and experience as theme one, and inclusive environment and campus facilities as theme two. In exploring RQ2, which investigated how three universities communicate their policies concerning safeguarding religion and belief to Muslim students, the envisioned themes for analysis encompassed aspects related to good relations, productivity, managing tensions, induction, theme four focusing on law and policies, and monitoring. For RQ3, theme five was centred on exploring the barriers and opportunities faced by Muslim students in the communication of policies related to protecting religion and belief on campuses.

3.12 Study Borders

The border of research refers to the boundaries or limitations that exist in conducting a piece of research. These are caused by a variety of factors, such as ethical considerations, access to information or data, funding constraints, and the availability of resources. These limitations are summarised here according to temporal, spatial, ethical, and objectivity borders:

3.12.1 Temporal Borders

The constraints that exist in conducting this study over a specific period of time. This created limitations in terms of access to data or information, and the availability of resources. For example, my PhD journey spanned between three and four years, during which the research encountered various challenges, such as the availability of resources. For example, the population and demographics of the Muslim population may have altered during this time period.

3.12.2 Spatial Borders

This study concentrated on a specific metropolitan area in England, encompassing three distinct types of universities, with a predominant focus on international Muslim students, particularly non-British Arab students. Despite potential challenges such as cultural disparities, language barriers, and limitations in data access, it was discovered that all participating students exhibited fluency in English, thereby obviating the need for translation services during surveys and interviews. Nevertheless, the study's outcomes were constrained by spatial boundaries and, consequentially, may not be wholly representative. While English proficiency may not have posed a significant obstacle, it is imperative to acknowledge a notable limitation of the study, namely, the omission of perceptions from British-born Muslim students. These individuals, having been nurtured within the UK education system, likely possess divergent viewpoints on the 'protection of religion' and perceive the role of universities differently compared to Arab students from predominantly Muslim nations adjusting to a multicultural, multireligious environment. The documented phenomenon of culture shock among Arab students in Western educational settings underscores the necessity of comprehensively considering the unique perspectives of these student cohorts.

3.12.3 Thematic Borders

In the focus and scope of my research study, constraints were connected to my expertise and the specific RQ or problem I aimed to address. It is important to note that this study focused on examining the engagement of EDI-focused academic literature with Muslim students at selected universities. One reason is the accessibility of pertinent reports and data concerning EDI from websites and library sources of Emerald, Modern and Faith universities. These reports, which included information on the implementation and measurement of EDI Key Performance Indicators, provided valuable insights for this study. Access to such reports and data within this specific time frame would ensure that this study is based on the most recent

and relevant information. Additionally, it should be noted that, since 2017, the UK government has mandated universities to publish data on their EDI reports as part of the HE and Research Act (Higher Education and Research Act, in UK legislation, 2017).

3.12.4 Sample Borders

This study is limited in respect to the convenience and purposive sampling strategy used. One of the limitations of this technique is that it produces a sample population that is not the most representative of the whole population. Another limitation of this study is that in case study qualitative research, one cannot generalise the findings from a single case to other similar cases (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Merriam, 2015; Stake, 2010; Yin, 2018). The lack of generalisability in case study qualitative research is regarded as a limitation of this method. Consequently, the findings obtained from in-depth interviews conducted with eighteen Muslim students in selected universities cannot be extended or applied to other universities within England. Although my intention was not to generalise across the population of Muslim or English HEIs, the lack of generalisability in this study can still be regarded as a limitation. On the other hand, instead of merely asserting the absence of generalisability concerns in qualitative research or perceiving it as a limitation, such research can foster curiosity regarding the potential nature of the relationship between the study findings and various forms of generalisation (Smith, 2018).

My research redefines the concept of limited generalisability as an opportunity to explore the intricate relationships between research outcomes and potential generalisation processes. While the findings from detailed interviews conducted with eighteen Muslim students in selected universities may not be universally applicable to all HEIs, it is essential to acknowledge its restricted generalisability. This study, which adopts a qualitative research approach, aims to spark curiosity about how the research findings may relate to broader contexts and possibilities for generalisation. Qualitative research excels in capturing the

complexities of human behaviour, emotions, and perspectives through methods such as interviews, observations, and focus groups, offering profound insights that quantitative approaches may overlook (Sekar & Bhuvaneswari, 2024).

3.12.5 Ethical Borders

In my study, I was dedicated to safeguarding the rights of participants, ensuring data confidentiality, and preventing any harm to those involved. For instance, I steered clear of sensitive topics and offered participants the freedom to exit the study simply by closing the online questionnaire tab. In the interview, I used the Otter.ai application; the automatic transcription service utilised in this study (Seyedi et al., 2023). After saving the transcript, the participants member checked the results, and then I deleted all the recorded files.

In conducting my research, I was acutely aware of ethical dilemmas, especially when delving into potentially sensitive subjects like discrimination and belonging in diverse cultural and educational settings. Anticipating participants sharing experiences of exclusion or discrimination, I prioritised ethical standards. This entailed securing informed consent, safeguarding participant anonymity, and fostering a secure environment for open dialogue. By embracing ethical mindfulness, I aimed to approach the study with sensitivity and integrity, nurturing trust and dignity throughout the research journey. I obtained informed consent from participants, ensuring they comprehended the research purpose, data usage, and associated risks, and gained access to participants who were willingly and fully informed about the study before they consented to take part (Eneman, 2022). I analysed participant-described timeline maps and conducted member checks on the findings in the transcripts, thereby mitigating the risk of researcher-imposed interpretations (Whitney et al., 2024).

3.13 Summary

In this chapter, I outlined the research methodology employed to investigate the perceptions of Muslim students in English universities regarding the communication of religion and belief policies. The research focused on analysing three English universities: a Russell Group university, a post-92 university, and a church-affiliated university. This comparative analysis delved into their histories, unique characteristics, policies, and Muslim student populations, providing a diverse perspective on Muslim students' experiences and viewpoints. In conducting my research, I utilised multiple case studies, focusing on three distinct cases corresponding to each university in the metropolitan area. The unit of analysis in these case studies was the groups of Muslim students at each university. The context of the case studies revolved around the three universities, while the research phenomenon explored the perceptions of Muslim students towards their educational experiences. Utilising this research approach with mixed-method triangulated data collection, I combined qualitative and quantitative methods to enhance the study's validity. A pilot study was conducted to test the research design, followed by the main study using purposive sampling to ensure participant representativeness and enhance the study's validity. The data analysis process incorporated statistical techniques and coding for both quantitative and qualitative data analysis. The quantitative analysis involved structured numerical data collected through an online questionnaire, employing descriptive statistics for comparisons. Qualitative analysis utilised thematic analysis to organise and interpret data from interviews, timeline maps, and EDI reports. Ethics played a crucial role in the study, prioritising participant rights, confidentiality and informed consent. Ethical considerations were carefully implemented, including secure data storage and participant anonymity. Overall, this study aimed to apply carefully thought-through methods to explore the perceptions of Muslim students regarding the protection of religion and belief on campuses, while ensuring the study participant comfort and confidentiality.

Chapter 4. Findings: What are Muslim Students' Perceptions about English University Policies on Protecting Religion and Belief?

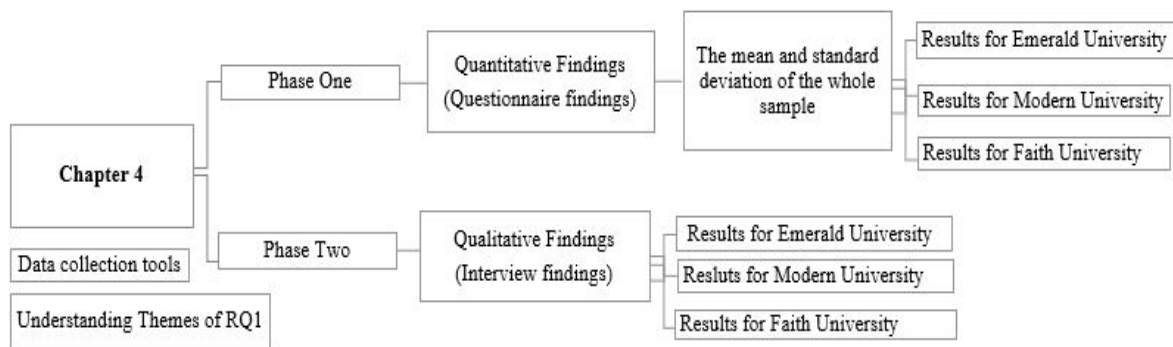
4.1 Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to present the findings concerning the first research question (RQ1), which investigates the perceptions of Muslim students about English universities' policies on protecting religion and belief. It is structured in line with the two key themes that emerged from the coding process: a) access, experience and learning on campus, and, b) the provision of inclusive environments and facilities. The first theme investigates the impact of Muslim students' access to religious provisions on their comfort level, satisfaction and learning opportunities on university campuses in England (section 4.3.1), while the second theme analyses the inclusive nature of university religious facilities such as prayer rooms, Islamic societies, Halal food on campus, examinations during Ramadan, non-alcoholic social events, and Muslim chaplains.

The results in this chapter are presented in two sections, phase one (questionnaire findings) and phase two (interview findings). Thus, the first section primarily presents quantitative findings, while the second section presents the findings of the qualitative data. Each section also divides the findings related to the two themes identified above, across all three case study universities (Emerald university, Modern university and Faith university). Figure 4.1 illustrates the structure of Chapter Four.

Figure 4.1

Map of the Structure of Chapter 4



4.2 Data Collection Tools

As indicated in the introduction above, this chapter discusses the findings resulting from two main themes, which examine the access, learning and experiences on campus, as well as the provision of an inclusive environment and facilities. The following data collection tools were utilised for this purpose:

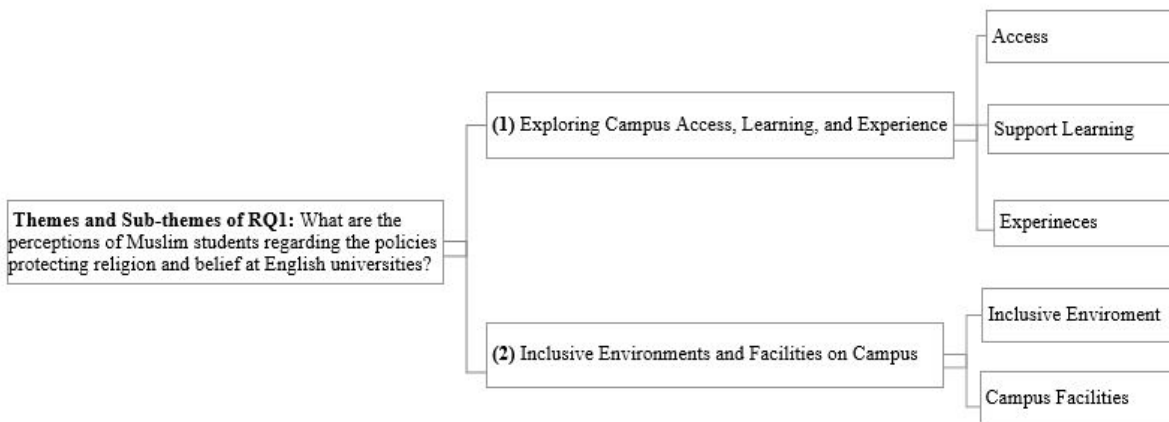
1. A self-administered questionnaire to explore Muslim students' experiences regarding the two mentioned themes.
2. Interviews to explore Muslim students' perceptions of universities' communication of their policies protecting their religion and belief and their satisfied settling experiences.

4.3 The Themes of RQ1

Regarding RQ1, the Muslim students' perceptions about the English university's policies on protecting religion and belief were coded into two main themes: *Campus Access, Learning and Experience* and *Inclusive Environments and Facilities*. Each primary theme was broken down into two or more sub-themes to provide a more comprehensive understanding of Muslim students' experience on university campuses (see Figure 4.2).

Figure 4.2

The Themes and Sub-themes of RQ1



The following sub-sections below provide a more detailed explanation of these sub-themes in order to enhance comprehension of the data findings.

4.3.1 Campus Access, Learning and Experience

The theme of *Access, Learning, and Experience* holds significant importance in addressing RQ1 as it explores Muslim students' perceptions and satisfaction levels with various campus resources and policies. Within this theme, three subthemes emerged: *Access*, which focuses on policies and resources related to accessing university facilities and services; *Learning Support*, which examines policies and resources aimed at supporting Muslim students' learning journey; and *Experiences*, which explores students' perceptions of university experiences beyond academia, including inclusion, social events and cultural celebrations. This theme provides insights into how the university environment shapes Muslim students' experiences, and their level of satisfaction with the university community's acceptance and fulfilment of their needs.

4.3.2 Inclusive Environments and Facilities on Campus

The theme of *Inclusive Environments and Facilities on Campus* is also of great importance in addressing RQ1 as it explores the impact of inclusive environments and facilities on Muslim

students' satisfaction levels. Within this theme, two subthemes were identified. The first subtheme, *Inclusive Environments*, encompasses Muslim students' perceptions of the university's culture and environment in terms of inclusivity and acceptance of their religious beliefs and practices. This includes factors such as campus-wide policies protecting religion, attitudes of staff and faculty towards Islam, and the overall sense of safety and comfort experienced on campus. The second subtheme, *Campus Facilities*, focuses on Muslim students' perceptions of the physical facilities and resources on campus that are relevant to their religion and beliefs. This includes prayer rooms, multi-faith spaces, availability of Halal food, access to books and resources, the existence of policies protecting religion, involvement in Islamic clubs and societies, and the presence of relevant Islamic initiatives or events.

Following this overview of the main themes and subthemes, this chapter proceeds to present the quantitative findings obtained from the whole sample, using descriptive statistics (including the mean and standard deviation). The subsequent sections of the chapter are structured into three main parts, each presenting the findings of a specific university in relation to the themes. The presentation of findings follows a sequential order starting with Emerald university, followed by Modern university, and finally, Faith university.

4.4 Quantitative Findings

A quantitative analysis was undertaken first. The sample in this part of the study that generated quantitative data consisted of a total sample size of 150 Muslim students (see Chapter 3 for more demographic details).

The full questionnaire is provided in Appendix IV. Theme one and theme two are used as independent variables to answer RQ1 in this chapter. Each item was scored on a Likert scale ranging from one to five: 1= Strongly Disagree; 2= Disagree; 3= Neither agree nor disagree;

4= Agree; 5= Strongly agree. Since some items (such as statements (4, 6 and 11) (see Table 4.2) were negatively worded it was necessary to reverse the scoring.

4.4.1 The Mean and Standard Deviation of the Whole Sample

The mean score for each questionnaire statement, which corresponds to five levels of perceived importance of the item for Muslim students satisfied settling experiences, was categorised into five levels of agreement with the statement.

Table 4.1

Statistical Results of Theme 1: Access, Experience, and Learning on Campus for the whole sample (N=150) across Three Universities

Statements	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Percentage	Ranking
1. I feel valued as an individual in my university.	150	3.01	1.01	60.1%	8
2. I feel I belong in my university.	150	3.26	0.85	65.2%	7
3. My university has a strong commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusivity.	150	2.89	1.57	57.7%	9
4. I have considered leaving the university because I felt unwelcome.	150	1.74	0.99	34.8%	12
5. I am treated with respect in my university.	150	4.13	0.41	82.7%	3
6. I feel others don't value my opinions in my university.	150	2.40	1.82	48.0%	11
7. University is a place where I am able to perform to my full potential.	150	4.14	0.84	82.8%	2
8. I have opportunities in my university to achieve academic success that is similar to those of my peers.	150	4.23	0.67	84.7%	1
9. There is too much emphasis put on issues of equality, diversity and inclusivity in my university	150	3.31	0.98	66.1%	6
10. My university provides sufficient resources to foster the success of a diverse student body.	150	3.55	1.28	70.9%	5
11. I have to work harder than others to be valued equally at university.	150	2.64	1.55	52.8%	10
12. My experience at university has had a positive influence on my academic growth.	150	3.81	0.70	76.1%	4

The statement in Table 4.1 ranked 8, 'I have opportunities in my university to achieve academic success that is similar to those of my peers', which had a mean score of 4.23 and a percentage of 84.7%. Statement 7, 'University is a place where I am able to perform to my full potential', was ranked second among the participants, with a mean score of 4.14 and a percentage of 82.8%. This result indicates that a high majority of the respondents agreed that the university provides them with an environment where they can perform to their full potential, and this statement is perceived as a significant positive aspect of their university experience.

In parallel, statement 5, 'I am treated with respect in my university', was ranked third among the participants, with a mean score of 4.13 and a percentage of 82.7%. This result indicates that a high majority of the respondents agreed that they are treated with respect in their university.

The finding revealed that Statement 4, 'I have considered leaving the university because I felt unwelcome', was ranked the low level of agreement among the respondents with a mean score of 1.74 and a percentage of 34.8%, this percentage indicates that only about a third of the participants agreed with the statement, while the majority of the students did not consider leaving the university due to feeling unwelcome.

The following sub-section highlights the importance of presenting detailed results for each university separately. Since the sample comprised fifty participants in each university, it is possible to gain insight into the similarities and differences in the perceptions of students from each university. Furthermore, presenting the results separately for each university allows for a more targeted approach towards identifying areas of improvement or satisfaction within each institution.

4.4.2 Theme One - Access, Experience and Learning

Table 4.2

Mean and Standard Deviation of Theme 1. Access, Experience, and Learning on Campus among Three Universities

University	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Emerald	50	47.14	6.03
Modern	50	47.08	3.15
Faith	50	36.40	1.82

Table 4.2 shows that there is variation in the mean score of the access, experience and learning related responses across different universities. The results indicate that while the mean scores for Emerald university and Modern university are relatively close (47.14 and 47.08, respectively), the mean score for Faith university was significantly lower at 36.40, implying less favourable experiences for Muslim students. To test the statistical significance of the differences in mean scores between the universities, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) test was performed at an alpha level of 0.05 ($\alpha=0.05$).

Table 4.3

Results of One-Way ANOVA Test on the Variables of Theme 1: Access, Experience, and Learning at Different Universities

Source of variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	3823.56	2	1911.78		
Within Groups	2433.7	147	16.556	115.475	<.001
Total	6257.26	149			

Table 4.3 clearly shows that there is a significant difference between the universities in regard to the variables of access, experience and learning on campus, with the significant value being less than 0.001. To investigate this difference between the groups further, I applied the Scheffe test. The results obtained from the Scheffe test demonstrated a statistically significant

difference in the variables of access, experience, and learning on campus ($F(2, 147) = 246.835$, $p < 0.001$). The Scheffe test is a post-hoc test that compares all possible pairs of group means following an ANOVA test. Thus, whereas the ANOVA test assessed whether there were significant differences in access, experience and learning on campus among the three universities together, the Scheffe test determined which specific pairs of universities showed significant differences. Post-hoc tests using Tukey's HSD also demonstrated that there was a significant difference between Emerald University and Faith University, as well as between Modern University and Faith University.

Table 4.4

Scheffe Test Results for Theme 1: Access, Experience, and Learning on Campus across Universities

(I) University	(J) University	Mean Difference (I-J)	Sig.
Emerald	Modern	0.06	0.997
Emerald	Faith	10.74	<.001
Modern	Faith	10.68	<.001

The results of the Scheffe test are presented in Table 4.5. The table displays the mean score differences and corresponding significance levels (Sig.) for each pair of universities (Emerald - Modern, Emerald - Faith, and Modern - Faith).

Based on the data, it is evident that while there was no significant difference in terms of variables of access, experience, and learning on campus between Emerald university and Modern university, there were significant differences in these areas between Emerald university and Faith university, as well as between Modern university and Faith university. In both cases, the significance value of less than 0.001 indicates a very low possibility of these differences occurring by chance. It can therefore be concluded that students from Faith

university perceived significantly different levels of access, experience and learning on campus compared to students from Emerald and Modern Universities.

4.4.3 Theme Two – Inclusive Environments and Facilities

The subsequent step involved analysing theme two of the study, emphasising inclusive environments and facilities on campus. The statistical findings for this analysis are presented in Table 4.6, which shows the mean, standard deviation, percentage and ranking across the whole sample of participants. In order to fully grasp the context and meaning behind the statements listed in Table 4.5, it is necessary to refer to the question that asked participants, "In your opinion, during your learning at university, how often have you interacted in a meaningful way with people?".

Table 4.5

Statistical Results of Theme 2. Inclusive Environments and Facilities for the Three Universities

Statements	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Percentage	Ranking
1. whose religious beliefs are different than your own.	150	2.19	1.36	43.7%	4
2. whose identity are different from your own.	150	2.63	1.10	52.7%	3
3. who are of a different nationality than yourself.	150	3.15	1.26	62.9%	2
4. whose gender is different than yourself.	150	1.98	1.24	39.6%	5
5. who are from a different social class.	150	3.23	1.20	64.7%	1

The results show that the first ranked statement 5, 'who are from a different social class's had a mean score of 3.23 and a percentage of 64.7%. This suggests successful efforts by these universities to promote social mobility and widen participation. The statement ranked second is statement 3, 'who are of a different nationality than yourself', with a mean score of 3.15 and percentage of 62.9%. The statement ranked third is statement 2, 'whose identity are different

from your own', with a mean of 2.63 and percentage of 52.7%. The statement ranked last is statement 4, 'whose gender is different than yourself', with a mean score of 1.98 and percentage of 39.6%. The following quantitative analysis focuses on analysing theme two across the three selected universities.

Table 4.6

Mean and Standard Deviation of Theme 2: Inclusive Environments and Facilities according to University

University	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Emerald	50	18.62	2.47
Modern	50	11.00	1.54
Faith	50	9.92	0.99

Table 4.6 shows that there is variation in the mean scores in respect to the provision of inclusive environments and facilities across the different universities. A one-way ANOVA test was conducted to investigate if this variation is statistically significant, with a significance level (α) of 0.05. The results are presented in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7

Results of One-Way ANOVA Test for Theme 2: Inclusive Environments and Facilities according to the University

Source of variance	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2248.68	2	1124.34		
Within Groups	461.46	147	3.14	358.16	<.001
Total	2710.14	149			

Based on the data presented in Table 4.8, it is clear that there is a statistically significant difference in the mean scores regarding the provision of inclusive environments and facilities

across different universities ($\alpha < 0.001$). A Scheffe test was conducted to explore this further. The results are presented in Table 4.9.

Table 4.8

Scheffe Test of Theme 2: Inclusive Environments and Facilities according to University

(I) University	(J) University	Mean Difference (I-J)	Sig.
Emerald	Modern	7.62	<.001
Emerald	Faith	8.70	<.001
Modern	Faith	1.08	0.011

The data presented in Table 4.8 show significant differences in the inclusive environments and facilities between Emerald university and Modern university, between Emerald university and Faith university, and between Modern university and Faith university, as all the significance values are less than 0.001.

4.4.4 Emerald University

Table 4.9

Statistical Results for Theme 1: Access, Experience, and Learning on Campus, for Emerald University

Statemnets	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Percentage	Ranking
1. I feel valued as an individual in my university.	50	3.10	0.46	62.0%	9
2. I feel I belong in my university.	50	3.78	0.58	75.6%	5
3. My university has a strong commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusivity.	50	3.14	0.81	62.8%	8
4. I have considered leaving the university because I felt unwelcome.	50	1.32	0.84	26.4%	12
5. I am treated with respect in my university.	50	3.96	0.35	79.2%	2
6. I feel others don't value my opinions in my university.	50	1.38	0.81	27.6%	11
7. University is a place where I am able to perform to my full potential.	50	3.74	0.75	74.8%	6
8. I have opportunities in my university to achieve academic success that is similar to those of my peers.	50	3.82	0.60	76.4%	4
9. There is too much emphasis put on issues of equality, diversity and inclusivity in my university	50	3.52	1.01	70.4%	7
10. My university provides sufficient resources to foster the success of a diverse student body.	50	4.30	1.39	86.0%	1
11. I have to work harder than others to be valued equally at university.	50	1.42	1.11	28.4%	10
12. My experience at university has had a positive influence on my academic growth.	50	3.90	0.54	78.0%	3

The results show that the statement ranked first was statement 10, 'My university provides sufficient resources to foster the success of a diverse student body', with a mean score of 4.30 and a percentage of 86.0%. Statement 5, 'I am treated with respect in my university', followed with a mean score of 3.96 and a percentage of 79.2%. The statement ranked third rank was statement 12, 'my experience at university has had a positive influence on my academic growth', with a mean score of 3.90 and a percentage of 78.0%. The lowest ranked statement, meanwhile, was statement 4, 'I have considered leaving the university because I felt unwelcome', with a mean score of 1.32 and percentage of 26.4%. This indicates that the majority of the respondents did not consider leaving the university due to feeling unwelcome.

Table 4.10

Statistical Results of Theme 2: Inclusive Environments and Facilities, for Emerald University

Statements	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Percentage	Ranking
1. ..whose religious beliefs are different than your own.	50	3.80	0.78	76.0%	3
2. ..whose identity are different from your own.	50	3.94	0.47	78.8%	2
3. ..who are of a different nationality than yourself.	50	3.30	1.27	66.0%	5
4. ..whose gender is different than yourself.	50	3.38	1.09	67.6%	4
5. ..who are from a different social class.	50	4.20	0.40	84.0%	1

According to the results, the statement ranked first was statement 5, ' who are from a different social class', with a mean score of 4.20 and a percentage of 84.0%. The statement ranked second was statement 2, 'whose identity are different from your own', with a mean of 3.94 and a percentage of 78.8%. The statement ranked third was statement 1, 'whose religious beliefs are different than your own', with a mean score of 3.80 and a percentage of 76.0%. The statement ranked last, with a mean score of 3.30 and a percentage of 66.0%, was statement 3, ' who are of a different nationality than yourself'.

4.4.5 Modern University

Table 4.11

Statistical Results of Theme 1: Access, Experience and Learning on Campus, for Modern University

Statements	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Percentage	Ranking
1. I feel valued as an individual in my university.	50	4.06	0.37	81.2%	3
2. I feel I belong in my university.	50	3.28	0.88	65.6%	8
3. My university has a strong commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusivity.	50	4.52	0.61	90.4%	1
4. I have considered leaving the university because I felt unwelcome.	50	1.06	0.24	21.2%	12
5. I am treated with respect in my university.	50	4.32	0.47	86.4%	2
6. I feel others don't value my opinions in my university.	50	1.08	0.27	21.6%	11
7. University is a place where I am able to perform to my full potential.	50	3.78	0.62	75.6%	6
8. I have opportunities in my university to achieve academic success that is similar to those of my peers.	50	3.92	0.40	78.4%	4
9. There is too much emphasis put on issues of equality, diversity and inclusivity in my university	50	3.80	0.73	76.0%	5
10. My university provides sufficient resources to foster the success of a diverse student body.	50	2.40	0.88	48.0%	9
11. I have to work harder than others to be valued equally at university.	50	2.14	0.57	42.8%	10
12. My experience at university has had a positive influence on my academic growth.	50	3.28	0.73	65.6%	7

The results show that the statement ranked first was statement 3, 'My university has a strong commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusivity', with a mean score of 4.52 and a percentage of 90.4%. Statement 5, 'I am treated with respect in my university', was the statement ranked second, with a mean score of 4.32 and a percentage of 86.4%. The statement ranked third was statement 1, 'I feel valued as an individual in my university', with a mean score of (4.06) and a percentage of (81.2%). The statement ranked last was statement 4, 'I have considered leaving the university because I felt unwelcome', with a mean of 1.06 and percentage of 21.2%.

Table 4.12

Statistical Results of Theme 2. Inclusive Environments and Facilities for Modern University

Statements	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Percentage	Ranking
1. ..whose religious beliefs are different than your own.	50	1.52	0.91	30.4%	4
2. ..whose identity are different from your own.	50	2.22	0.74	44.4%	2
3. ..who are of a different nationality than yourself.	50	1.98	0.38	39.6%	3
4. ..whose gender is different than yourself.	50	1.48	0.61	29.6%	5
5. ..who are from a different social class.	50	3.80	0.45	76.0%	1

According to the results presented in Table 4.12, statement 5, 'who are from a different social class', was the highest-ranking statement, with a mean score of 3.80 and a percentage of 76.0%. The second highest ranked statement was statement 1, 'whose identity is different from your own', which has a mean score of 2.22 and a percentage of 44.4%. The third ranked statement was statement 3, 'who are of a different nationality than yourself', which exhibits a mean score of 1.98 and a percentage of 39.6%. Finally, the statement ranked the lowest was statement 1, 'whose gender is different than your own', with a mean score of 1.48 and a percentage of 29.6%.

4.4.6 Faith University

Table 4.13

Statistical Results of Theme 1. Access, Experience, and Learning on Campus for Faith University

Statements	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Percentage	Ranking
1. I feel valued as an individual in my university.	50	1.86	0.53	37.2%	11
2. I feel I belong in my university.	50	2.72	0.70	54.4%	9
3. My university has a strong commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusivity.	50	1.00	0.00	20.0%	12
4. I have considered leaving the university because I felt unwelcome.	50	2.84	0.55	56.8%	8
5. I am treated with respect in my university.	50	4.12	0.33	82.4%	6
6. I feel others don't value my opinions in my university.	50	4.74	0.96	94.8%	3
7. University is a place where I am able to perform to my full potential.	50	4.90	0.58	98.0%	2
8. I have opportunities in my university to achieve academic success that is similar to those of my peers.	50	4.96	0.20	99.2%	1
9. There is too much emphasis put on issues of equality, diversity and inclusivity in my university	50	2.60	0.76	52.0%	10
10. My university provides sufficient resources to foster the success of a diverse student body.	50	3.94	0.42	78.8%	7
11. I have to work harder than others to be valued equally at university.	50	4.36	0.98	87.2%	4
12. My experience at university has had a positive influence on my academic growth.	50	4.24	0.43	84.8%	5

The results show that the statement ranked first was statement 8, 'I have opportunities in my university to achieve academic success that is similar to those of my peers', with a mean score of 4.96 and a percentage of 99.2%. Statement 7, 'University is a place where I am able to perform to my full potential' was the statement ranked second, with a mean score of 4.90 and a percentage of 98.0%. The statement ranked third was statement 6, 'I feel others don't value my opinions in my university', with a mean score of 4.74 and a percentage of 94.8%. The statement ranked last was statement 3, 'My university has a strong commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusivity', with a mean score of 1.00 and a percentage of 20.0%.

Table 4.14*Statistical Results of Theme 2. Inclusive Environments and Facilities for Faith University.*

Statements	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Percentage	Ranking
1. ..whose religious beliefs are different than your own.	50	1.24	0.43	24.8%	4
2. ..whose identity are different from your own.	50	1.74	0.44	34.8%	2
3. ..who are of a different nationality than yourself.	50	4.16	0.79	83.2%	1
4. ..whose gender is different than yourself.	50	1.08	0.27	21.6%	5
5. ..who are from a different social class.	50	1.70	0.58	34.0%	3

According to Table 4.14, the statement ranked first was statement 3, 'who are of a different nationality than yourself', with a mean score of 4.16 and a percentage of 83.2%. The statement ranked second was statement 2, 'whose identity are different from your own', with a mean of 1.74 and a percentage of 34.8%. The statement ranked third was statement 5, 'who are from a different social class', with a mean score of 1.70 and percentage of 34.0%. The statement ranked last was statement 4, 'whose gender is different than yourself', with a mean score of 1.08 and a percentage of 21.6%.

Overall, the analysis of quantitative data across three universities indicated positive ratings for academic opportunities and respect, emphasising academic success opportunities. Participants varied in their levels of agreement regarding feeling unwelcome. Notable differences in access, experience, and learning were evident, with Faith university notably differing from Emerald and Modern Universities. Inclusive environments and facilities assessment revealed a focus on interactions with individuals from diverse backgrounds, underscoring efforts to promote campus diversity and social mobility. Emerald university excelled in Theme 1, receiving high ratings for resources, respectful treatment, and academic influence, yet showcasing lower agreement on feeling unwelcome. Theme two for Emerald university highlighted strong ratings for interactions with individuals from different social

classes and identities, reflecting a commitment to inclusivity. Modern university's Theme one results showed high ratings for equality, inclusivity, and feeling valued, with lower agreement noted on considering leaving due to feeling unwelcome. These quantitative findings provide valuable insights into the perspectives of the participants. In the next section, I analysis the qualitative findings to gain a deeper understanding of the underlying experiences shared by the respondents.

4.5 Qualitative Findings

To better understand the above data, this section explores the qualitative data elicited from semi-structured interviews (see Appendix V). The interview schedule and questions provided the initial codes and themes, while further themes and sub-themes emerged from the data (see Figure 4.2). The quantitative data had revealed some issues which needed to be explored in depth and so the interview questions were designed based on both the RQs and the quantitative data from the questionnaire. Approximately twenty-three primary questions were posed during the interview stage, and numerous follow-up questions were generated based on the responses received from the participants. For this study, a set of six interviewees was chosen from each of the three different universities (Emerald, Modern and Faith), based on their voluntary agreement in the questionnaire. This meant that eighteen interviews were conducted in total. Demographic details of the participants were gathered as explained in Section 3.9.

Similar to the previous section, the findings are organised based on two overarching themes, with each university discussed separately. The purpose of this section is to examine the Muslim students' perceptions of the policies adopted by their universities to protect religion and belief (RQ1). The first segment of the section deals with theme one and theme two, as they pertain to the policies of Emerald university. The second section explores the corresponding themes in Modern university, and the third focuses on Faith university. Remarkably, the

qualitative data encompassed a total of 18 participants, with 6 individuals representing each university involved in the study.

4.5.1 Emerald University

The interviews provided insight into the access to learning resources and the response of the educational institution to the needs of Muslim students. Eman, highlighted a negative experience with the university's response to her need for time off during religious holidays. She felt that the university was not keen on helping the students and was focused on 'dumping' work on them rather than giving access to resources:

"When we ask them, for example, for a holiday because we have a religious holiday, they don't, you don't see that they're keen on helping you, they're more focused on just dumping work on us, instead of giving access to resources." (Participant, Eman)

Esraa expressed a positive experience with access to learning resources, but she felt that she was not welcomed by some people in the community. She believed that some people are not capable of accepting people from diverse backgrounds:

"I felt that I wasn't like being welcomed by others... I believe that some people are accepting for Muslim students, but others are not." (Participant, Esraa)

Ekram, had an experience with the university's policies on allowing Muslim students to contribute to and access societies, such as the Islamic society. Ebtihal found the access to information easy because the university provides them with the necessary information. Estabriq, acknowledged that they have the same access as everyone else.

In addition, the interview findings provided in this subtheme provide insights into the experiences of Muslim students with regards to the learning opportunities and support available to them at Emerald university. Eman, expressed concern about the workload, particularly in relation to the need to search for resources on their own. She required specific obligations or rituals, she felt overwhelmed by the workload and struggled to balance her academic

responsibilities with her religious duties. She also felt that the university did not provide adequate information about where Muslim students could join related to Muslim student societies, prayer spaces, or Muslim support services available on campus. She hoped that the university would be able to develop more diverse extracurricular activities, improved accessibility services, and stronger career support.

"And I felt like the workload was a lot more than I was used toand we have to search more most of the things on our own, but what is provided is provided for all nationalities" (Participant, Eman).

Esraa felt that she has not been given the chance to raise awareness about Islam and other religions among other people.

"I'm not given any opportunity to learn about any different religions...the only way to combat this discrimination is by raising awareness and making sure that they're aware of accepting other religions and students that come from different backgrounds than them" (Participant, Esraa).

Similarly, Ebtihal, called for respect for their religion.

"I think I believe that what I need is respect. So, I need them to respect our religion..." (Participant, Ebtihal).

Ekram expressed some positive experiences with fellow students learning about their culture and beliefs on campus. They also had events created by the Muslim community. Estabriq stressed the need for more awareness about the Muslim community and more one-to-one support from teachers. Ehaab, wished there were more opportunities to learn about Islam and Muslim cultures on campus.

The interviews also provided insights into the experiences of Muslim students, and their overall satisfaction with their experiences on campus at Emerald university. Eman felt that the university did not address their beliefs and cultures, making it challenging to adjust. She felt the university emphasised certain things and left others out, leading to a negative first

impression. Esraa, expressed negative experiences with discrimination and a need for support services and awareness-raising activities.

Ekram emphasised the importance of making Muslim students feel at home, providing support for their beliefs, and celebrating their culture.

And making us feel like we're home, we are celebrating our same beliefs and celebrate and mentioning our situation...Because this in our generation, our generation is really supportive and helpful and our universities are really helpful too" (Participant, Ekram).

Ebtihal highlighted the positive implications of prayer rooms being available on campus but expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of Halal options. She also saw that one of the prayer rooms was vandalised, and the university did nothing about it. Estabriq, expressed overall satisfaction but experienced discrimination in her biology and chemistry classes from teachers who did not treat her and other Muslim students equally.

"Overall, it's good. However, I did see some discrimination I faced during...our [....] students were late for maybe five minutes. The [...] teacher was really disrespectful...he didn't provide the same...response to non-quality students or British students...As for the British students, he handled it like they did not even come late. So, it's a little discrimination. However, even in my [...] class, the [...] teacher always teachers or like has eye contact with a bit of students. However, he doesn't do any eye contact with Arab students as if like they are the other one...Because they are Muslims" (Participant, Ebtihal).

Finally, Ehaab appreciated the university's efforts to make him feel valued as a member of the community.

"I appreciate that my university helps me feel like a valued member of the community" (Participant, Ehaab).

Moreover, the interviews provided insights into the experiences of Muslim students regarding an inclusive environment on campus at Emerald university. Overall, there were some positive experiences but also challenges faced by Muslim students.

Eman believed the university could do more in bringing light issues that Muslim students might face in respect to inclusivity, as well as taking more initiative to address specific Muslim requests in the university environment.

"I feel like the university can be more including for the situations or just to bring light to some sort of issues that my our that they understand and that they acknowledge that we as Muslims might have specific requests, like time off for a specific holiday or even to acknowledge that there might be inequalities, and if there is to come to them" (Participant, Eman).

Esraa expressed fear of not being welcomed by others on campus.

"I felt that I wasn't... being welcomed by others... sometimes like I feel afraid of going to the university...the only way in order to combat this discrimination is by raising awareness and making sure that they're aware of accepting other religions and students that come from different backgrounds as them." (Participant, Esraa)

Ekram found that an inclusive environment helped in fostering understanding among students in her university. Ebtihal, however, felt that the university was not inclusive enough and that she needed to be surrounded by a diverse group of people, and that those people needed to understand her religion and beliefs fully.

"Not inclusive environment, I need to be surrounded by diversity of people and students and I need them to be understanding of my religion and beliefs and treat me normally" (Participant, Ebtihal).

She also said:

"I feel like it's difficult because my university don't have us mixed with other people other than Muslims and my nationality. So, it's difficult, but in semester two, there are a couple of shared lectures with other nationalities but not as much as there should be" (Participant, Ebtihal).

Estabriq, another first-year undergraduate student, acknowledged that there is discrimination on campus but appreciated the university's efforts to create a safe space for everyone to express themselves.

"There is a discrimination, but I think they try understanding, and respecting others' perspectives, and creating a safe space for everyone to express themselves" (Participant, Estabriq).

Finally, Ehaab found it challenging to connect with other students who share his beliefs on campus.

"I don't feel like there's a strong Muslim community on campus. It can be hard to connect with others who share my beliefs" (Participant, Ehaab).

Another theme identified from the interview responses relates to the facilities available on campus for Muslim students. The interviewees primarily commented on the availability of Halal food options and the inadequacy of specific prayer rooms for Muslim students. Eman and Ekram mentioned that there is a multifaith room available on the campus, but it is not specific to Muslim students. Esraa added that the academic calendar does not include breaks for Islamic religious holidays.

"Academic calendar breaks are not for Islamic religious holidays, and some rooms are not specifically for us but all can access the faith room, and all boys and girls from different religions can access the faith room" (Participant, Esraa).

Ebtihal highlighted the lack of Halal food options and the need for more prayer rooms specific to the Muslim community. Estabriq reiterated the same issue regarding the absence of Halal food options at parties on campus. Ehaab expressed his frustration with the limited availability of Halal food options on campus, and how prayer rooms can be crowded, dirty and uncomfortable.

From the above data, it noticeable that while there were some negative experiences reported by Muslim students in Emerald university, there were also positive experiences expressed by other students, particularly with regard to access to learning resources and policies for Muslim students to contribute to academic affairs. Specifically, two students, Eman and Estabriq, expressed negative experiences relating to the university's handling of their religious holidays and discrimination in their classes, respectively. On the other hand, four

students, Esraa, Ekram, Ebtihal and Ehaab, reported positive experiences with regard to access to learning resources and support services.

Table 4.15

Summary of Student Experiences regarding Access to Resources, Learning Opportunities, Inclusivity, and Facilities for Muslim Students at Emerald University

Students	Eman	Estabriq	Esraa	Ekram	Ebtehal	Ehaab
Experience	Negative	Negative	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive

Looking at the data in Table 4.15, it is evident that there were both positive and negative experiences reported. Two students, Eman and Estabriq, represented the minority with negative experiences, highlighting issues with religious holidays and discrimination. On the contrary, the majority of students (Esraa, Ekram, Ebtihal, and Ehaab) expressed positive experiences, emphasising access to learning resources and supportive services.

4.5.2 Modern University

The subtheme that emerges from these interview responses is access to resources for Muslim students on campus. While some interviewees did not mention any particular policies related to access, others pointed out certain areas where they either had good access or faced difficulties.

Mai, for instance, spoke about the challenges she faced in finding a suitable place to pray on campus. She expressed her dissatisfaction with the lack of access to prayer facilities and the need to leave the campus to pray. Mariam, on the other hand, felt that as a Muslim student, she had good access to learning resources on a wide range of topics, including religion:

"I think I have a good as a Muslim student, I have a good level of access to learning resources when it comes to any material, even regarding religion regarding my own religion, or any other topic" (Participant, Mariam).

Maria appreciated the wide range of societies on campus and the promotion of activities and access through Instagram and other channels of communication:

"The wide range of societies that are available on campus and our allow us to do so, I think that you know, the university's Instagram pages, and their promotions really help us with this" (Participant, Maria).

Malika, however, expressed her concerns about unclear policies and lack of information regarding access to resources for Muslim students:

"I just wish they would make it clearer what the policies are, and where we can go if we have questions or concerns" (Participant, Malika).

She added:

"I feel like the information is sort of hidden away, like they don't want to talk about it. It makes me feel like my beliefs aren't valued" (Participant, Malika).

Mohammad, on the other hand, felt free to express his Islamic attitude without any restrictions at the university. He did not feel that his accent reflected his religion or created any problems for him.

The interview responses also highlighted the subtheme of learning as experienced by Muslim students on campus. Several interviewees highlighted the need for more support, resources and events that specifically address the experiences of Muslim students.

Mai found the library resources to be quite useful for Muslim students, and she felt that these resources were available to all students regardless of their religious background. Mariam found that while the university discouraged discrimination, it did not provide much information about religion or offer specific classes or events to educate students about various religious beliefs.

"But I was able to personally learn from the students themselves and from my classmates and peers, but the university would rarely talk about religion in order to spread information in regard to the religion, they would all they would talk about is just letting us know that we can't criticise each other we can't discriminate anyone in regard to their religion, but that's all there is" (Participant, Mai).

Maha, on the other hand, expressed her desire for more events catering specifically to Muslim students in order to help them better integrate into the campus community. Maria had no complaints about discrimination or unequal access to learning opportunities. Malika expressed her frustration at the lack of understanding about religious beliefs and the prevalence of stereotypes and assumptions on campus. She wished that the university would offer more classes and events that focused on different religious beliefs to promote greater understanding and communication between students with different backgrounds.

"I feel like there's so much we could learn from each other, but we never get the chance. I wish there were more classes or events that focused on religion and belief" (Participant, Maha).

She also reported:

"I feel like there's a lack of understanding about different religious beliefs on campus. People make assumptions and stereotypes that aren't accurate, and it's frustrating" (Participant, Maha).

Mohammad felt that the university had provided him with all the necessary instruments for his lab work and did not require any specific support as a Muslim student.

The subtheme identified from the interview responses was the personal experience of Muslim students on campus. The responses broadly reflected either a positive experience or a negative one. Mai and Mariam had a positive experience, where they felt supported and respected for their religious beliefs on campus. Mai noted how her supervisor was supportive when she faced an uncomfortable situation. Mariam found that Islam was talked about only briefly, but it was still a positive experience for her.

Maha and Maria had a relatively neutral experience, where they felt that they received the same access and opportunities as other students on campus. Maha only suggested that more events and resources catering to Muslim students would be helpful, while Maria only expressed that she did not experience any particular discrimination or criticism. Malika and Mohammad, however, had negative experiences, where they felt that they did not receive the same level of respect and support for their religion on campus. Malika experienced insensitive comments, such as derogatory remarks about her religious attire, from her professors and did not feel like it was a safe space for her to express herself:

"I don't feel like the university really cares about my religious beliefs. I've had professors make insensitive comments, and I don't feel like it's a safe space for me to express myself" (Participant, Malika).

Mohammad shared his concerns about incidents of racism and bias towards Muslim students on campus, and how he had heard from others about their experiences of discrimination, such as being subjected to additional scrutiny or suspicion by campus authorities.

Another subtheme that emerged from the interviewees' responses was the inclusivity of the campus environment towards Muslim students. Mai expressed the difficulty in finding facilities for prayer and attending Islamic holidays. On the other hand, Mariam found it nice to be around people from different backgrounds, while Maha noted the lack of representation of Muslim students in some departments and areas of the campus.

"I can find that especially like in some department, like the placement department, cafeteria, we don't see like ladies or even men who are Muslim or who like they can tell you something special about your background. So, I don't, it can be better. It can be a better representation" (Participant, Maha).

Maria perceived no discrimination from staff and professors towards Muslim students. Malika emphasised the importance of feeling included in the university community, noting that inclusivity is important for all students, not just Muslim students. Mohammad felt that the university was keen on inclusion and perceived no racism:

"I think the university is keen to provide the students with inclusion. There is no racism..." (Participant, Mohammad).

Another subtheme that emerged from the interviewees' responses was the availability and accessibility of facilities on campus for Muslim students. Mai and Malika both noted difficulties in finding facilities for women's prayer rooms and Halal food options. Mai said that:

"The problem we face is that we don't have the facility for a prayer room for female Muslims, and no options concerning the Halal food" (Participant, Mai).

Mariam, on the other hand, mentioned that she was able to find prayer rooms on campus that were accessible to students at all times. Maria confirmed the availability of a prayer room and Halal food on campus. Mohammad described the multifaith place for praying, where anyone can perform their rituals with no limitations or restrictions, including for Muslim students:

"They provided a multifaith place for praying dissents, and you can find them Quran and the Bible. Anyone can do his rituals with no limitations or restrictions"(Participant, Mohammad).

From the above, it noticeable that the data collected from Muslim students at Modern university revealed theme one of *Access, Learning, Experience* and theme two *Inclusive environment, and Facilities*, with a mix of positive, neutral and negative experiences reported by the participants. While some Muslim students felt supported and respected for their religious beliefs on their campus, others experienced discrimination and a lack of adequate resources and facilities.

Table 4.16

Summary of Student Experiences regarding Access to Resources, Learning Opportunities, Inclusivity, and Facilities for Muslim Students at Modern University

Students	Malika	Mohammad	Mai	Mariam	Maha	Maria
Experience	Negative	Negative	Positive	Positive	Neutral	Neutral

Looking at the data in Table 4.16, it is apparent that the majority of students (2 out of 6) reported a "Positive" experience, with an equal number of students reporting a "Negative" experience. The remaining students indicated a "Neutral" experience. Reflecting on the qualitative data provided, two students, Malika and Mohammad, shared negative experiences while Mai and Mariam expressed positive experiences regarding access to resources, learning opportunities, personal experiences, inclusivity, and campus facilities for Muslim students. In contrast, Maha and Maria reported neutral experiences.

4.5.3 Faith University

The subtheme identified from the interview responses was access to resources related to religion and belief on campus. The responses indicated that Muslim students felt that there was a lack of access and representation regarding policies related to religion and belief on campus.

Fai felt that there was a lack of acknowledgement and representation for Muslim students on campus, which limited their access to resources. Fatima mentioned that there were no policies regarding religion and belief representation on campus, and the awareness regarding access accommodations for religious practices is inadequate that there may be a lack of information or resources available to support students in practising their religion on campus:

"My university doesn't have any policies regarding access to represent religion or belief" (Participant, Fai).

Also, she stated that:

"There is no awareness regarding access accommodations for religious practices"
(Participant, Fai).

Farah expressed that she found it difficult to navigate and understand the policies in place since there was no accessible information related to religion and belief policies.

"Information related to religion and belief policies is not accessible and not provided in a clear manner for us, which makes it difficult to navigate and understand the policies in place" (Participant, Farah).

Farida noted that the policies to protect religion and belief are not accessible to all students, specifically Muslim students.

"I think the policy of the university to protect religion and belief is only accessible to students who come from certain religious backgrounds, mainly Christianity on our campus" (Participant, Farida).

Faisal mentioned a lack of access to resources such as books, articles and other materials related to policies protecting religion and belief for all students, including Muslim ones.

"Access to resources such as books, articles, and other materials related to religion and belief protecting policies not available for all students, including Muslim students"
(Participant, Faisal).

Another sub-theme that emerged from the interviewees' responses was the lack of opportunities and resources for students on campus to learn about different religions and cultures. All the interviewees expressed a desire for more awareness and education about cultural and religious diversity.

Specifically, Fai mentioned the need for more support for the Islamic society, which lacked members and did not provide opportunities for learning about Islam. Fatima added that the university as a whole does not create many chances for students to interact with each other and learn about different cultures, beliefs and customs. She also noted that there are no classes,

workshops or events that provide students with opportunities to learn about different cultures and religions.

"My university doesn't create opportunities for students to interact with each other and learn about different cultures, beliefs, and customs" (Participant, Fai).

Farah echoes this sentiment, stating that the university does not provide opportunities for learning about different religions, as it mainly focuses on academic topics:

"Opportunities to learn about different religions are lacking in the university, well... we just focusing on our academic topics" (Participant, Farah).

Farida suggested that the university could include religious diversity in the curriculum, which would help create awareness about tolerance and respect for all faiths:

"I don't know...the university could include religious diversity in the curriculum and teach students about different religions. This will create awareness about tolerance and respect for all faiths" (Participant, Farida).

Faisal also noted the lack of opportunities for staff and students to learn about diverse Muslim cultures and beliefs through events, workshops and classes.

".. our university does not provide opportunities for staff and students to learn about diverse Muslim cultures and beliefs through events, workshops, and classes" (Participant, Faisal).

Fahad emphasises the need for more activities and resources for Islam and Muslim students.

"I don't see any activated for Islam or for Muslim student or I don't know why there is not any awareness as well" (Participant, Fahad).

A subtheme that emerged from the interviewees' responses was the experience of discrimination and lack of support for Muslim students at the university. All of the interviewees, except for Fahad, expressed negative experiences and feelings towards their campus experience. Fai mentions experiencing racism towards her religion, making it difficult for her to feel accepted in the university environment.

"I've been struggling a lot with feeling accepted in my university as I feel like there's a lot of racism towards my religion" (Participant, Fai).

Fatima agreed that there is no support for Muslim students on campus, leading to discrimination based on religion. Farah notes the lack of accurate representation of her religion and beliefs in the university community, and how this led to a lack of respect and understanding.

"I do not feel that my religion and belief are accurately represented in my university community, which does not foster respect and understanding" (Participant, Fatima)

Farida shared an incident of negativity from her peers based on her faith, which was not acted upon by the university management.

"I have experienced negativity from my peers on several occasions because of my faith. When I reported this issue to university management, they didn't take any action" (Participant, Farida).

Faisal desires fair and accurate representation of his religion and beliefs in the university community, which fosters respect and understanding.

"As a Muslim student, I would want to see fair and accurate representation of my religion and belief in my university community that fosters respect and understanding because this not applicant" (Participant, Faisal).

In contrast, Fahad expressed no negative experiences or feelings towards the university.

"I don't see anything that makes me sad or like this in this university" (Participant, Fahad).

Another subtheme that emerged from the interviewees' responses was the lack of an inclusive environment for Muslim students on campus. Fai noted the lack of opportunities for Muslims in the university environment due to a lack of awareness about different religions.

"I feel like there's not much awareness when it comes to different religions...there is no opportunities for Muslims in my university environment" (Participant, Fai).

Fatima agreed and added that the university does not facilitate interaction between students from different religious backgrounds, which hinders the formation of communities.

"My university doesn't create any opportunities for me to connect with each other and form communities" (Participant, Fatima).

She also reported that:

"Interacting with students from different religious backgrounds is not facilitated by my university" (Participant, Fatima).

Farah expressed feeling unwelcome in the student community due to the university environment's lack of inclusivity towards Muslims.

"I do not feel very welcomed in the student community at my university since the university environment is not very inclusive towards Muslims in general" (Participant, Farah).

Farida suggested that the university needs to create a more inclusive environment for all faiths if it is to be a welcoming place for students from diverse backgrounds.

"I think my university needs to create a more inclusive environment for all faiths if they want to be a welcoming place for students from diverse backgrounds" (Participant, Farida).

Faisal, on the other hand, did feel as if he was a part of the student community at his university, indicating a more inclusive experience. Fahad expressed general happiness with joining the university but also noted the lack of attention towards Islam and Muslims as a concern.

"I am happy to join with this university. But we're not talking about most Islam and Muslim in general" (Participant, Fahad).

A subtheme that emerges from the interviewees' responses was the lack of facilities on campus to support Muslim students, such as prayer rooms and Halal food options. Fai noted the absence of a prayer room, which is essential for Muslim students to practise their faith. Fai also highlighted that the university's exam schedule in the holy month of Ramadan indicated a lack of respect for Muslim students.

"They don't even give us a prayer room.... There is no prayer room. The most important month for us Muslims is the holy month of Ramadan, and they don't even respect that. All our exams are scheduled in this month" (Participant, Fai).

Fatima agreed with Fai and added that no facilities are provided to support Muslim students, such as prayer rooms and Halal food options.

"No facilities are provided such as prayer rooms and Halal food options to support Muslim students" (Participant, Fatima).

Farah mentioned the availability of an outdoor garden for practising faith but noted its unsuitability for Islamic women's prayer. Farida reiterated the lack of prayer rooms and Halal food options on campus for Muslim students. Faisal noted the absence of facilities to support Muslim students on campus, such as prayer rooms and Halal food options, and Fahad shared his experience of not having specific places to pray on campus.

From the above, it is noticeable that Muslim students at Faith university feel that there is a lack of representation and acknowledgement regarding religion and belief on campus, which limits their access to resources. Similarly, there is a lack of opportunities for students to learn about different religions and cultures, and a lack of support for Muslim students. Negative experiences of discrimination and lack of support are also common among the interviewees. Based on the data provided, there are five students with a negative experience (Fai, Fatima, Farah, Farida, and Faisal) and one student with a neutral experience (Fahad) regarding access to resources related to religion and belief, opportunities for learning about different religions and cultures, and discrimination and lack of support for Muslim students at the university; All the interviewees, except for Fahad, however, expressed negative experiences and feelings about their campus experience related to discrimination and lack of support for Muslim students.

Table 4.17

Summary of Student Experiences regarding Access to Resources, Learning Opportunities, Inclusivity, and Facilities for Muslim Students at Faith University

Students	Fai	Fatima	Farah	Farida	Faisal	Fahad
Experience	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Neutral

Looking at the data in Table 4.17, the majority of students (Fai, Fatima, Farah, Farida, and Faisal) expressed negative experiences in contrast to one student (Fahad) who reported a neutral experience. These findings indicate a prevalent trend of negative experiences in terms of discrimination and lack of support for Muslim students at the university.

4.6 Summary

The research findings in this chapter present the perceptions of Muslim students regarding English universities' policies protecting religion and belief. The data from questionnaires and interviews were divided into two themes: access, experience, and learning on campus, and inclusion and facilities available on campus. Quantitative data in the form of means and standard deviations were presented for each statement related to both theme one and theme two. Qualitative data in the form of participants' quotations were also presented, and the level of satisfaction expressed by Muslim students regarding the case study universities' policies protecting religion was analysed.

First, the study analysed the variations in the mean scores of *Access, Experience and Learning* on campus, and *Inclusive Environments and Facilities* across the three universities. The results showed a significant difference in these variables between Faith University and the other two universities, whereas there was no significant difference between Modern and Emerald University. The results for Emerald University indicated that the majority of Muslim students felt that their university provided sufficient resources to support a diverse student

body. Additionally, most students reported feeling respected within the university and stated that their experience at the university positively influenced their academic growth. Very few students reported feeling unwelcome enough to consider leaving the university.

Furthermore, the study explored the perceptions of Emerald university students towards interacting with individuals who had different social identities, such as religious beliefs, nationalities and social classes. The results revealed that students were most comfortable interacting with individuals from a different social class, followed by those whose identities were different from their own and those with different religious beliefs. Students were least comfortable interacting with individuals from different nationalities.

The Modern university results showed that the majority of Muslim students had a positive perception of their university, with the highest-ranked statement being the university's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusivity. The second highest-ranked statement was related to students feeling respected within the university, and the third highest-ranked statement was about students feeling valued as individuals in the university. Regarding the attitudes of Muslim students from Modern university towards interacting with individuals from different social identities, the results showed that students were most comfortable interacting with individuals from a different social class, followed by those with different identities.

A statistical analysis at Faith university highlights key findings on access, experience, and learning on campus. Notably, the findings indicated strong agreement among students regarding equal academic success opportunities, emphasising students' ability to reach their full potential within the university environment. These results reflected a significant sense of academic empowerment and fulfilment among Faith university participants, supporting academic growth and achievement. Findings identified from the interview responses centred around the lack of access to resources related to religion and beliefs on campus, particularly

concerning policies and accommodations for Muslim students. Fai highlighted the absence of acknowledgement and representation for Muslim students, limiting their resource access. Fatima echoed this sentiment, noting the absence of policies for religion and belief representation and inadequate awareness of access accommodations for religious practices. The participants expressed difficulties navigating campus policies due to the lack of accessible information on religious matters, as noted by Farah's experience. Farida raised concerns about accessibility to policies protecting religion and beliefs, emphasising a bias towards certain religious backgrounds. Faisal added to these concerns, citing a lack of access to resources like policies.

Overall, this chapter divided data into two main themes: access, experience, and learning on campus, and inclusion and available facilities. Through the presentation of quantitative data using descriptive statistics (e.g., means and standard deviations) and qualitative insights from participants' interview extracts, the research scrutinised the satisfaction levels among Muslim students concerning university policies on protecting religion. Noteworthy findings included significant variations in mean scores across themes among Faith university and comparison universities, with Emerald university showing strong support for diversity and respect towards students.

Chapter 5. Findings: How do the Three Universities Communicate their Policies for Protecting Religion and Belief to Muslim Students?

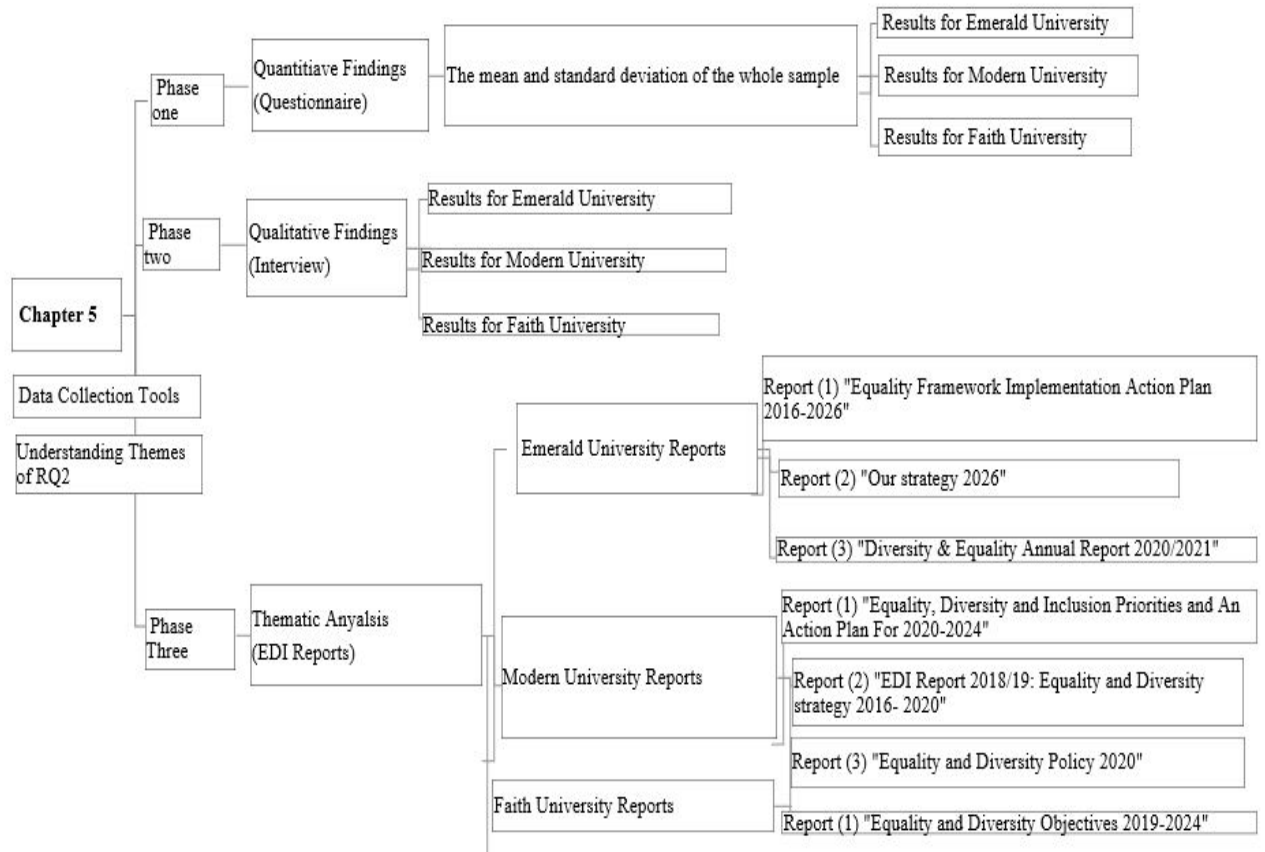
5.1 Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to present the findings concerning the second research question (RQ2), which investigates the ways the three case study universities communicate their policies for protecting religion and belief to Muslim students. The chapter is structured around two key themes that were identified during the coding process. The first theme focuses on establishing a good relationship between universities and students, which includes facilitating productive dialogue and effectively managing any tensions that arise as a result of miscommunication or differences in opinion (Section 5.3.1). The second theme pertains to ensuring compliance with laws and policies, as well as communicating the implemented policies and strategies effectively to promote and safeguard the protection of religion (Section 5.3.2). This analysis is further supported by examining university policies, such as their Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) reports.

Accordingly, this chapter is divided into sections corresponding to the data collected from the three universities: Emerald university, Modern university and Faith university. The data collection process consisted of three phases: quantitative data collection (questionnaires from students), qualitative data collection (interviews with students), and thematic analysis (document analysis of university policies) (see Figure 5.1).

Figure 5.1

Schematic of Structure of Chapter 5



5.2 Data Collection Tools

The data collection tools used to address RQ2 were the following:

- A self-administered questionnaire to gather quantitative data on the experiences and perceptions of Muslim students in relation to how universities communicate their policies for protecting religion and belief.
- Semi-structured interviews to gain deeper qualitative insights into the participants' experiences and perceptions regarding the universities' communication of their policies for protecting religion and belief in relation to Muslim students.
- Thematic analysis of EDI reports published during the period 2016 to 2022. These reports were analysed to gain insights into how the universities communicate their

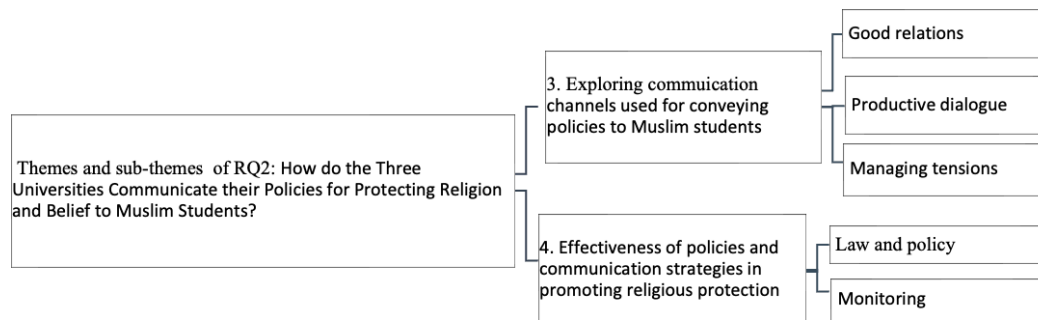
policies of religion and belief protection to Muslim students. Moreover, I supplemented the findings with some photographs of relevant campus facilities taken on-site.

5.3 The Themes of RQ2

I will start this chapter with themes three and four for two reasons. Firstly, it provides continuity from the previous chapter (Chapter 4), where themes one and two were discussed. Secondly, it follows the prescribed order presented in the methodology chapter (Section 3.5). Theme three explores the communication channels used to convey these policies to Muslim students, while theme four focuses on the effectiveness of policies and communication strategies in promoting religious protection. Each theme consists of two or more subthemes, as illustrated in Figure 5.2.

Figure 5.2

Themes and Subthemes of RQ2



5.3.1 Exploring the Communication Channels used for Conveying Policies to Muslim Students

Theme three examines the methods and channels employed by universities to communicate with Muslim students regarding their policies protecting religion and belief. The aim is to evaluate the effectiveness of these communication channels, including the quality of the

relationships established between the universities and students, the level of dialogue between both parties, and the management of any resulting tensions. Several sub-themes were generated.

The first sub-theme, *Good Relations*, centres around the universities' efforts to cultivate and maintain positive relationships with Muslim students, fostering trust, respect and openness. Such relationships are central to the effective communication of since they ensure that students feel listened to and valued.

The second sub-theme, *Productive Dialogue*, focuses on creating an environment conducive to productive discussions, where Muslim students can express their concerns, provide feedback, and present their opinions on university policies. This facilitates opportunities for constructive dialogue and ensures that the communication channels remain open and effective.

The third sub-theme, *Managing Tensions*, explores how universities navigate and address tensions and conflicts that may arise due to miscommunication and differences in beliefs. This involves implementing strategies to manage and resolve such conflicts in a manner that upholds respect and promotes understanding.

5.3.2 Effectiveness of Policies and Communication Strategies in Promoting Religious Protection

Theme four explores the communication policies regarding the protection of belief and religion for Muslim students on campus. Two sub-themes are highlighted. The first sub-theme, *Law and Policy*, examines how universities ensure that their communication strategies align with the legal framework established by the government, such as the Equality Act (2010). It investigates the policies employed by universities to comply with the law and effectively

communicate it to Muslim students through strategies like EDI. The second sub-theme, *Monitoring*, focuses on the feedback generation regarding how universities communicate their policies and strategies in promoting religious protection for Muslim students. It delves into the communication utilised by universities to assess the impact of their communication and policy implementation efforts.

The presented themes and sub-themes highlight the findings obtained through the implementation of a mixed-methods approach, incorporating quantitative and qualitative findings.

5.4 Findings of the Thematic Analysis of University EDI Reports

In this phase of the study, the focus was on analysing EDI reports from three universities - Emerald university, Modern university, and Faith university. These reports illuminated the institutions' EDI strategies, policies, objectives, and implementation. The evaluation extended to the communication strategies within these reports and their alignment with the perspectives of Muslim students. Two key themes were developed: the importance of fostering positive relationships and constructive dialogues, and effectively managing tensions while ensuring policy compliance. The analysis aimed to assess how these themes manifested in practice and their impact on academic environments. Employing a deductive approach, the thematic analysis of these reports revolved around predefined themes concerning religion policies, university-Muslim student relations, legal compliance, monitoring practices, and advocacy for safeguarding religious beliefs. This methodical examination provided a structured framework for interpreting findings pertinent to the RQ2 at hand.

5.4.1 Emerald University

The analysis of the EDI reports from Emerald university EDI reveals that it has made significant advances in the past five years. Notably, the university has introduced several new facilities to accommodate the diverse religious needs of its campus community, including a purpose-built Muslim prayer room and a multi-faith room. These facilities were developed with the intention of catering to the religious requirements of Muslim students, as well as those from other faith backgrounds, while also serving as inclusive spaces for worship and contemplation. Specifically, in the institution's Equality Framework for the period 2016–2026 it is reported that:

"New facilities have been launched which have included the opening of purpose-built Muslims Prayer Room" on campus, 'a multi faith room..." (Emerald University, Equality Framework 2016-2026)

The following visual evidence on campus substantiates the facilities content discussed in the Emerald EDI report.

Figure 5.3

Spacious Muslim Prayer Room at Emerald University's Library Campus



Emerald university also has implemented various initiatives aimed at fostering positive relationships between diverse communities. These initiatives focus on creating opportunities for engagement and mutual learning, ultimately striving to achieve a diverse student body across all disciplines. To fulfil this objective, the university has set specific targets, aiming to

increase the proportion of "Rest of the World" students (excluding China) to 45% by 2026, with a milestone of 43% by 2021.

Moreover, in an effort to enhance diversity and inclusion, the university has implemented measures such as providing mentorship programmes, delivering annual training modules, and encouraging staff members to effectively engage with funders, subject associations, research users and research teams. These initiatives aim to equip staff with the skills and knowledge necessary to navigate diverse contexts and ensure a supportive and inclusive academic environment.

In line with these efforts, Emerald university's Equality Framework Implementation Action Plan (2016–2026) emphasises the objective of fostering good relations between different communities by providing opportunities for interaction, learning and mutual understanding.

"Foster good relations between different communities by providing opportunities to come together, learn and understand one another" (Emerald University, Equality Framework Implementation Action Plan, 2016-2026, p.1)

The sub-theme of 'Access and Learning' arose as a secondary aspect during the analysis of the EDI reports, specifically within the overarching theme of 'Communication Channels'. This sub-theme pertains to the efforts undertaken by universities to provide equal opportunities for both staff and students to access educational resources and opportunities. Consequently, the emergence of the 'Access and Learning' sub-theme highlights the indispensable role played by universities in advancing EDI principles and cultivating an inclusive and equitable learning environment that caters to all members of the academic community, including minority groups like Muslim students.

An exemplary illustration of such initiatives can be found at Emerald university, where noteworthy accomplishments have resulted in heightened awareness and understanding of

diverse countries and student groups. This entails cultural awareness seminars and intercultural communication lectures that foster a culture of mutual respect and dignity while combatting bullying and harassment. Furthermore, Emerald university has made significant strides towards implementing an official policy on accommodating multi-faith needs on campus, including the appointment of a Muslim Chaplain. This comprehensive process also involves an Annual Interfaith Week events programme. As reported by Emerald university, these endeavours have led to an:

"Increased awareness and understanding about different countries and student groups"
(Emerald University, Equality Framework Implementation Action Plan, 2016-2026, p.15)

Additionally, the university's curriculum incorporates global perspectives, cultivates skills pertinent to the international workplace, and integrates insights from industry experts and organisations. Beyond this, however, Emerald university has made efforts to enhance international students' comprehension of the English education system by organising cultural awareness seminars.

According to the university's documentation, Emerald university has undertaken initiatives to enhance international students' familiarity with the English education system. They have organised cultural awareness seminars that are specifically adapted to cater to the needs of international students. This aligns with the university's commitment to providing a supportive and inclusive educational environment for its diverse student body. Guided by the Human Rights Act and the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, the university implements policies to ensure the well-being of staff and students while fostering intellectual engagement and constructive debates. As stated in the Equality Framework Implementation Action Plan (2016–2026), Emerald university will:

"Continue to encourage and support Freedom of Speech on campus within the confines of relevant legislation; it is important for our students to learn to disagree well, and we

will support events which encourage this" (Emerald University, Equality Framework Implementation Action Plan,2016-2026, p.13)

The report emphasises the need to enhance the number of staff members who receive training in conflict resolution and mediation. This measure aims to address tensions and effectively manage conflicts within the institution (Emerald University, Equality Framework Implementation Action Plan, 2016–2026, p.6).

Regarding the sub-theme of *Law and Policy*, the report highlights that Emerald university has formulated its own policy on religious discrimination, which is easily accessible on the university's website. Through this policy, the institution articulates its commitment to safeguarding the rights of students and staff members belonging to different faiths and belief systems.

In terms of monitoring, the report underscores that Emerald university conducts regular assessments to evaluate progress in relation to the equality objectives and action plans. This monitoring process entails gathering comprehensive data across various indicators, including staff and student satisfaction, recruitment and retention rates, and disciplinary cases. Furthermore, the university's monitoring efforts encompass evaluating attitudes and culture, conducting annual events, encouraging faith-related activities, and promoting interfaith collaboration. Their report highlights:

"Monitor attitudes and culture, Annual programme of events, faith activities, and interfaith work etc" (Emerald University, Equality Framework Implementation Action Plan, 2016-2026, p.13).

5.4.2 Modern University

According to the EDI reports from Modern university, the institution has undertaken initiatives to establish a platform for both staff and students to share their EDI-related experiences. This platform serves as a safe environment where individuals can openly discuss their experiences,

thereby fostering awareness and understanding of EDI issues, improved relationships and mutual respect between staff members and Muslim students, and thus a more inclusive and harmonious academic community (EDI Priorities and an Action Plan, 2020–2024, p.7).

Modern university's policies also highlight several measures to promote a positive and inclusive environment for staff and students on campus. These include the implementation of a centralised online reporting system for incidents of harassment and violence, the adoption of best practices that support positive action during recruitment campaigns, and the promotion of cultural diversity through the representation of diverse images. The action plan suggests conducting an audit to assess the inclusivity of the campus environment, examining visual representations such as images on walls, room and building names, and the origin of displayed artifacts. If the audit reveals a lack of diversity in the environment, the plan proposes addressing this issue through the creation of portraits, exhibitions and other means. This is detailed in the quotation below:

"Audit the inclusivity of the campus environment, by mapping visible images on walls, room and building names, origin of any artefacts on display etc. If the audit outcomes point to a lack of diversity in the environment consider a project to address this through portraits, exhibitions, etc" (Modern University, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Priorities and an Action Plan, 2020-2024, p.5).

Additionally, the action plan outlines the objective of creating thirty diverse images and displaying them strategically to have a positive impact. This particular measure is tied to a staff survey and is intended to foster inclusivity and a sense of belonging among the university's workforces. As outlined in their report:

"30 Diverse images will be created and hung for positive impact specific measure within the staff survey" (Modern University, EDI Priorities and an Action Plan, 2020-2024, p.8).

According to the Modern university EDI Review and Objectives 2020–2024 report, an example of effective practice in managing tensions is demonstrated through the establishment of a

‘Diversity and Inclusion Champions’ network. This network serves as a platform for staff members to exchange ideas and share best practices aimed at promoting diversity and inclusion within the university’s working environment. This initiative contributes to fostering a more inclusive and harmonious workplace culture (Modern University EDI Review and Objectives 2020–2024, p.22).

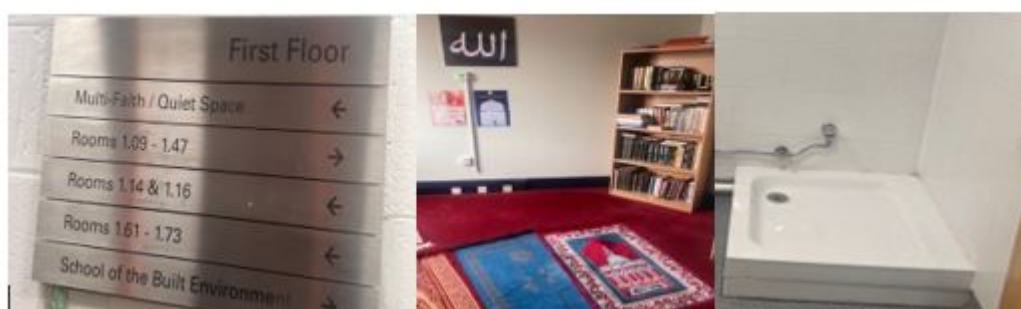
In line with its commitment to equal opportunities, Modern university endeavours to ensure that all members of its community have equitable access to university facilities. To uphold this principle, the university has implemented measures such as the creation of a multi-faith room that caters to the needs of Muslims and other religious groups on campus. This initiative reflects Modern university’s dedication to accommodating the diverse needs of its staff and student body, as dictated by the requirements set forth in the Equality Act (2010),

"The University will strive to make all its facilities accessible to staff and students regardless of any seen or unseen impairments. The University appreciates that the Equality Act 2010 requires it to meet the needs of a widely diverse group of people..." (Modern University, Equality and Diversity Policy, 2009-2021, p.5)

The visual representation on campus in the following figure aligns with the information presented in the Modern University EDI report.

Figure 5.4

Facilities Available in the Modern University Campus, Including Multi-Faith Rooms Catering to the Needs of Muslim Students



Another noteworthy aspect of the commitment exhibited by Modern university is the deliberate organisation of events centred around this principle. For example, in February 2019, they held an event during LGBT History Month with Lady Phyll as the keynote speaker. The event focused on the interconnection of race, gender, and class, promoting inclusion, equality, freedom, and justice. In addition, the university emphasises the maintenance of a secure environment by promptly addressing any harassment instances using specialised support services such as the Student Advice and Well-being Department and the University Student Union.

The findings in respect to Modern university indicate a prominent commitment on the part of the institution to enhance the intercultural competence of its staff. This is evidenced by the projected increase in the proportion of staff members attending Unacceptable Behaviour and Intercultural Competence training sessions by the year 2024. Furthermore, the university has displayed a genuine aspiration to foster greater leadership among women by implementing measures to enhance accessibility to leadership training programmes and writing retreats. In its pursuit of EDI, the university has also extended its dedication to students by implementing an Access and Participation Plan. This plan sets forth specific objectives aimed at ameliorating opportunities and outcomes for students originating from underrepresented and disadvantaged backgrounds. As aptly stated in the EDI Priorities and an Action Plan (2020–2024), the university's commitment to the EDI agenda is intrinsically linked to the implementation of the Access and Participation Plan, with the ultimate goal of augmenting opportunities and outcomes for students from historically marginalised and disadvantaged groups.

"Linked to the EDI agenda is the University's Access and Participation Plan (APP) which aims to increase opportunities and outcomes for students from under-represented and disadvantaged groups". (Modern University, EDI Priorities and an Action Plan, 2020-2024, p.1)

5.4.3 Faith University

Faith university recognises the utmost importance of fostering social integration within its community and, to achieve this, endeavours to enhance the rates of disclosure pertaining to protected characteristics. This concerted effort aims to facilitate a better understanding of the composition of the institution's workforce. By cultivating an inclusive culture, Faith university strives to create a supportive and constructive learning and working environment, wherein students feel empowered and well-assisted in their academic pursuits, while staff members experience a sense of value and engagement in their professional roles. The findings underscore the fundamental role of positive relationships in establishing an environment conducive to productive work and effective learning experiences for all individuals involved.

According to Faith university's Equality and Diversity guidelines (2019–2024), the institution has established a number of networks to provide support to staff members with specific protected characteristics, such as those related to LGBT, BAME, and Disabled individuals.

"The University will have a series of Networks in place to support staff with particular protected characteristics e.g., for LGBT, BAME and Disabled Staff" (Faith University, Equality and Diversity, 2019-2024, p.3).

Notwithstanding, it is worth noting that support for members of the Muslim community is not specifically addressed in these university reports as documented guidelines.

Faith university has made significant strides in creating a culture that fosters inclusivity and respect, as evidenced by the implementation of various staff training initiatives. Notably, managers at the university are required to undergo mandatory training regarding EDI, which includes modules specifically designed to address unconscious bias. This commitment to training is reflected in the Faith university's Equality and Diversity guidelines (2019–2024),

which state that managers will receive compulsory instruction on these topics, particularly in relation to unconscious bias:

"Managers will receive mandatory training in relation to Equality and Diversity, for example in relation to unconscious bias" (Faith University, Equality and Diversity, 2019-2024, p.4).

Moreover, Faith university has taken proactive measures to ensure equitable access to its complaints and appeals procedures. The institution strives to maintain a proportionate representation of complaints from individuals belonging to protected characteristics, thus ensuring that the distribution of complaints received aligns with the broader university community.

"Complaints and Appeals will reflect the university community and not disproportionately be received from those with protected characteristics" (Faith University, Equality and Diversity, 2019-2024, p.4).

This commitment is explicitly stated in Faith University's Equality and Diversity guidelines (2019–2024), which emphasises the intention to embed this policy within the university's fabric through a series of staff training events,

"The policy will be embedded in university life through a series of staff training events" (Faith University, Equality and Diversity, 2019-2024, p.4).

When examining Faith University's provisions for supporting prayer or worship on campus, it becomes evident that the institution has not made notable efforts in this regard, save for a brief mention of social spaces and encouragement for community and self-development to facilitate prayer. The university's website and mission statement highlight its commitment to promoting the social, cultural, and spiritual aspects of student life (Faith University, n.d.).

"Promoting the social, cultural and spiritual life of the student body" (Faith University, n.d.).

Despite this stated commitment, Faith university's initiatives do not appear to include significant investments in supporting prayer or worship on campus.

Faith university has taken steps to ensure that its policies are thoroughly integrated into the teaching and learning culture of the institution, as evidenced by a series of staff training events. This approach aims to ensure that the principles and values underlying these policies are effectively communicated and practised by all faculty members. The university has also recognised the importance of providing students with comprehensive support services that contribute to their academic and personal development. These services include access to librarians and career advisers, who offer guidance and assistance to students throughout their educational journey. The inclusion of such support services further underscores Faith university's commitment to creating an environment that fosters the growth and success of all community members. As stated in Faith university's Learning, Teaching, and Assessment Strategy (3.5) for 2019, students will have the opportunity to benefit from a range of support services, including access to librarians and careers advice:

"Students will have access to a range of support services, including librarians and careers advice" (Faith University, Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy (3.5), 2019, principal 10, p.21).

Faith university unequivocally affirms its unwavering commitment to upholding freedom of speech while simultaneously ensuring the safety, inclusion and respect of all individuals within its community. The institution places considerable emphasis on adhering to legal frameworks that safeguard the expression of beliefs, thereby promoting an environment devoid of discrimination or harassment. To this end, Faith university has established a Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech and Management of Events on Campus, which serves as a mandate for all personnel, students and visitors to support the university's efforts to uphold freedom of speech in accordance with the provisions stated in Section 43 of the Education (No. 2) Act 1986. This code of practice underscores the responsibility of teaching staff to create course materials that are accessible to students from diverse backgrounds and are devoid of any discriminatory assumptions, images or language, unless such elements are being studied

explicitly as examples. As outlined in Faith university's Equality and Diversity guidelines (2019–2024), every teaching staff member is entrusted with the responsibility of ensuring that the materials used in the curriculum are adjusted to accommodate specific needs and are free from any form of sexism, racism or other forms of discrimination,

"Ensuring that materials used to deliver the curriculum are accessible to a diverse range of students adjusted to meet specific needs and that they are free from sexist, racist and other discriminatory assumptions, images and languages unless they are being studied as examples of such" (Faith University, Equality and Diversity, 2019-2024, p.3).

5.5 Quantitative Findings for RQ2

The initial phase of this study comprises two sections dedicated to presenting the quantitative data. The first part focuses on outlining the mean and standard deviations of the sample in relation to the questionnaire statements. This includes an analysis of factor rankings for the three selected universities and correlations observed between different factors. Data from a total sample of 150 participants were utilised for this quantitative analysis. The complete questionnaire used in the study can be found in Appendix IV. It is worth noting that no scoring reversal was necessary for any of the questionnaire statements, as all of them were formulated with positive wording. The second part of the quantitative analysis presents the university-specific findings, beginning with Emerald university, followed by Modern university, and concluding with Faith university. These findings are aligned with the themes and subthemes explored in this chapter. The following section presents the quantitative findings in detail.

5.5.1 The Mean and Standard Deviation of the Whole Sample

The data analysis techniques used in this study were applied in accordance with the methods discussed in the previous chapter. In summary, the mean, standard deviation and percentage were computed for each statement in both themes, and the responses were ranked across the

selected universities for comparison purposes. The mean score obtained for each item across the entire sample was then used to determine the level of agreement with the given statement. This corresponded to the perceived importance of the item for Muslim students.

The five levels of agreements were formulated based on the range of possible mean scores, with 1.00 indicating the strongest possible disagreement with the statements (i.e. no importance at all in the perception of the Muslim student participants), and 5.00 signifying the strongest possible agreement with the statement (i.e. maximum importance in the perception of the Muslim student participants). This approach provided valuable data into the perceived importance of each item among the sample as a whole.

During the initial stage of analysis, the focus was placed on exploring aspects related to *Good relations*, *Productive Dialogue* and *Managing Tensions* within the theme three context on campus. The results were derived from the participants' responses to the questionnaire tool, specifically Section III and Section IV within the questionnaire. The following findings present the mean, standard deviation, percentage and ranking across all of the selected universities.

Table 5.1

Statistical Results of Theme Three Factors Across all of the Selected Universities

Statements	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Percentage	Standing
1. My religious beliefs are acceptable at my university.	150	2.42	1.06	48.4%	4
2. I have a voice in the decision-making that affects my learning in my university.	150	2.21	1.05	44.1%	5
3. My university education is based on clear principles of equity.	150	3.43	1.51	68.7%	1
4. There are fair processes for determining protection strategies based on religion and belief at my university.	150	3.19	1.45	63.9%	2
5. Support is provided equitably in my university.	150	3.19	1.51	63.9%	3

The findings presented in Table 5.1 illustrate specific trends in the rankings of this section statements. The statement that received the highest score and most agreement from respondents was statement 3, 'My university education is based on clear principles of equity', with a mean of 3.43 and a percentage of 68.7%. This was followed closely by statement 4, 'There are fair processes for determining protection strategies based on religion and belief at my university', with a mean of 3.19 and a percentage of 63.9%. Similarly, statement 5, 'Support is provided equitably in my university', achieved the same mean, of 3.19, and a percentage of 63.9%. The statement with the lowest ranking was statement 2, 'I have a voice in the decision-making that affects my learning in my university', with a mean of 2.21 and percentage of 44.1%.

Furthermore, Table 5.2 presents comprehensive data on the mean and standard deviation observed for each selected university, with a total of fifty participants in each university. Understanding the mean values makes it possible to assess the average levels of the factors relevant to theme three, while the standard deviation indicates the degree of variability within the data. This data becomes particularly relevant when evaluating the overall experiences and perceptions of participants across the selected universities.

Table 5.2

Mean and Standard Deviation of Theme Three between Universities

University	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Emerald	50	8.32	5.81
Modern	50	16.84	2.69
Faith	50	18.18	1.44

The mean values in Table 5.2 represent the average levels of theme three factors across the individual universities. Emerald university has the lowest mean score of 8.32, followed by Modern university with a mean score of 16.84, while Faith university has the highest mean score of 18.18. This implies that participants from Faith university perceive higher levels of

theme three compared to participants from the other universities. It is important to note, however, that mean values alone do not provide sufficient information to determine the practical significance and meaningfulness of these differences.

The standard deviation values, which indicate how data is dispersed around the mean, provide valuable information regarding the diversity of responses within each university. The results show that Emerald university has the highest standard deviation, 5.81, indicating a wider range of responses and greater variability in the answers relevant to theme three. In contrast, Modern university shows a lower standard deviation scored 2.69, suggesting relative consistency in responses. Lastly, Faith university has the lowest standard deviation scored 1.44, indicating a smaller spread of data and thus more consistency in participants' perceptions.

Given these findings, it was imperative to ascertain the significance and practical implications arising from the observed variations between the universities under examination. One approach entails the application of appropriate statistical tests, particularly the utilisation of a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) test. This test aims to assess whether a significant difference exists, at a predetermined significance level of $\alpha=0.05$, in the mean values between the universities. Furthermore, a Scheffe test can aid in the identification of specific pairwise differences among the universities. Subsequently, Table 5.3 presents the outcomes resulting from the application of the one-way ANOVA test.

Table 5.3

Result of One-Way ANOVA Test in Theme Three Across Universities

Source of variance	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2860.09	2	1430.05		
Within Groups	2110.98	147	14.36	99.58	<.001
Total	4971.07	149			

The data in Table 5.3 displays the results originating from ANOVA test. The table includes essential components such as the Source of variance, Sum of Squares, degrees of freedom, Mean Square, F-statistic, and Significance level. In this case, the F-statistic is very large (99.58), and the significance level is very small (<0.001). This means that the probability of getting an F-statistic as large as 99.58 by chance is less than 1 in 10,000. Thus, it is highly improbable that the observed difference between the groups is attributable to random variation. Hence, there exists a statistically significant variation between the means of the two groups. The Scheffe test was therefore employed to analyse how this significant distinction is distributed when comparing pairs of universities. The results are shown in Table 5.4.

Table 5.4

Scheffe Test of Theme Three between Universities

(I) University	(J) University	Mean Difference (I-J)	Sig.
Emerald	Modern	-8.52	<.001
Emerald	Faith	-9.86	<.001
Modern	Faith	-1.34	0.213

The Scheffe test is a post-hoc test used to compare the means of multiple groups after an ANOVA has been conducted. The (I) University column shows the name of the first group. The (J) University column shows the name of the second group. The Mean Difference (I-J) column shows the difference between the means of the two groups. The Sig. column shows the significance of the difference between the means.

The analysis shows a statistically significant difference in the means of Emerald and Modern Universities, with a negative difference of -8.52 and a significance level of <0.001. This signifies that the probability of obtaining such a substantial difference in the mean by chance alone is exceedingly low, thus providing evidence of a genuine distinction between

these groups. Similarly, a statistically significant difference in the mean was observed between the Emerald and Faith university results, with a negative difference of -9.86 and a significance level of <0.001. Again, it is evident that the observed differences between these groups are not a result of chance.

Conversely, the mean difference between the Modern and Faith university groups was observed to be relatively small at -1.34, with a significance level of 0.213. Consequently, it can be inferred that there is a rather higher likelihood of obtaining a mean difference of similar magnitude by chance alone in respect to this comparison, hence the difference in the means here cannot be said to be statistically significant.

To conclude, there are significant differences between Emerald university and Modern university, and between Emerald university and Faith University since their significance values are less than (0.001).

This questionnaire elicited five statements relating to Theme Four, with participants being asked to proffer their perspectives on matters related to law, policy, and monitoring of policies pertaining to Muslim students on campus. Table 5.5 below reports the descriptive statistical data arising from Likert scale responses to these statements, including the mean, standard deviation, percentage, and ranking analysis for each of the three universities.

Table 5.5

Statistical Results of Theme Four Factors Across all of the Selected Universities

Statements	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Percentage	Standing
1. Provides facilities for prayer.	150	3.99	1.32	79.7%	1
2. Respects the Islamic tradition of Muslim women e.g., dress code.	150	2.41	1.68	48.3%	4
3. Offers Halal options for Muslim students on campus.	150	3.14	1.15	62.8%	3
4. Respects Islamic holidays.	150	2.39	1.29	47.7%	5
5. Allows Muslim students to join Islamic societies.	150	3.27	0.84	65.3%	2

Table 5.5 results show that the statement ranked first was statement 1, 'provides facilities for prayer', with a mean of 3.99 and a percentage of 79.7%. The second-ranked statement was statement 5, 'allows Muslim students to join Islamic societies', with a mean of 3.27 and a percentage of 65.3%. Ranked third was statement 3, 'offers Halal options for Muslim students on campus', with a mean of 3.14 and a percentage of 62.8%. Statement 4, 'respects Islamic holidays', was ranked fourth, scoring a mean of 2.39 and a percentage of 47.7%.

Table 5.6

Mean and Standard Deviation of Theme Four according to University

University	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Emerald	50	20.36	3.82
Modern	50	12.44	3.08
Faith	50	12.78	1.22

This statement explains the data presented in Table 5.6, which shows the mean (average) and standard deviation values that represent theme four in three universities. Among these universities, Emerald university stands out with a significantly higher mean score of 20.36. This indicates that, on average, the communication policies regarding the protection of belief and religion for Muslim students on campus are more robust or effective at Emerald university compared to the other universities included in the study. Additionally, the statement mentions that Emerald university has a relatively larger standard deviation of 3.82. In this context, a larger standard deviation suggests greater variability in how the theme is addressed or perceived at Emerald university compared to the other universities in the study. Thus, Emerald university demonstrates higher average performance in theme four, but also shows more variability in how this theme is implemented or understood across the university.

In contrast, the Modern and Faith universities display significantly lower mean scores of 12.44 and 12.78, respectively. These lower mean scores indicate that there may be a less favourable perception among Muslim students regarding the factors related to theme four at these universities. Moreover, looking at the standard deviations of 3.08 for Modern university and 1.22 for Faith university, it suggests that there is more variability in how theme four is addressed or perceived at Modern university compared to Faith university. The higher standard deviation at Modern university indicates greater divergence in the responses or opinions of Muslim students on this theme compared to Faith university.

A one-way ANOVA test was conducted to investigate these variations and specifically to identify any statistically significant differences at a significance level of $\alpha=0.05$. The results are set out in Table 5.7, below.

Table 5.7

Results of One-Way ANOVA Test in Respect to Theme Four across Universities

Source of variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2004.97	2	1002.49		
Within Groups	1252.42	147	8.52	117.67	<.001
Total	3257.39	149			

The outcomes of the one-way ANOVA test revealed a statistically significant disparity among the mean values relevant to theme four across the three universities, with a significance level of <0.001 . Notably, the between-groups factor's mean square of 1002.49 considerably exceeded the within-groups factor's mean square of 8.52. This observation signifies that the variances in the data predominantly stem from dissimilarities between the universities.

Accordingly, a deeper examination was conducted utilising the post-hoc Scheffe test (see Table 5.8). The results revealed significant variations in mean values between Emerald

and Modern Universities, with a mean difference of 7.92 ($p < 0.001$). Similarly, significant differences were observed between the Emerald and Faith Universities, with a mean difference of 7.58 ($p < 0.001$). In contrast, no statistically significant mean difference was found between the Modern and Faith categories, with a mean difference of -0.34 ($p = 0.844$).

Table 5.8

Scheffe Test of Theme Four between Universities

(I) University	(J) University	Mean Difference (I-J)	Sig.
Emerald	Modern	7.92	<.001
Emerald	Faith	7.58	<.001
Modern	Faith	-0.34	0.844

The focus of the analysis now shifts towards highlighting the specific components and data outcomes of this theme within the context of each university included in this study.

5.5.2 Emerald University

Table 5.9

Statistical Results of Theme Three Factors for Emerald University

Statements	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Percentage	Standing
1. My religious beliefs are acceptable at my university.	50	1.52	1.03	30.4%	5
2. I have a voice in the decision-making that affects my learning in my university.	50	1.70	1.27	34.0%	2
3. My university education is based on clear principles of equity.	50	1.76	1.38	35.2%	1
4. There are fair processes for determining protection strategies based on religion and belief at my university.	50	1.68	1.22	33.6%	3
5. Support is provided equitably in my university.	50	1.66	1.26	33.2%	4

The results shown in Table 5.9 provide an overview of the rankings obtained for each statement within theme three for Emerald University. The first-ranked statement was 3, 'My university

education is based on clear principles of equity', with a mean of 1.76 and a percentage of 35.2%. Following closely behind was the second-ranked statement 2, 'I have a voice in the decision-making that affects my learning in my university', with a mean rating of 1.70 and accounting for 34.0% of responses. The third-ranked statement was 4, 'There are fair processes for determining protection strategies based on religion and belief at my university', achieved a mean rating of 1.68 and selected by 33.6% of the participants. Lastly, the fourth-ranked statement was 1, 'My religious beliefs are acceptable at my university', with a mean of 1.52 and representing 30.4% of the responses.

Table 5.10

Statistical Results of Theme Four for Emerald University

Statements	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Percentage	Standing
1. Provides facilities for prayer.	50	4.80	0.53	96.0%	1
2. Respects the Islamic tradition of Muslim women e.g., dress code.	50	4.42	1.21	88.4%	2
3. Offers Halal options for Muslim students on campus.	50	3.78	0.76	75.6%	3
4. Respects Islamic holidays.	50	3.66	0.94	73.2%	5
5. Allows Muslim students to join Islamic societies.	50	3.70	0.86	74.0%	4

The findings shown in Table 5.10 reveal that the top ranked statement was 1, 'provides facilities for prayer', with a mean of 4.80, signifying a high level of agreement, and selected by 96.0% of the participants. Following closely behind was the second-ranked statement 4, 'respects the Islamic tradition of Muslim women e.g., dress code', which achieved a mean rating of 4.42 and garnered agreement from 88.4% of the participants. The third-ranked statement 3, 'offers Halal options for Muslim students on campus', received a mean rating of 3.78, indicating a moderately positive perception, and was chosen by 75.6% of the respondents. Lastly, the fourth-ranked statement 4, 'respects Islamic holidays', obtained a mean rating of 3.66, reflecting a positive sentiment, and was agreed upon by 73.2% of the participants.

5.5.3 Modern University

Table 5.11

Statistical Results of Theme Three Factors for Modern University

Statements	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Percentage	Standing
1. My religious beliefs are acceptable at my university.	50	3.14	0.53	62.8%	4
2. I have a voice in the decision-making that affects my learning in my university.	50	3.12	0.56	62.4%	5
3. My university education is based on clear principles of equity.	50	3.94	0.55	78.8%	1
4. There are fair processes for determining protection strategies based on religion and belief at my university.	50	3.38	0.67	67.6%	2
5. Support is provided equitably in my university.	50	3.26	0.72	65.2%	3

The results of Modern university shown in Table 5.11 indicate that the top ranked statement was 3, 'My university education is based on clear principles of equity' received a mean rating of 3.94, suggesting a high level of agreement among the participants, and selected by 78.8% of the respondents. Following closely behind was the second-ranked statement 4, 'There are fair processes for determining protection strategies based on religion and belief at my university', which attained a mean rating of 3.38 and garnered agreement from 67.6% of the participants. The third-ranked statement was 5, 'Support is provided equitably in my university', which received a mean rating of 3.26, and was chosen by 65.2% of the participants. Lastly, the fourth-ranked statement was 2, 'I have a voice in the decision-making that affects my learning in my university', which attained a mean rating of 3.12, and was agreed upon by 62.4% of the respondents.

Table 5.12*Statistical Results of Theme Four Factors for Modern University*

Statements	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Percentage	Standing
1. Provides facilities for prayer.	50	2.44	0.95	48.8%	3
2. Respects the Islamic tradition of Muslim women e.g., dress code.	50	1.58	0.84	31.6%	5
3. Offers Halal options for Muslim students on campus.	50	3.90	0.46	78.0%	1
4. Respects Islamic holidays.	50	1.68	1.15	33.6%	4
5. Allows Muslim students to join Islamic societies.	50	2.84	0.84	56.8%	2

The findings in Table 5.12 indicate that the top ranked statement was 3, 'offers Halal options for Muslim students on campus', with a mean of 3.90, suggesting a relatively high level of agreement among the participants, and selected by 78.0% of the respondents. The second-ranked statement was 5, 'allows Muslim students to join Islamic societies'; this obtained a mean rating of 2.84 and garnered agreement from 56.8% of the participants. The third-ranked statement was 1, 'provides facilities for prayer', which received a mean rating of 2.44, indicating a moderate level of agreement, and was chosen by 48.8% of the participants. The last ranked statement was 4, 'Respects the Islamic tradition of Muslim women e.g., dress code'. This obtained a mean rating of 1.58, reflecting a relatively lower level of agreement, and was supported by 31.6% of the respondents.

5.5.4 Faith University

Table 5.13

Statistical Results of Theme Three Factors for Faith University

Statements	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Percentage	Standing
1. My religious beliefs are acceptable at my university.	50	2.60	0.83	52.0%	4
2. I have a voice in the decision-making that affects my learning in my university.	50	1.80	0.40	36.0%	5
3. My university education is based on clear principles of equity.	50	4.60	0.49	92.0%	2
4. There are fair processes for determining protection strategies based on religion and belief at my university.	50	4.52	0.54	90.4%	3
5. Support is provided equitably in my university.	50	4.66	0.52	93.2%	1

The results in Table 5.13 show that the top-ranked statement was 5, 'Support is provided equitably in my university'. This achieved a mean rating of 4.66, suggesting a high level of agreement among the participants, and was selected by 93.2% of the respondents. Following closely behind was the second-ranked statement 3, 'My university education is based on clear principles of equity', which attained a mean rating of 4.60 and garnered agreement from 92.0% of the participants. The third-ranked statement was 4, 'There are fair processes for determining protection strategies based on religion and belief at my university', garnering a mean rating of 4.52, signifying a relatively positive perception, and chosen by 90.4% of the respondents. Lastly, the fourth-ranked statement 2, 'I have a voice in the decision-making that affects my learning in my university', received a mean rating of 1.80, indicating a lower level of agreement, and was supported by 36.0% of the participants.

Table 5.14*Statistical Results of Theme Four Factors for Faith University*

Statements	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Percentage	Standing
1. Provides facilities for prayer.	50	4.72	0.67	94.4%	1
2. respects the Islamic tradition of Muslim women e.g., dress code.	50	1.24	0.48	24.8%	5
3. Offers Halal options for Muslim students on campus.	50	1.74	0.44	34.8%	4
4. Respects Islamic holidays.	50	1.82	0.63	36.4%	3
5. Allows Muslim students to join Islamic societies.	50	3.26	0.56	65.2%	2

The results in Table 5.14 show that the top-ranked statement was 1, 'provides facilities for prayer'. This achieved a mean of 4.72, suggesting a high level of agreement among the participants, and was selected by 94.4% of the respondents. The second-ranked statement was 5, 'allows Muslim students to join Islamic societies', which achieved a mean rating of 3.26, signifying a relatively positive perception, and garnered agreement from 65.2% of the participants. The third-ranked statement was 4, 'respects Islamic holidays', which obtained a mean rating of 1.82, indicating a lower level of agreement, and was supported by 36.4% of the respondents. Lastly, the fourth-ranked statement was 4, 'respects the Islamic tradition of Muslim women e.g., dress code', with a mean rating of 1.24 reflecting a relatively lower level of agreement and chosen by 24.8% of the participants.

The next section of this chapter focuses on the findings and results obtained from the interviews, which served as the second data collection tool for addressing RQ2 of this study.

5.6 Qualitative Findings for RQ2

Arising from the second phase of this study, the findings presented in this section are derived from qualitative data. The research reveals important insights into the ways in which universities communicate their policies surrounding religion and belief, and how Muslim

students respond to them. This section examines two important research themes that emerged from the data: theme three, the establishment of good relations between universities and Muslim students, facilitating productive dialogue between both parties, and managing tensions that may arise due to miscommunication or differences in opinion; and, theme four, policies' legal compliance, the monitoring of policies and strategies to ensure that they are effective in promoting the protection of religion and beliefs. Qualitative findings begin by presenting the results from Emerald university, followed by an analysis of the results from Modern university, and then the findings from Faith university.

5.6.1 Emerald University

The findings of this study highlight contrasting perspectives among Muslim students at Emerald university regarding the university's communication of its policies protecting religion and belief. Eman's experience reveals a sense of intimidation and a perception that Arab Muslims, specifically, face bias in the university's handling of their concerns. Eman's statement suggests that the university does not demonstrate willingness or initiative in addressing the needs of Arab Muslim students while being more accommodating towards Pakistani Muslims and other nationalities. For instance, she mentioned that while Pakistani Muslims seemed accommodating towards other nationalities, the Arab Muslims seemed less proactive in initiating conversations or expressing concerns about settling in. This distinction showcases a potential variation in approaches to communication and integration within the diverse Muslim student body. This perceived bias is evident in her statement,

"Because you are Muslims, because it was something. There was Pakistani Muslims and they for the other nationalities. They were fine with it, but I think it was the Arab Muslims that they had problems with, or that they weren't – they weren't willing or they weren't taking the initiative to ask how we were" (Participant, Eman).

On the other hand, Esraa reported a positive relationship with the university in terms of communication, describing how the university conducts meetings with Muslim students, listens to their concerns, and actively seeks solutions to their problems. Ekram also expressed a positive experience with the university, emphasising that they receive a satisfactory level of assistance. This was clear when she said:

"Ensure...they would conduct meetings with Muslim students, try to listen to them and acknowledge their concerns, and find solutions to their problems" (Participant, Ekram).

Similarly, Ekram reported a positive experience with her university, stating that they offer a good amount of help compared to other universities. She said:

"University offers a good amount of help compared to other universities" (Participant, Ekram).

Participant Ekram's statement could be based on her personal experiences at the university she is currently attending. While she may not have attended other universities herself, her perception of the level of support provided by her current university could be influenced by comparisons she has heard from peers, friends, or family members who attended different universities.

Not all experiences were positive, however. Ebtihal mentioned instances of discrimination or racism from certain lecturers, highlighting the need for greater openness and cultural acceptance within the university environment.

"I think they should be more open about our religion and more open about our culture" (Participant, Ebtihal).

On the one hand, Estabriq suggested potential improvements in communication regarding policies protecting religion and belief protection, such as engaging teachers in discussions, raising awareness through surveys or online feedback mechanisms, and providing accessible complaint forms.

"What role do they have? They have a bigger role because they could talk to the teacher raise awareness about the issue that is happening and at the same time they should do like questionnaires and online feedback maybe...Who didn't know about this? I didn't know...they didn't show us any or tell us that we have any complaint form" (Participant, Estabriq).

Lastly, Ehaab reports positive interactions with university staff, indicating their receptiveness to religious needs and commitment to ensuring student success. He said:

"I've had good experiences talking to staff members about my religious needs. They seem genuinely interested in making sure I have what I need to succeed" (Participant, Ehaab).

Muslim students' perceptions of the good relationship regarding communication of religion and belief protection policy from Emerald university are mixed, with some feeling satisfied and some feeling dissatisfied.

Within the sub-theme of *Productive Dialogue*, it was evident that different interviewees held differing views on the effectiveness of communication with the university. Eman, for instance, reported a lack of productive dialogue with the university concerning policies to protect religion and belief. On the contrary, Esraa offered praise for the university, highlighting its willingness to listen to Muslim students and find solutions to their problems.

"They listen to Muslim students and find solutions to their problems" (Participant, Esraa).

Ekram, meanwhile, pointed out the presence of Muslim societies on campus that facilitate productive dialogue among students, enabling them to adapt to the university's environment.

"Our Muslim society which helps...make group clubs, Islamic group, for example, to help other Muslims adapt to their lifestyle here" (Participant, Ekram).

Ebtihal, on the other hand, expressed a desire for more opportunities to engage in dialogue and discussion about religion and belief, especially with students from diverse backgrounds. Estabriq acknowledged that there was a productive dialogue between Muslim students and university staff, particularly in matters related to religion and belief. Moreover, she recognised

the university's efforts to cultivate interfaith dialogue and understanding. This was evident when she stated that the question had been related to initiatives or activities aimed at fostering interfaith dialogue and understanding:

"Their efforts to promote interfaith dialogue and understanding"(Participant, Estabriq).

Finally, Ehaab highlighted the importance of dialogue in resolving misunderstandings and enhancing communication surrounding issues of religion and belief.

"Sometimes there can be misunderstandings and it helps to have a dialogue"
(Participant, Ehaab).

Within the sub-theme of *Managing Tensions*, it was apparent that interviewees held varying views on the university's efforts. Eman did not mention any active efforts by the university to manage tensions surrounding religion and belief, while Esraa suggested that raising awareness and promoting acceptance of different religions and backgrounds is crucial in combating discrimination and managing tensions.

"...the only way to combat this discrimination is by raising awareness and making sure that they're aware of accepting other religions, and students that come from different backgrounds as them" (Participant, Esraa).

Ekram highlighted the role of Muslim societies on campus in helping fellow Muslims adapt to the university lifestyle. Ebtihal suggested that the university should be more open about religion and culture, implying that increased transparency and discussion surrounding these topics could help reduce tensions.

Estabriq emphasised the need for Emerald university to raise awareness regarding its policies on campus and establish a space for dialogue between Muslim students and university staff.

Ehaab expressed concern about potential tensions between religious groups on campus as a result of a lack of promotion of dialogue and understanding by the university.

"I worry that there could be tension between different religious groups on campus. My university doesn't promote dialogue and understanding" (Participant, Ehaab).

The sub-theme of *Law and Policy* shed light on Muslim students' levels of awareness regarding the university's communication of laws and policies relating to the protection of religion and beliefs. Eman, one of the interviewees, did not mention any specific laws or policies communicated by the university concerning the protection of religion and beliefs. Esraa, another interviewee, expressed her lack of awareness regarding any policies in place, stating,

"I am not aware of any policies that have been set in place." (Participant, Esraa)

Ekram also highlighted her lack of knowledge about diversity and inclusion strategies specifically related to Muslim students, emphasising:

"I don't know about a strategy equality and diversity, inclusion strategies, not classes or webinars or any awareness, not meant for Muslim students" (Participant, Ekram).

On the other hand, Ebtihal offered her perspective, suggesting that the policy should promote a welcoming outlook and the freedom to practise one's religion:

"I think that the policy is that we should be welcoming and allow everyone to practise their religion freely. And that's what I know" (Participant, Ebtihal).

Similarly, Estabriq expressed her lack of familiarity with policies protecting religion and belief, stating:

"In regard to the policies I don't really know about them" (Participant, Estabriq)

Lastly, Ehaab, acknowledged that he had only recently become aware of the existence of some policies related to religion and beliefs. He recommended that the university improve the visibility and accessibility of these policies to benefit the students:

"I wasn't aware of some of the policies related to religion and belief until recently. It would be helpful if the university made these policies more visible and accessible to students." (Participant, Ehaab)

The interviewee data collected sheds light on the sub-theme of *Managing Tensions*, which highlights the varied perceptions of Muslim students regarding Emerald university's active monitoring and enforcement of policies concerning the protection of religion and belief on campus.

Eman, one of the interviewees, did not mention any active monitoring or enforcement of policies related to the protection of religion and belief at Emerald university. Esraa's response also lacked specific information on this topic.

On the other hand, Ekram indicated that the situation was improving, and that the university is becoming more receptive to Muslim students, allowing them to express their beliefs. This suggests the presence of some level of monitoring and intervention from the university. Ekram stated:

"It was worse before; it's getting better. Now, for example, they're allowing us; they're hearing us more and they're allowing us to speak on our beliefs and accept us".
(Participant, Ekram)

Ebtihal, however, shared her belief that the programme in place was only for certain nationalities of Muslim students and that it would eventually include students from other nationalities in the coming years. She did not provide any information regarding active monitoring or enforcement of policies, however.

Estabriq, another interviewee, did not have any knowledge of complaints filed, or any related matters, further indicating a lack of information regarding active monitoring or enforcement.

In contrast, Ehaab suggested that increased monitoring and intervention by the university would be beneficial in preventing incidents of discrimination. For instance, establishing anonymous reporting systems for students to report incidents of discrimination or bias can encourage individuals to speak up without fear of retaliation and providing dedicated support

services, such as counselling or advocacy, for students who have experienced discrimination can offer immediate assistance and guidance. He expressed:

"It can be difficult to address incidents of discrimination without the support of the university. I think more monitoring and intervention would help prevent these incidents from happening." (Participant, Ehaab)

5.6.2 Modern University

This section sheds light on the experiences and perceptions of Muslim students in Modern university, starting with the sub-theme of *Good relations*.

One notable finding is that Muslim students, such as Mai, have positive relationships with their non-Muslim colleagues, experiencing good relations and collaboration on campus. Mai mentioned that they face no issues working together and that everything goes smoothly, indicating a harmonious environment.

"We collaborate for work and everything can go smoothly, and no problems in this aspect." (Participant, Mai)

Concerns were raised, however, regarding direct communication from the universities regarding policies for protecting religion and belief. It was evident that Muslim students often relied on communication from fellow students rather than receiving clear communication directly from the university itself. Mariam expressed uncertainty about opportunities to learn about different religions directly from the university but mentioned learning from other students and peers. She said:

"I'm not sure if there were opportunities to learn about different religions, when it comes directly from the university. But I was able to personally learn from the students themselves and from my classmates and peers." (Participant, Mariam)

On a positive note, Maria reported that she had not personally experienced discrimination from professors.

"I haven't experienced personally any discrimination from the staff themselves and from professors." (Participant, Maria)

Additionally, Malika highlighted the importance of building positive relationships and effective communication with university staff and administrators. She emphasised that a good relationship with university staff fosters comfort in asking questions and raising concerns.

"I think it's important to have a good relationship with university staff, so we feel comfortable asking questions and raising concerns" (Participant, Malika).

The analysis of the interviewee findings also highlighted a common sub-theme of *Productive Dialogue*. Mai shared that she avoided discussing religion with others but still engaged in productive dialogues with her non-Muslim colleagues. She emphasised her strong belief in religion and expressed that she did not require anyone to convince her of her beliefs.

"I believe in my gut and profit and my religion, and I do not need anyone to convince me or convince him. I do not need this" (Participant, Mai).

Maria and Malika both stressed the importance of open communication and dialogue between university staff and students. Maria advocated for the ability to discuss religion and belief, highlighting that it is a necessary aspect that should be encouraged. As she stated:

"The ability to discuss it and have conversations about it is something that should be done." (Participant, Maria)

Malika argued that there was a need for university staff to listen to student concerns in order to adapt policies to meet their needs. She emphasised that dialogue is crucial for understanding, and that conversations about religion and belief should not lead to judgment or marginalisation. She mentioned this by saying:

"I think it's really important to have open communication and listen to student concerns, so that policies can be adapted to meet our needs" (Participant, Malika).

and,

"If there's no dialogue, then there's no understanding. We need to be able to have conversations about religion and belief without feeling like we're being judged or marginalised" (Participant, Malika).

On a similar note, Mohammad expressed feeling comfortable engaging in conversations about Islam and learning about different religious practices.

Neither Mariam nor Maha, however, mentioned any productive dialogue regarding university policies for protecting religion and belief.

Another noteworthy sub-theme that emerged from the interviews at Modern university was the management of tensions pertaining to religion and belief. In this regard, the majority of the interviewees did not encounter any substantial conflicts concerning their religious identity when interacting with their non-Muslim colleagues.

While Mai did not report any significant incidents, both Maria and Malika acknowledged the potential for misunderstandings or conflicts to arise between different religious groups on campus. Maria expressed the view that it is imperative for the university to have policies in place to address these issues and prevent their escalation. She emphasised the need for staff and administration to engage actively in resolving conflicts.

"Sometimes there can be misunderstandings or conflicts between different religious groups. I think the university needs to have policies in place to address these issues and prevent them from escalating" (Participant, Maria).

Similarly, Malika stressed the importance of university staff being cognisant of potential tensions and taking proactive measures to address them before they become problematic.

"I think it's important for university staff to be aware of the potential for religious tensions to arise, and to be proactive in addressing these tensions" (Participant, Malika).

While Mariam and Mohammad did not mention any specific incidents or tensions related to university policies regarding the protection of religious beliefs, the sentiment conveyed by the

interviewees as a whole was that it was important to manage tensions and resolve conflicts in a peaceful and respectful manner, particularly within the context of a diverse and multi-faith community like a university campus.

Another significant sub-theme that emerged from the interviews was the consideration of law and policy pertaining to the protection of religion and belief on campus. Some Muslim students, including Mai and Maria, expressed a lack of awareness regarding the specific policies and strategies in place for safeguarding religion and belief within the campus environment. Mariam mentioned the existence of rules concerning discrimination and bullying that applied to all students but did not address any explicit rules targeting Muslim students. As she stated:

"I don't think that there are any rules specific to religion and beliefs but there are rules about discrimination and bullying" (Participant, Mariam).

Malika emphasised the importance of having well-defined, written policies that explicitly address religious beliefs. She asserted:

"I think it's important for the university to have written policies that address religious beliefs, so that we know what we're allowed to do and what the university staff is responsible for" (Participant, Malika).

Additionally, Malika emphasised the need for regular updates and effective communication to ensure that students are well-informed about any changes or updates to these policies.

Again, while neither Maha and Mohammad mentioned any specific university policies regarding the protection of religion and belief, the sentiments expressed by the interviewees as a whole underscored the need for clear and easily accessible policies that support and protect their religious beliefs. They emphasised the necessity for regular updates, and effective communication regarding any modifications or amendments made to these policies.

Another significant sub-theme that emerged from the interviews was the consideration of *Monitoring* pertaining to the protection of religion and belief on campus.

While Mai did not report any significant monitoring of the policies pertaining to protecting religion and belief on campus, Mariam alluded to potential intimidation felt by university staff when approaching students who wear the hijab. Mariam also noted, however, that when asked specifically about how to approach them, the staff became more understanding and accommodating of their limits.

"Sometimes I think they do depend on whether the Muslim students around me, Hijab is or not sometimes they, the students and the staff may feel like a little bit intimidated. By them on how to approach them. But I saw that would they ask about how to approach the students who are Muslim, they become more comfortable, and they become understanding of our limits?" (Participant, Mariam).

Maria emphasised the need to foster and promote awareness-raising activities regarding policies related to protecting religion and belief on campus. Meanwhile, Malika stressed that merely having policies in place is insufficient; active monitoring is crucial to ensure effective communication and implementation of these policies.

"It's not enough for the university to just have policies in place. They need to be actively monitoring them and making sure that they're being followed" (Participant, Malika).

Maha and Mohammad did not mention any specific policies concerning the monitoring of Muslim students' religious practices, but overall, the interviewees underlined the significance of monitoring policies related to the protection of religion and belief to ensure their effectiveness and proper implementation on campus.

5.6.3 Faith University

Some Muslim students, such as Fai and Fatima, reported a dearth of effective communication and a failure to encourage engagement in honest and respectful dialogue regarding religious beliefs. Farah shared her perception of differential treatment towards Muslim students

compared to their non-Muslim counterparts, potentially arising from unconscious biases or a lack of awareness concerning their customs and practices.

"There are instances where I feel that Muslim students are treated differently compared to non-Muslim students" (Participant, Farah).

On the other hand, Farida expressed appreciation for her university's efforts in establishing open lines of communication and regular meetings to address any issues related to religion and belief.

"The university has established a good relationship with Muslim students by having regular meetings with us to discuss any issues we might have" (Participant, Farida).

Faisal, however, reported instances of discrimination and a lack of support from the university in resolving such conflicts. This highlights the urgent need for universities to provide support and assistance to students facing discrimination and ensure that conflicts are adequately addressed.

"Discrimination occurred, the university didn't offer support and assistance in resolving the conflict" (Participant, Faisal).

Although Fahad did not comment on this particular sub-theme, overall, the interviewees highlighted the importance of fostering good communication and establishing supportive relationships between universities and Muslim students in matters pertaining to policies protecting religion and belief.

Another notable sub-theme that arose from the interviews was the significance *Productive Dialogue* regarding the protection of religion and belief on campus. In this regard, Fai mentioned a limited interaction with university staff when it came to inquiries about policies safeguarding religion and belief.

"There is limited interaction with university staff regarding questions regarding religion and belief protection policies" (Participant, Fai).

Fatima reported a lack of safe spaces for students to engage in *productive dialogue* on religion-related topics and believed that this hampered their ability to have constructive conversations about religious beliefs and practices.

"There is no safe space for students to discuss religion-related topics" (Participant, Fatima).

Farah highlighted a lack of understanding and empathy from both sides, thereby making it challenging for her to interact effectively with students from diverse religious backgrounds. She explained this as follows:

"It is not very easy for me to interact with students from different religious backgrounds since there is a lack of understanding and empathy from both sides" (Participant, Farah).

Farida underscored the importance of fostering constructive and productive dialogue with Muslim students concerning policies pertaining to protecting religion and belief on campus. Faisal stressed the need to approach discussions about religion with honesty and respect, as this fosters understanding and empathy among different groups of individuals. Faisal shared the following insight:

"Discussions of religious beliefs should be approached with honesty and respect, which can foster a sense of understanding and empathy between different groups of people" (Participant, Farida).

Fahad did not offer any specific comments related to this particular sub-theme but, overall, the interviewees emphasised the significance of having safe spaces and facilitating constructive dialogue about religion and beliefs on campus.

In light of the interviewee data, a critical examination reveals that the Muslim students at this university expressed some dissatisfaction with the institution's communication and enforcement of its religion and belief protection policy. Evidently, they perceived a lack of emphasis on managing tensions surrounding religion and beliefs, ultimately resulting in a sense

that the university is not taking tangible measures to address instances of discrimination targeting Muslim students. This sentiment is echoed by Fai, who asserts that the university dismisses complaints pertaining to religious issues, stating:

"The university ignores complaints regarding issues surrounding religion and belief"
(Participant, Fai).

Additionally, Fatima highlights the absence of clear action within the university to tackle discrimination against Muslim students, saying:

"There is no clear action in my university to address instances of discrimination towards Muslim students" (Participant, Fatima).

Another interviewee also revealed instances of discrimination and hostility towards Muslims, leading to discomfort when discussing religion-related topics with fellow students and staff. In her own words:

"I am not very comfortable discussing religion-related topics with other students and staff since there are instances of discrimination and hostility towards Muslims"
(Participant, Farah).

These revelations from the interviewees suggest that the university should enhance its communication strategies and implement its religion and belief protection policy more effectively to foster a comfortable and inclusive environment for Muslim students. As Farida also highlighted, the university must adopt a proactive approach in managing tensions between students of different faiths, remarking,

"The university is not proactive in managing tensions between students of different faiths" (Participant, Farida).

Moreover, it is crucial to acknowledge the statement made by Faisal, a Muslim student, who articulated a lack of comfort when engaging in discussions revolving around religion. The university should prioritise providing a safe platform for open and respectful dialogue, ensuring that Faisal's concern is addressed:

"I am not very comfortable discussing religion-related topics with other students and staff since there are instances of discrimination and hostility towards Muslims" (Participant, Faisal).

In respect to the sub-theme of *Law and Policy*, the data reveals a significant level of dissatisfaction among Muslim students at this university regarding the communication of the institution's policy to protect religion and belief. The students expressed their perception that the messaging surrounding these policies is unclear, leading to a lack of awareness regarding accommodations for religious practices. This sentiment is exemplified by Fatima, who states:

"My university doesn't have clear protection strategies and policies in place to promote equality, diversity, and inclusivity for us." (Participant, Fatima)

Additionally, she highlights the lack of awareness regarding policies concerning religious practice accommodations, stating:

"There is no awareness of policies regarding accommodations for religious practices" (Participant, Fatima).

Furthermore, Farah contends that the university's policies inadequately support Muslim students' religious practices and beliefs, making it challenging for them to navigate daily life on campus. She asserts:

"My university's policies do not provide adequate support for Muslim students' religious practices and beliefs, which makes it challenging to navigate daily life on campus" (Participant, Farah).

These statements highlight the need for the university to evaluate and enhance its policies to better accommodate the religious needs of its Muslim students. Moreover, Frida expressed the desire for the university to communicate its updated policies and laws protecting all faiths in a clear and accessible manner. She emphasised:

"I think my university should communicate its updated policies and laws that protect all faiths so that all students are aware of their rights" (Participant, Farida).

Faisal also brings attention to the lack of clear information and accessibility regarding the institution's policies. He remarked:

"Information related to religion and belief policies is not accessible and not provided in a clear manner for Muslim students" (Participant, Faisal).

The above analysis of the interviewee data within the context of law and policy uncovers the dissatisfaction of Muslim students at this university. The lack of clarity and awareness surrounding the institution's policies protecting religion and belief protection poses significant challenges for these students.

Based on the interviewee data pertaining to the sub-theme of 'Monitoring' Muslim students at this university are dissatisfied with the communication and implementation of the institution's policy protecting religion and belief protection. They perceive a lack of clear messaging and a deficiency in promoting cultural and religious responsiveness within these policies. This sentiment is exemplified by Farah, who expresses a lack of confidence in engaging in open and honest conversations about religious beliefs with other students and staff due to a perceived lack of respect and understanding towards Muslims. In her words:

"I do not feel very confident about having open and honest conversations with other students and staff about their religious beliefs since there is a lack of respect and understanding towards Muslims" (Participant, Farah).

Fai echoes this sentiment, noting that the messaging surrounding the protection of religion and belief is unclear. She expressed their opinion by stating:

"The messaging...for protecting religion and belief to be unclear" (Participant, Fai).

Farida suggested that the university should monitor whether its policies are being implemented effectively and fairly in order to create an inclusive and welcoming environment for all students.

"The university should monitor the implementation of its religious protection policies to ensure that they are implemented effectively and fairly" (Participant, Farida).

In addition, Faisal highlights the need for the university's policies to promote cultural and religious responsiveness, which should be implemented effectively and fairly to cultivate a welcoming environment for all students. As he asserted:

"University policies do not promote in terms of cultural and religious responsiveness" (Participant, Faisal).

In conclusion, the analysis of the interviewee data exposes some dissatisfaction among Muslim students regarding the communication and implementation of the religion and belief protection policy at this university.

The EDI reports of these selected universities will provide further insight into how effectively these institutions communicate and adhere to the religious protection measures outlined in the Equality Act. These reports will help assess whether there are any improvements or areas requiring better communication of these policies.

5.7 Summary

This chapter has presented a detailed analysis of the findings from a study on how three English universities communicated their policies to protect the religion and belief of Muslim students. The analysis incorporated both quantitative and qualitative data to address specific RQs. Furthermore, comparisons between the universities indicated that participants from Faith university exhibited higher levels of agreement with theme three, while Emerald university stood out with greater variability in responses. Further statistical analysis using a one-way ANOVA test confirmed significant differences in the mean responses from Emerald university compared to the other two universities, highlighting genuine distinctions in perceptions.

The study also examined various policies and practices related to Muslim students on campus, such as prayer facilities, Islamic societies, Halal options, and recognition of Islamic holidays. The importance of providing prayer facilities was ranked highly among the participants, while inclusion in Islamic societies and catering to dietary needs were also considered significant. Universities' recognition and respect for Islamic holidays required improvement, however. Emerald university demonstrated a significantly more positive perception within theme four, while Modern university and Faith university showed comparatively lower levels of agreement and positive perception among Muslim students.

The qualitative analysis revealed diverse perspectives among Muslim students at Emerald university regarding the university's communication of its policies protecting religion and belief. Some students identified feelings of intimidation and bias against Arab Muslim students, while others commended the university's attentiveness to Muslim students' concerns. Instances of discrimination were also mentioned, suggesting potential challenges within the university context. Some participants recommended improvements, including better communication and raising awareness about policies. Positive accounts of interactions with university staff, and productive dialogue on religion and belief protection policies were also mentioned.

At Modern university, positive relationships and collaboration between Muslim students and non-Muslim colleagues were emphasised, but concerns arose regarding the lack of direct communication from the university regarding policies on religion and belief.

The chapter also presented analysis of EDI reports issued by the selected universities. The analysis focused on the importance of establishing positive relationships and facilitating productive dialogues while effectively managing tensions and ensuring adherence to policies and strategies. Emerald university was noted for its progress in terms of inclusivity and

accommodating religious needs. The university had implemented various facilities and programmes, such as a purpose-built Muslim prayer room, a multi-faith room, mentorship programmes, and training modules to create an inclusive academic environment. Modern university had taken initiatives to promote EDI on campus, evaluating attitudes and culture, organising annual events, and encouraging interfaith collaboration. Efforts had also been made to ensure equitable access to university facilities, such as the creation of a multi-faith room. Faith University recognised the significance of social integration within its community and had implemented staff training initiatives to promote inclusivity and respect, but there was limited support for prayer or worship on campus.

In summary, the universities examined in this study have made efforts to promote EDI on their campuses. They have implemented various policies, facilities and initiatives to create inclusive academic environments and accommodate the needs of Muslim students. Recommendations for improvement, based on the perspectives of Muslim students, include enhancing communication, raising awareness about policies, and addressing potential issues related to discrimination and bias.

Chapter 6. Findings: What are the Barriers Faced by Muslim Students in Communicating Policies that Protect Religion and Beliefs on Campuses?

6.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the barriers faced by Muslim students enrolled in English universities regarding policies that aim to protect religion and belief. It starts with an overview of the data collection tools used in this study to answer the third research question (RQ3), which is focused on the challenges Muslim students face terms of the communication and understanding of the policies protecting religion and belief on university campuses. Following the introduction, this chapter discusses the findings arising from the theme of communication barriers faced by Muslim students, drawing on two primary data collection tools: timeline maps and participants' responses to semi-structured interviews.

The timeline maps also provided insight into the participants' satisfaction with their campus experiences, including both positive and negative experiences, as well as the barriers faced by the participants during their academic journey at the university. Moreover, feedback from interviews enabled the exploration of the participants' satisfaction with their settling experiences.

Overall, this chapter aims to identify the communication barriers faced by Muslim students when enrolling in and communicating with their university, to identify insights into the participants' levels of satisfaction with their study journey at the university.

6.2 Data Collection Tools for RQ3

The following data collection tools were used to explore the barriers faced by Muslim students in terms of the communication and understanding of the policies protecting religion and belief on university campuses:

- Semi-structured interviews aimed at exploring participants' satisfaction with their settling experiences.
- Timeline maps to explore participants' satisfaction with their campus experiences, including both positive and negative experiences, as well as any barriers faced by the participants.

A variety of timeline styles were prominent in the timelines created by the participants in this study. List-like timelines described life events chronologically and were text-heavy. These timelines consisted of columns with brief notes (e.g., short phrases and keywords) with academic journey years.

Only a few participants attempted to differentiate between positive or negative life events by using positive (+) or negative (-) signs or emoticons. Others employed dash marks to indicate significant events on the timeline. Participants represented their experiences through the creation of lines, incorporating spikes, dips, angles, waves or curves. The majority of lines were drawn horizontally, while a few were presented in a vertical list format. The timeline maps reflected the various ways in which Muslim students perceive and recall their experiences in university life. A total of eighteen participants (interviewees) completed timeline maps.

The following sections present the research findings on the barriers encountered by Muslim students in respect to the communication and understanding of the policies protecting religion and belief on Emerald campus, then, Modern campus, and finally, Faith campus.

6.3 Uncovering Communication Barriers Influencing the Effectiveness of Policies Safeguarding Religion and Belief at Emerald University.

Emerald campus offers Muslim students various resources supporting their religious practices and well-being, such as multiple prayer rooms and supportive tutors. Cross-cultural engagement and campus acceptance contribute to their integration and sense of belonging. These findings, based on research data collection, highlight positive aspects of the university environment for Muslim students, noting the support and inclusivity demonstrated by the campus community.

The research findings for Emerald university revealed that Muslim students held a range of different views, and highlighted several critical issues. During the interviews, the six participants from Emerald university shared their experiences and perspectives, highlighting various barriers that hindered effective communication and their settlement experiences. Additionally, the participants each created a timeline map to document their level of satisfaction with their study journey at the university based on the identified barriers and communication challenges.

Eman highlighted that Muslim students perceive a lack of transparent communication from the university regarding matters concerning religion and belief. This suggests that students may not receive sufficient clarity and information about the university's policies safeguarding these aspects, leading to confusion and uncertainty. She mentioned,

"It's not something that you could ... ask the staff because they are not welcoming"

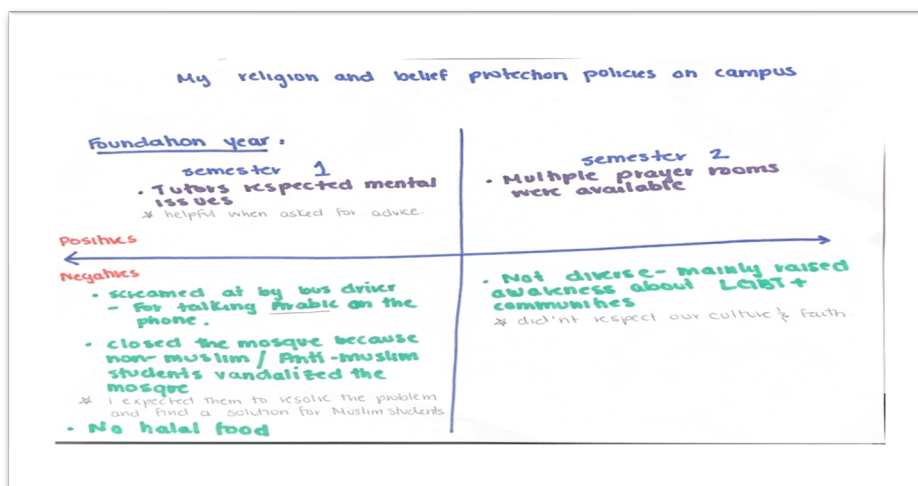
(Participant, Eman).

This viewpoint from a participant indicates a potential discrepancy in communication and openness from university staff, contrasting with the positive aspects mentioned in the preceding paragraph.

In addition, in her timeline map (see Figure 6.1) Eman initially expressed a positive experience with her university, noting its helpfulness and respect towards mental health issues. She also appreciated the availability of a prayer room on campus. Nonetheless, she went on to report negative experiences that were overwhelming: the mosque was closed for renovation without a clear indication of necessity or an alternative arrangement. Furthermore, she mentioned the lack of Halal food options in the canteen, posing a challenge for Muslims with religious dietary restrictions. This, along with the absence of diversity awareness, indicated a lack of respect for the cultural and religious beliefs of Muslim students.

Figure 6.1

Eman's Timeline Map



Another interviewee, Esraa, discussed the impact of discrimination, limited access to participation in activities, and a lack of awareness-raising. All these issues contributed to a

sense of isolation, exclusion and significant challenges in fully expressing themselves as Muslim students:

"I faced, like some discrimination due to the fact that I wear the Hijab to the university...sometimes like I feel afraid of going to the university...the discriminate against Muslim students..." (Participant, Esraa).

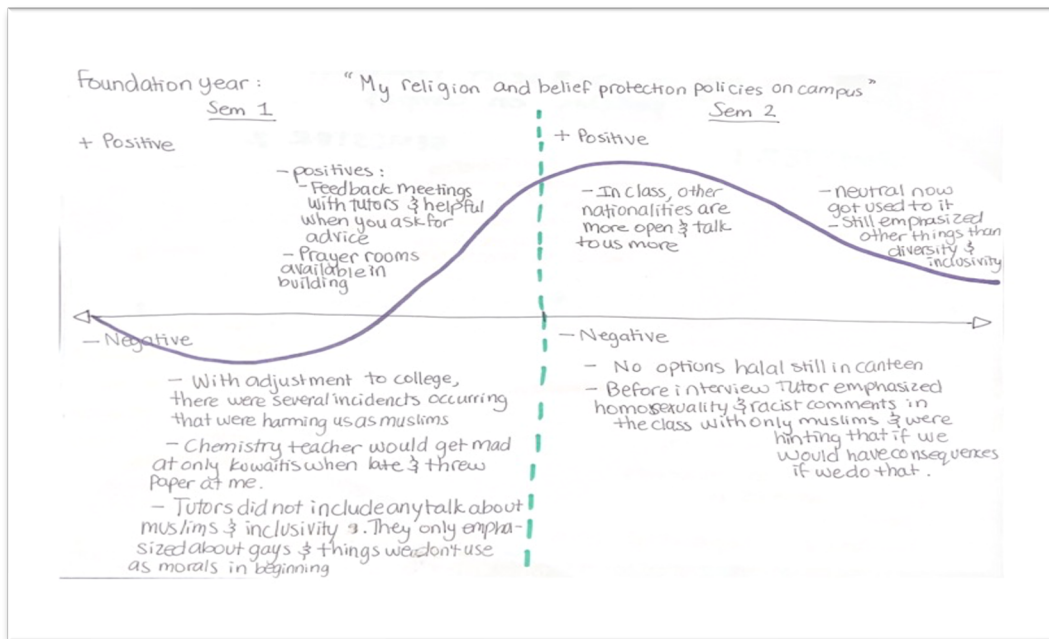
Also, she added,

"...they are limiting Muslims...there are social groups such as Muslim social groups. But most of the time I feel like Muslims are limited" (Participant, Esraa).

Figure 6.2 showcases a timeline depicting Esraa's experiences throughout her first year as a Muslim student at the university. The map demonstrates both positive and negative incidents that Esraa encountered during this period. Initially, there were negative occurrences, leading to a downward trend on the timeline. Specifically, Esraa experienced anger and aggression from a teacher, who even went as far as throwing a paper at her. Furthermore, Esraa perceived an insufficient emphasis on protecting Muslim students, in contrast to discussions about the gay community, which caused her discomfort. She highlighted an imbalance in addressing and supporting different minority groups, indicating unequal emphasis on discussions and visibility in this particular context. As the first semester progressed, however, Esraa's timeline exhibits an upward trend, symbolising more positive experiences and supportive interactions with her other tutors. These positive experiences carried forward into the subsequent semester, as Esraa noticed her classmates becoming more open and receptive towards her. Nonetheless, there was a subsequent decrease in positivity, suggesting a more neutral feeling as Esraa acclimatised to the environment, while still observing a continued lack of focus on diversity and inclusivity.

Figure 6.2

Esraa's Timeline Map



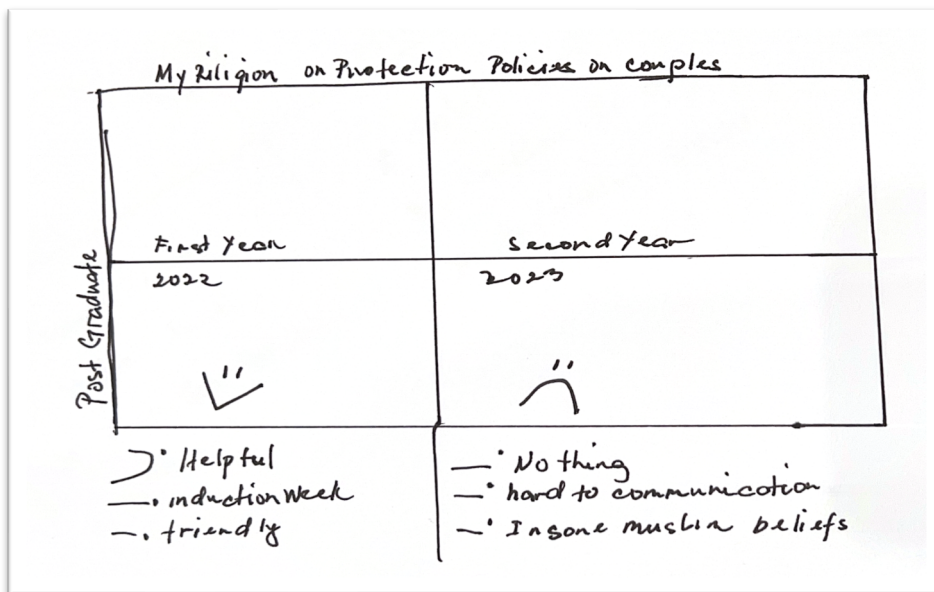
Ekram illustrated her postgraduate journey at the university in her timeline map. In her first year, she expressed her happiness and positive experiences through a drawing of a smiling face. She felt that the university staff were helpful and friendly, especially during the induction week. As time went on, however, she struggled to connect with others and found it difficult to communicate. She also noticed a lack of resources or support for Muslim beliefs, depicted through a sad face in Figure 6.3

"It's easy, but at the same time, it's hard because of the different religious backgrounds we have different beliefs. And we don't really agree" (Participant, Ekram).

She expressed that in her timeline map below.

Figure 6.3

Ekram's Timeline Map



Likewise, another participant, Ebtihal, highlighted the absence of diversity and inclusivity in the university, as well as a lack of opportunities for learning and dialogue, further explaining that this limits Muslim students' access to information and participation in activities. She commented:

"I don't feel very confident because we share different beliefs so I'm scared that I might get criticised by them" (Participant, Ebtihal).

In addition to her previous statement, she also commented:

"I don't feel very comfortable because the students that I might be talking to might be Islamophobes themselves, so it scares me a little bit" (Participant, Ebtihal).

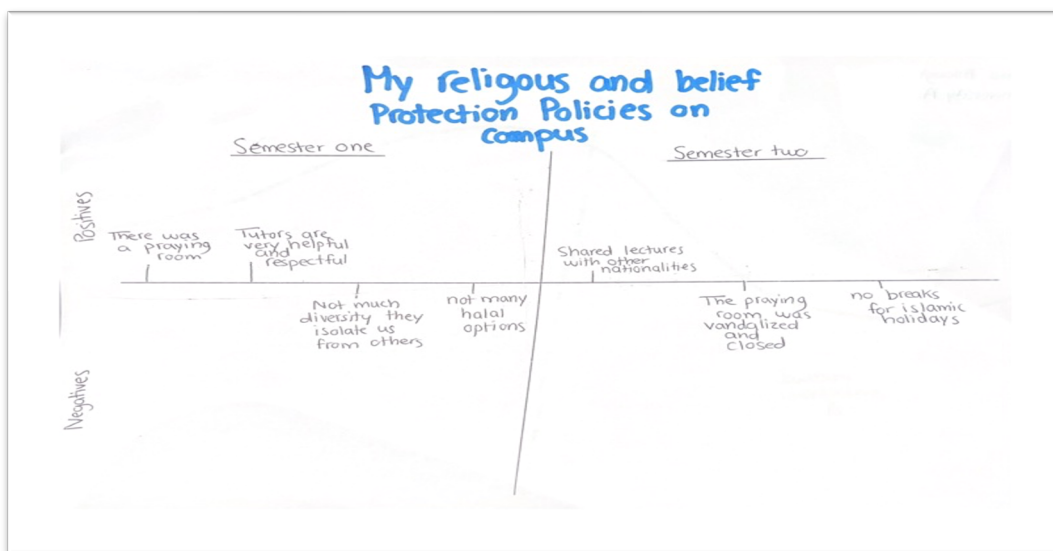
Ebtihal elaborated on her above concerns in the provided timeline map (see Figure 6.5). The timeline encompasses both negative and positive aspects. In the first semester, there were two positive aspects observed. Firstly, there was a prayer room available for students, providing a space for religious practice. Secondly, she mentioned that her tutors were helpful, respectful,

and supportive towards her educational journey. There were also two notable negative aspects identified in the first semester, however. Firstly, Ebtihal expressed her experience of feeling excluded from students of diverse backgrounds, and this was confirmed during the interview. This limited interaction and reduced the opportunities for cultural exchange. Secondly, there was a scarcity of Halal options within the university or in close proximity, making it challenging for Ebtihal to maintain her dietary needs. However, a positive change occurred when the university enrolled her in a class where she could engage with students from diverse backgrounds. This contrasting experience suggests a shift from feeling excluded and segregated in the first semester to a more inclusive and diverse environment in the second semester.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that the negative aspects seemed to persist. The prayer room was vandalised and subsequently closed, depriving Ebtihal and other students of a dedicated space for religious observance. Additionally, there were no breaks specifically allocated for Islamic holidays, leading to potential challenges for Ebtihal in balancing her academic and religious commitments.

Figure 6.4

Ebtihal's Timeline Map



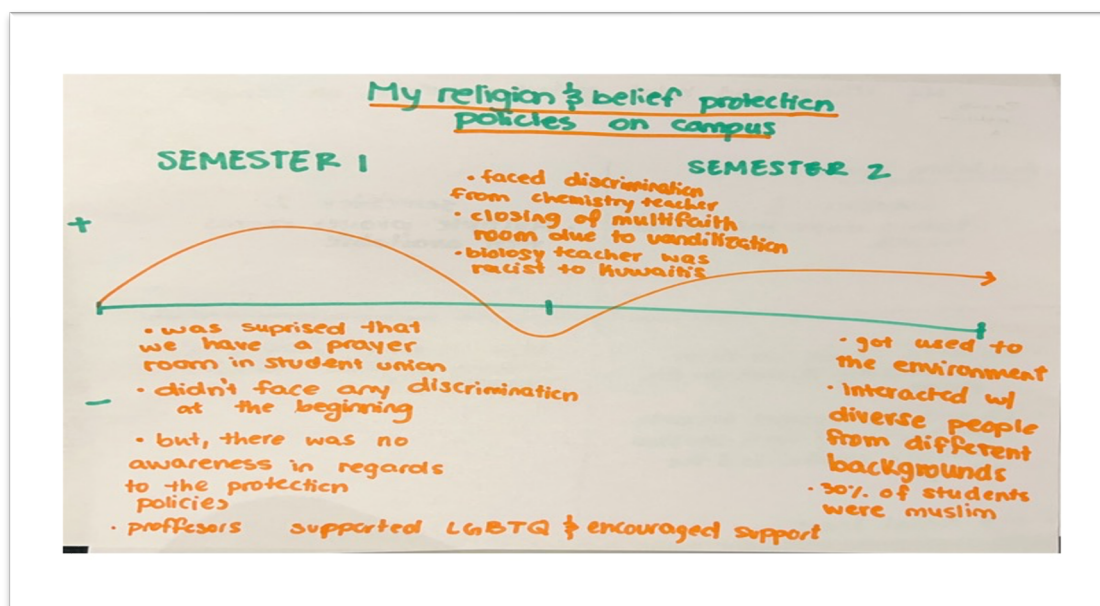
Another participant at the same university also shared her perspective, Estabriq expressed a sense of constraint in expressing their religious beliefs, particularly to non-Muslim students, due to the possible misinterpretation of their beliefs. She feared that bringing up their beliefs during conversations may disrupt the flow of communication or result in negative reactions, possibly stemming from prejudiced or biased views exacerbated by media coverage on Islamophobia. This finding highlights the impact of limited awareness-raising and a lack of understanding of religious diversity:

"I feel like I can't show my beliefs, especially to non-Muslim students as they might take it in another way. They might not converse with me normally if I bring in my beliefs, the conversation...there is interest and Islamophobia that highlighted on the media so you don't...defend or protect your religion...I am... afraid...because I feel like they will do harm to me" (Participant, Estabriq).

These comments are illustrated in her timeline map as shown in Figure 6.5.

Figure 6.5

Estabriq's Timeline Map



Estabriq's timeline map depicts the fluctuation of her experience. Her timeline begins with a positive experience, characterised by her initial surprise at the availability of a prayer room and the absence of discrimination in her academic environment. It is important to note, however, that there was a lack of awareness regarding protection policies during this period. As the timeline progresses, it shows a reduction in the positivity of Estabriq's experience. During this phase, she encountered discrimination from one of her lecturers, leading to a negative impact on her overall experience. This means that she experienced unfair treatment or prejudice based on her religion or any other factor. The incident affected her perception and enjoyment of the educational process.

Additionally, the multi-faith room was closed due to vandalism, hindering her ability to engage in religious practices. Furthermore, the timeline indicates that Estabriq faced racism from another teacher based on her nationality. This specific incident had a negative effect on her overall perception of the academic milieu within her university campus. As the timeline continues, however, the trends become steady, suggesting that Estabriq gradually adapted to an environment that initially presented challenges. This indicates that she found ways to cope with the negative experiences and eventually achieved a level of comfort within the academic setting.

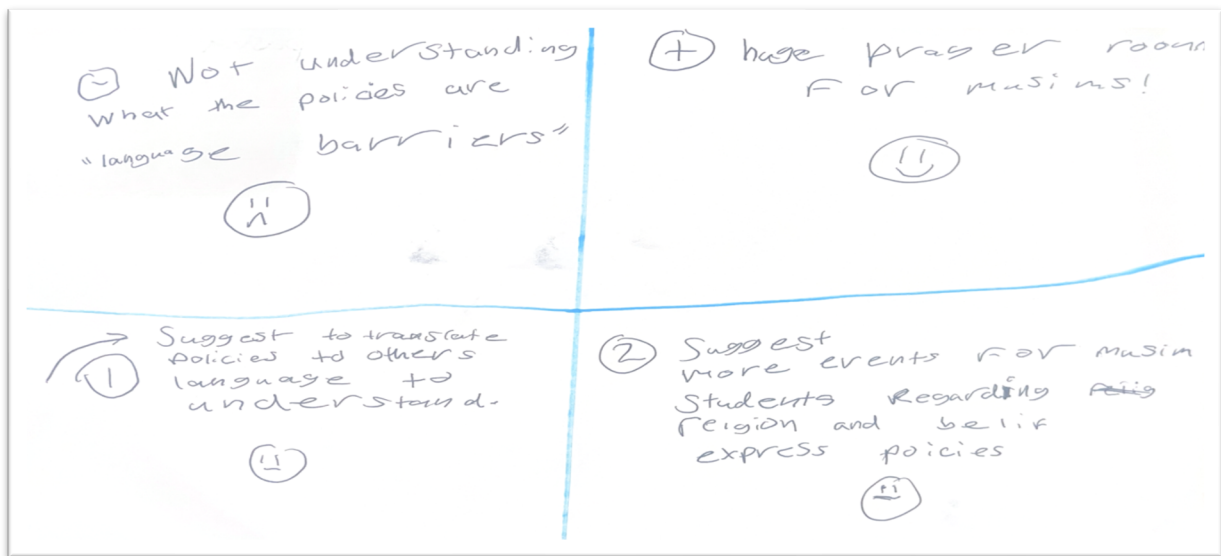
Lastly, Ehaab, highlighted the presence of language barriers and restricted access to information as factors that impede Muslim students from understanding policies, engaging in activities, and effectively expressing themselves. It was suggested that enhancing access to information in multiple languages would be beneficial, as it would ensure that all individuals are knowledgeable about their rights and obligations.

"I think there are a lot of students who struggle with English as a second language. It would help if more information was available in other languages to make sure everyone understands their rights" (Participant, Ehaab).

This is demonstrated in the accompanying timeline map he provided (see Figure 6.6).

Figure 6.6

Ehaab's Timeline Map



In that timeline map Ehaab employed various facial expressions, including happy, sad, and neutral faces, which serve as nonverbal indicators of his satisfaction level. Ehaab did not provide specific details regarding the timeline of his journey; however, he expressed his discontent due to a lack of comprehension of relevant policies and the presence of a language barrier. Furthermore, Ehaab suggested the establishment of more centres dedicated to Muslim students, which would cater to their religious beliefs and provide an avenue for expressing related policies. This notion aligns with his desire for enhanced support and recognition of religious practices within the academic environment. Finally, Ehaab expressed his contentment regarding the provision of a large prayer room for Muslim students.

6.4 Uncovering Communication Barriers Influencing the Effectiveness of Policies Safeguarding Religion and Belief at Modern University.

Muslim students at the Modern university campus have various opportunities that seek to communicate and protect their religion and belief. These opportunities include discussions and considerations related to Islam, and flexibility during the Islamic holy month of Ramadan. The presence of an Islamic society establishes a platform for Muslim students to engage with their faith and connect with other like-minded individuals. The availability of a mosque on campus, which students have the chance to tour, signifies the university's commitment to providing resources for religious observance. The respect and assistance extended to Muslim students, along with the presence of informative posters about the Hijab displayed both on campus and online, further contribute to a supportive environment.

Inclusivity is exemplified by Muslim students leading the Joint Muslim Students' union, showcasing the representation and empowerment of the Muslim community within the university. The provision of Halal food options in the canteen demonstrates the university's effort to cater to the dietary needs of Muslim students. Additionally, the knowledge about and accessibility of a multi-faith prayer room in proximity to the lab facilities accommodate the religious practices of Muslim students during their academic pursuits.

Feedback from Modern university interviewees provided valuable insights into the barriers faced by Muslim students in respect to the communication of policies to protect religion and belief on campus. The sample consisted of six participants, whose perspectives shed light on the barriers experienced in this context. One common challenge that emerged was the lack of access to suitable specialist facilities for prayer for Muslims, forcing students to leave the campus building to find a clean and appropriate place to pray. This issue was

highlighted by participant, Mai, who was one of those who reported experiencing this challenge. She said:

"The problem we face is that we don't have access to a facility for prayer" (Participant, Mai).

Additionally, she mentioned:

"I leave the campus to find a clean place to pray" (Participant, Mai).

Figure 6.7

Mai's Timeline Map

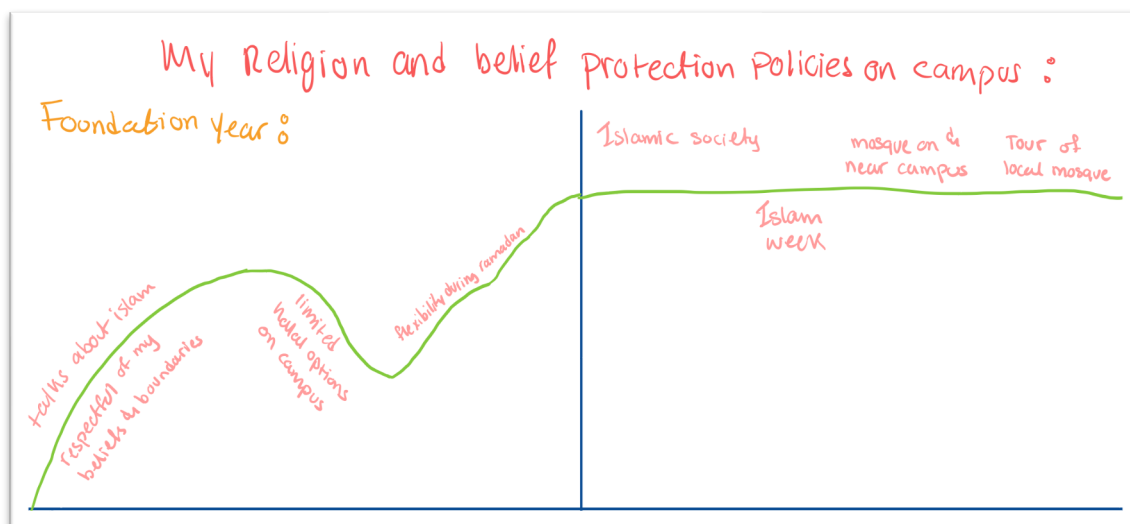


Figure 6.7 depicts the narrative experience of the participant, Mai, as she embarked on her academic journey, with a specific focus on the discussions surrounding Islam within universities and the significance of upholding religious beliefs and boundaries. Significantly, there appeared to be a favourable attitude towards Ramadan, as her university showed flexibility in accommodating the needs of Muslim students during this holy month. Nevertheless, Mai emphasised a notable shortage of Halal dining options on her campus, which posed a potential challenge. Furthermore, Mai pointed out the convenience of having a nearby mosque in close proximity to her university, even though there is not one located directly on campus. Additionally, she mentioned the presence of an Islamic society within the university

that actively organised events such as Islam Week. She highlighted how the existence of a community supportive of her religious beliefs enriched her overall campus experience.

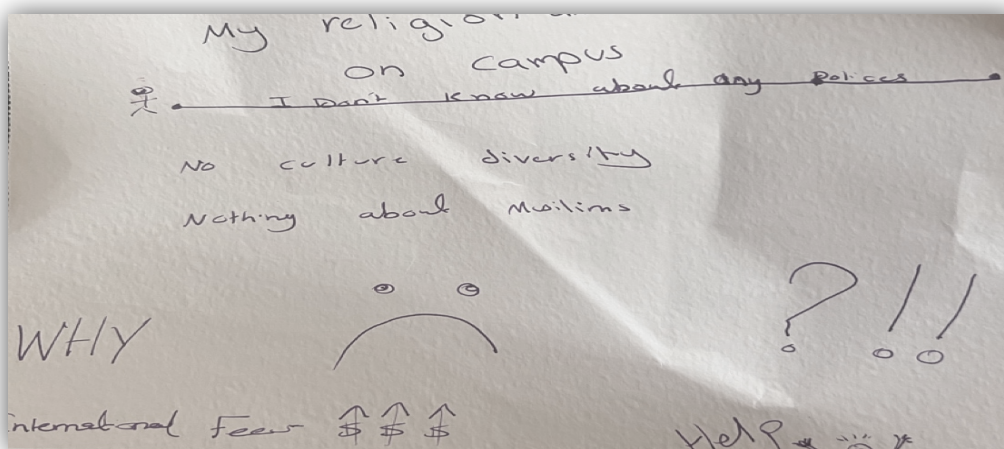
Mai's colleague, Malika, meanwhile, identified a barrier in her struggle to find relevant information about policies that protect religious beliefs. Specifically, she faced challenges due to a lack of clarity on where to find such information and whom to approach for guidance. In her own words, she stated:

"Sometimes it can be difficult to know where to find information about policies. It's not always clear where to go or who to talk to" (Participant, Malika).

Furthermore, she discussed the issue of international fees being excessively high in comparison to those charged to local students. She highlighted how high fees disproportionately affecting international students from specific religious groups like Muslims could impact discussions on policies safeguarding religious beliefs and financial accessibility in education. She expressed her overall experience by depicting a sad face and seeks assistance in creating a light-hearted and comical art piece, as demonstrated by the illustrations shown in Figure 6.8.

Figure 6.8

Malika's Timeline Map



Another participant, Maria, emphasised the sensitive nature of religious beliefs and their potential to become a delicate topic of discussion on campus. In her own words, she shared:

"I think religion is a very sensitive topic" (Participant, Maria).

Maria's timeline map (see Figure 6.9) visually represents her experience of her first year of study on campus. She identified a sense of respect and helpfulness within the campus environment, indicating a positive atmosphere that encouraged inclusivity. Notably, she highlighted the presence of an Islamic society on campus, suggesting the existence of a community that fostered a supportive environment for Muslim students. Furthermore, Maria mentioned the occurrence of Islamic events taking place on campus, further reinforcing the sense of appreciation and celebration of diverse religious traditions within the academic setting. Maria also introduced the sensitive topic of Islamophobia as a significant concern within her campus community, however, and noted a degree of uncertainty about the existence of specific policies or guidelines that explicitly addressed this issue, expressed by her reference to policies highlighted with a symbol denoted as 'X'.

Figure 6.9

Maria's Timeline Map



Another participant, Maha, highlighted the challenges she faced in respect to the communication of policies regarding religion and belief on campus. The insights shared by Maha are presented in Figure 6.10 through a horizontal diagram. Within the map, Maha also highlighted two positive aspects of her overall experience. Firstly, she highlighted the existence of an informative poster depicting the significance of the Hijab, featuring visuals of both Muslim and non-Muslim students. This observation implied a deliberate attempt to foster inclusivity and enhance awareness of Muslim cultural norms within the campus environment. Additionally, she pointed out that Muslim students wearing Islamic headscarves occupy leadership roles within the Islamic societies on campus, indicating a representation of their religious identity within student organisations.

The map also denotes negative aspects, however. These are indicated by arrows pointing downwards. She expressed uncertainty regarding the availability of facilities that supported her religious needs. She was unsure about the proper channels to report any negative experiences she may encounter, indicating a lack of clarity in regard to expressing concerns and seeking support. Furthermore, Maha mentioned a lack of external support beyond the campus boundaries, implying a need for resources or services that extended beyond the academic setting. Also, she highlighted that there were not many events specifically catering to the Muslim community, suggesting a potential lack of inclusivity and cultural enrichment opportunities for Muslim students, this may include workshops or seminars addressing issues related to discrimination, bias, and inclusion within educational environments. Lastly, she pointed out that the availability of Halal foods on campus is not well advertised, suggesting a potential difficulty in accessing dietary options that meet her religious requirements.

Figure 6.10

Maha's Timeline Map

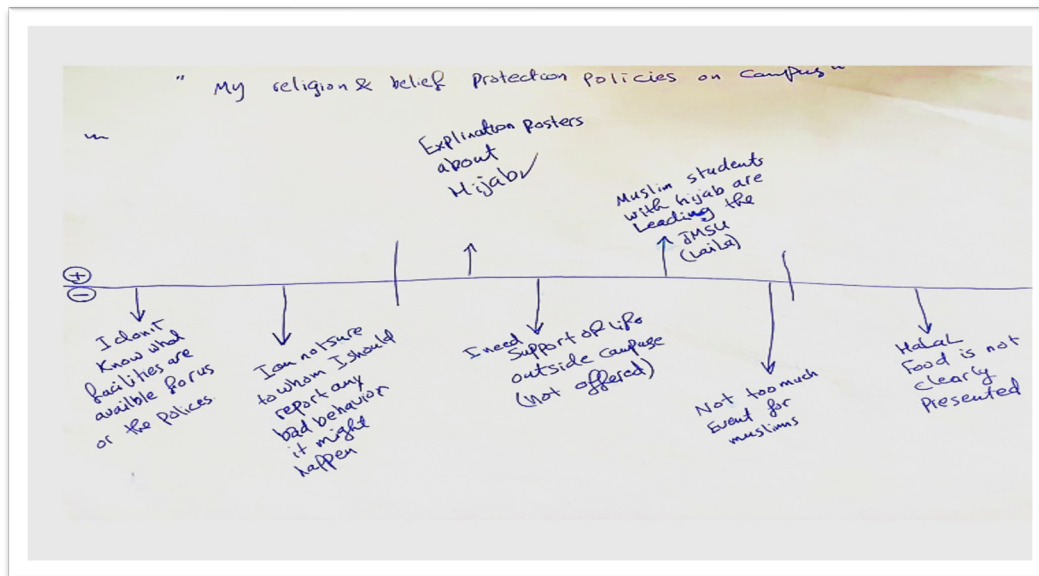
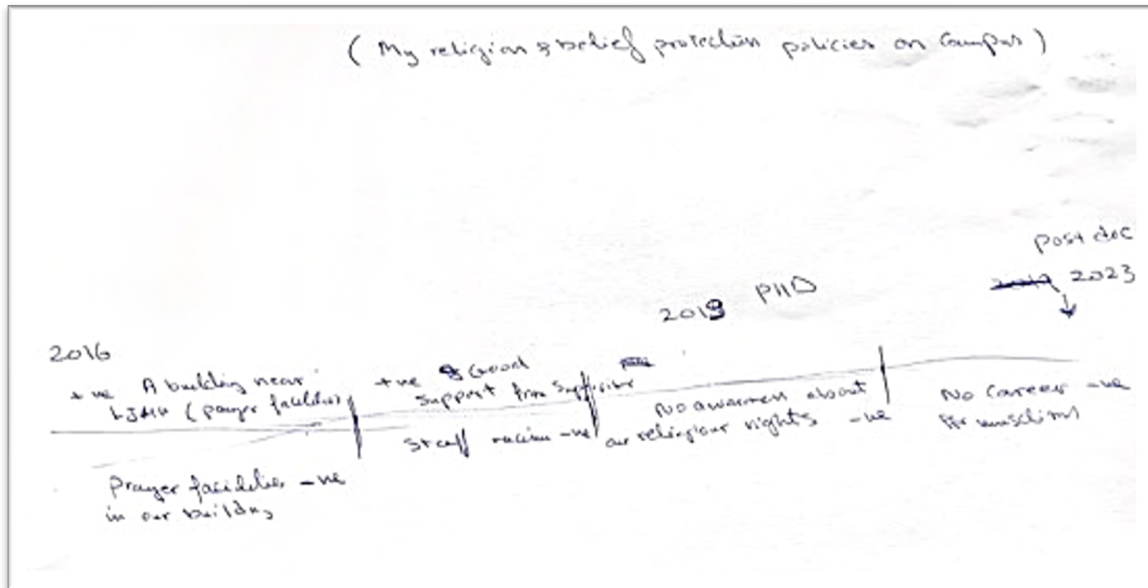


Figure 6.11 provides an overview of the experiences of the interviewee, Mariam, who embarked on her PhD and post-PhD journey in 2016. In her map, Mariam highlighted positive aspects of her experience in the top part of her map, while the negative experiences are described in the lower section. Beginning with the positive aspects, Mariam drew attention to the absence of awareness about religious rights prior to 2019. This indicates an increased recognition and understanding of the importance of religious rights and their application within the academic context more recently. Additionally, Mariam mentioned the presence of nearby prayer facilities, which suggests a level of consideration for accommodating religious needs, despite the absence of dedicated prayer facilities in the building itself. In contrast, the negative experiences and challenges highlighted by Mariam revolved around issues such as staff racism and a lack of career opportunities for Muslims.

Figure 6.11

Mariam's Timeline Map



Mohammad, meanwhile, a PhD student who commenced his academic journey in 2020, did not identify any significant barriers and expressed his overall satisfaction with his experiences on campus. His timeline map, in Figure 6.12. represents this overall experience with a happy face. The figure illustrates that the positive experiences significantly outweigh the negative ones. One negative situation that Mohammad did mention, however, was the occurrence of racism from a lecturer towards Muslim students. This suggests a concerning instance of discriminatory behaviour within the academic environment.

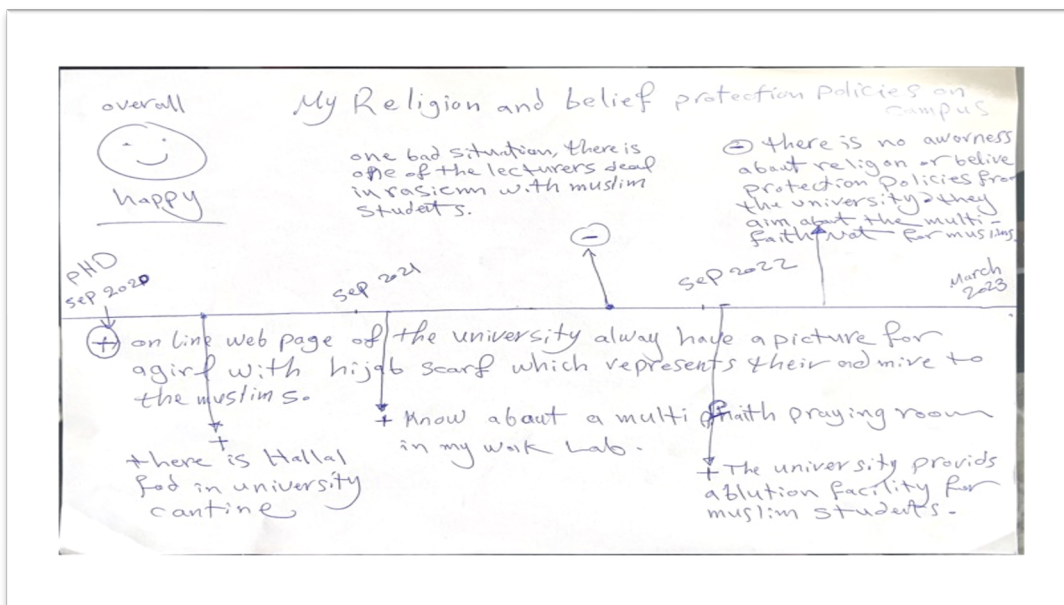
Additionally, Mohammad noted a lack of awareness about religion or belief protection policies from the university, indicating a potential gap in addressing the unique needs and concerns of Muslim students. Instead, the university appears to prioritise a multi-faith approach rather than focusing specifically on the needs of Muslim students. On a positive note, the figure depicts the presence of practices and support systems that support inclusivity and diversity. For instance, the university website displays an image of a girl wearing a Hijab, symbolising a welcoming attitude towards individuals of different faiths, including Muslim students.

Moreover, Mohammad acknowledged the availability of Halal food in the university canteen, suggesting efforts to cater to dietary requirements aligned with Islamic practices. His mention of a multi-faith prayer room suggests the presence of a designated space where students from diverse faith backgrounds can engage in their religious practices.

Additionally, Mohammad referred to the university providing ablution facilities specifically for Muslim students, implying the presence of resources and services that attend to their unique needs. Overall, the figure captures Mohammed’s experiences, showcasing a predominantly positive experience in regard to his journey as a PhD student. It also, however, highlights the presence of negative situations that signify areas where improvements are needed, particularly in terms of addressing racism, raising religious awareness, and ensuring adequate support for Muslim students.

Figure 6.12

Mohammad’s Timeline Map



6.5 Uncovering Communication Barriers Influencing the Effectiveness of Policies Safeguarding Religion and Belief at Faith University.

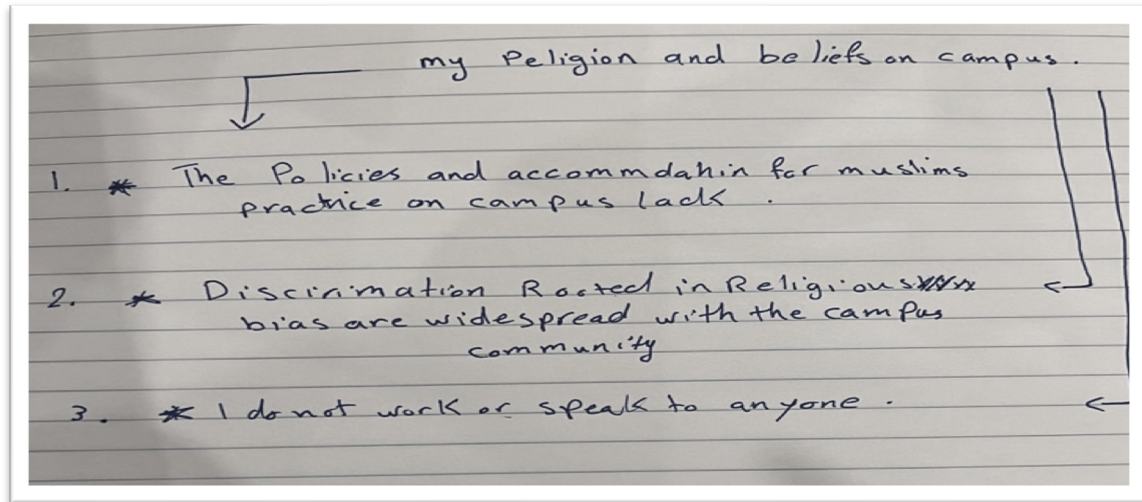
Analysis of interview feedback from Faith university provides valuable insights into the barriers faced by Muslim students in communicating policies for protecting religion and belief on campuses. The study involved six participants, whose perspectives shed light on the barriers experienced in this context. One participant, Farida, highlighted the friendliness of students and staff, indicating a welcoming environment. Another participant, Fai, mentioned the university's willingness to allow Muslim societies to be created, promoting mutual support among students. The campus's diverse community was also noted, emphasising the potential for cross-cultural understanding. Nonetheless, some participants reported negative aspects to their experience at the university.

One common barrier identified by multiple interviewees, including Fai, Fatima, Farah, and Fahad, was the lack of awareness and accessibility of policies and facilities specifically designed to support Muslims. This includes the lack of resources like prayer rooms and Halal food on campus, and the lack of channels for feedback or expressing concerns related to religious protection policies.

Furthermore, one student, Fatima, reported that discrimination based on religious beliefs was prevalent on campus.

Figure 6.13

Fatima's Timeline Map



Fatima also shared her viewpoint, stating:

"There is no awareness of policies and accommodations for religious practices on campus" (Participant, Fatima).

Moreover, she added:

"Discrimination based on religion is prevalent on campus." (Participant, Fatima)

Another student, Farah, acknowledged the presence of discrimination targeting Muslim students upon her enrolment at the university in 2022. Notably, in 2023, she discerned an alarming lack of awareness surrounding university policies established to protect against discriminatory practices. In an effort to raise awareness and assert her religious identity, Farah adopted a visually oriented approach by creating an artwork depicting a Muslim symbol, specifically the mosque. This evocative representation serves as a powerful symbol of her faith and seeks to draw attention to the absence of dedicated spaces for prayer within the university setting.

Figure 6.14

Farah's Timeline Map



She shared her thoughts, highlighting:

"Information related to my university's protection strategies on religion and belief is not accessible, and these strategies do not promote equality, diversity, and inclusivity for Muslim students" (Participant, Farah).

Additionally, she stated,

"I have experienced discrimination as a Muslim student, but the university did not offer much support or assistance in resolving the conflict. " (Participant, Farah)

Farida, meanwhile, identified a lack of clear communication channels for effective communication and feedback between students and management in regards to religious protection policies.

"There is no clear communication channel for Muslim students to provide their feedback or raise any concerns about religious protection policies. This poses a challenge for effective communication between students and management" (Participant, Farida).

Figure 6.15

Farida's Timeline Map

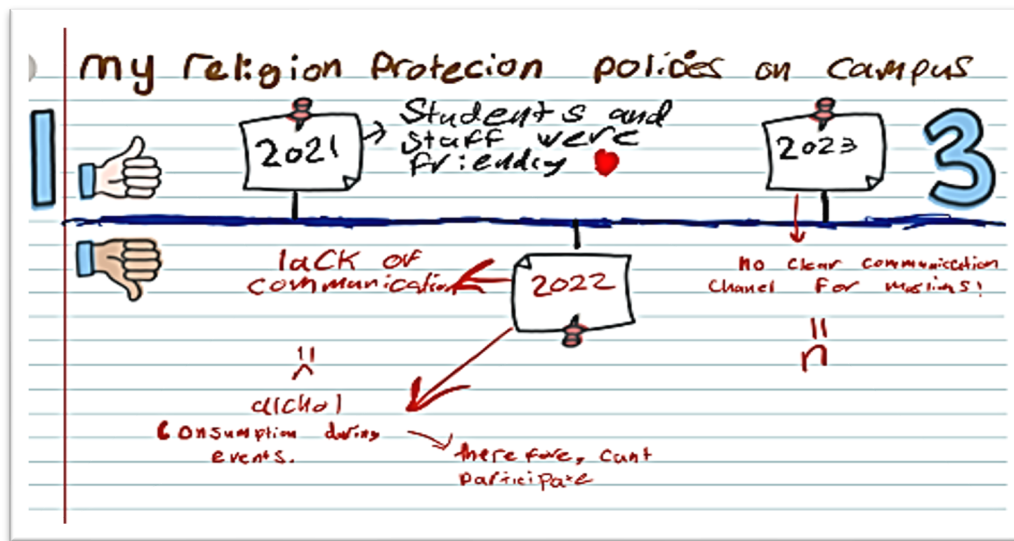


Figure 6.15 showcases the experiences narrated by Farida during her academic journey, which began in 2021. Initially, when she started, both students and staff were depicted as friendly, symbolised by her thumb-up gesture, indicating a positive rapport within the academic community. Over time, however, a lack of communication emerged as a significant issue. After a year, Farida highlighted a decline in communication, suggesting a breakdown in effective information exchange within the university. This lack of communication could potentially hinder the flow of important announcements, updates and opportunities, impacting the overall student experience. Additionally, Farida mentioned how the presence of alcohol consumption at events deterred her from participating, and thus limiting her involvement in campus life. This indicates a potential clash between her personal beliefs and the prevailing cultural norms within the university's event culture.

Reflecting on her third year, Farida expressed that she did not come across any clear communication channels specifically catering to Muslim students. This highlights a lack of dedicated platforms or resources that address the unique needs and concerns of Muslim students within the academic setting. The absence of clear communication channels further

compounds the challenges faced by Muslim students, potentially hindering their sense of inclusion and support on campus. Overall, the figure represents Farida's experiences, with the initial positive impression gradually giving way to communication challenges and cultural factors that hindered her engagement with university events. Additionally, the absence of clear communication channels catering to Muslim students points to the need for improved support systems and a greater understanding of diverse religious perspectives within the university community.

During the interview, Faisal specifically highlighted the absence of facilities and resources that are necessary to support Muslim students on campus. He expressed this concern by stating:

"Some facilities and resources related to religion and belief are not available on campus to support Muslim students" (Participant, Faisal).

Faisal's timeline map, shown in Figure 6.16, showcases the range of experiences he encountered in the first year of his PhD. He provided a column that outlines the advantages and disadvantages related to the freedom to practise and uphold religious beliefs on campus. Faisal identified the primary advantage as the freedom to practise his religion and belief without restrictions on campus.

On the other hand, Faisal's figure also pointed out some drawbacks. Specifically, he highlighted the lack of communication and sharing of information about ongoing initiatives or events related to Islam on campus. This suggests a limited engagement and involvement with Islamic activities within the university community.

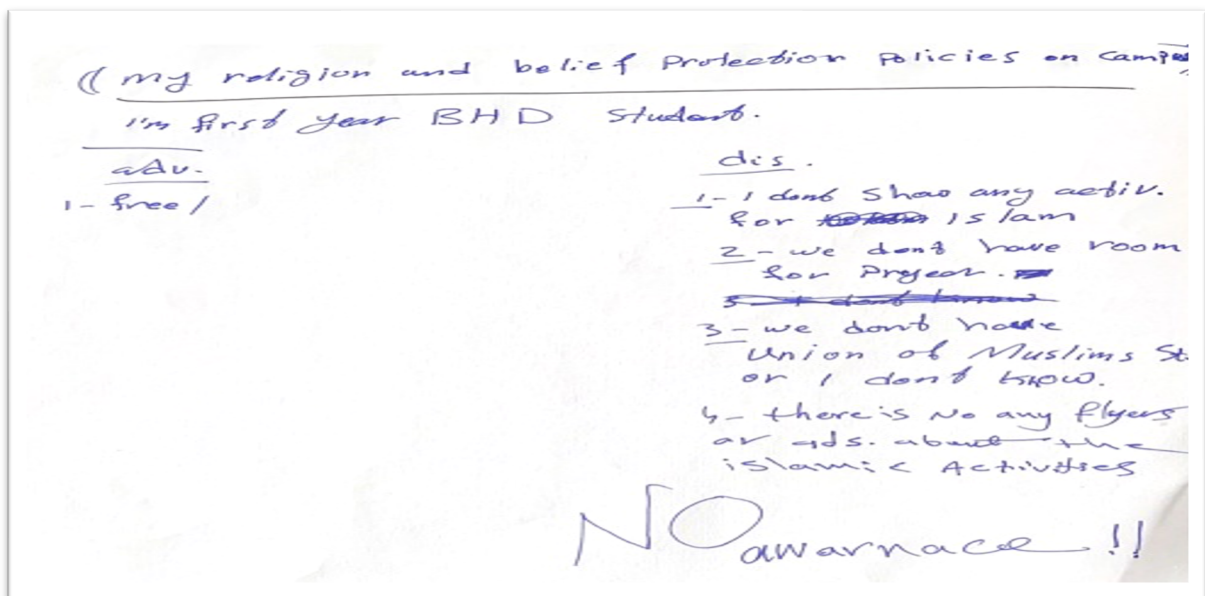
Furthermore, Faisal noted that the absence of a designated prayer room made it difficult to find a suitable space for prayer, and this in turn made it hard to maintain religious observances on campus.

Adding to the list of concerns, Faisal expressed uncertainty about the existence of student or Islamic groups on campus, reflecting a lack of awareness and visibility. The absence of such groups can hinder the formation of a supportive community and limit opportunities for networking and engagement within the Muslim student population. Lastly, the figure includes a statement marked with a "NO," indicating a lack of awareness about policies.

In addition, Faisal emphasised the lack of awareness regarding religion and belief protection policies on campus, suggesting the need for robust policies and guidelines that address and safeguard the rights of individuals with regard to their religious beliefs.

Figure 6.16

Faisal's Timeline Map

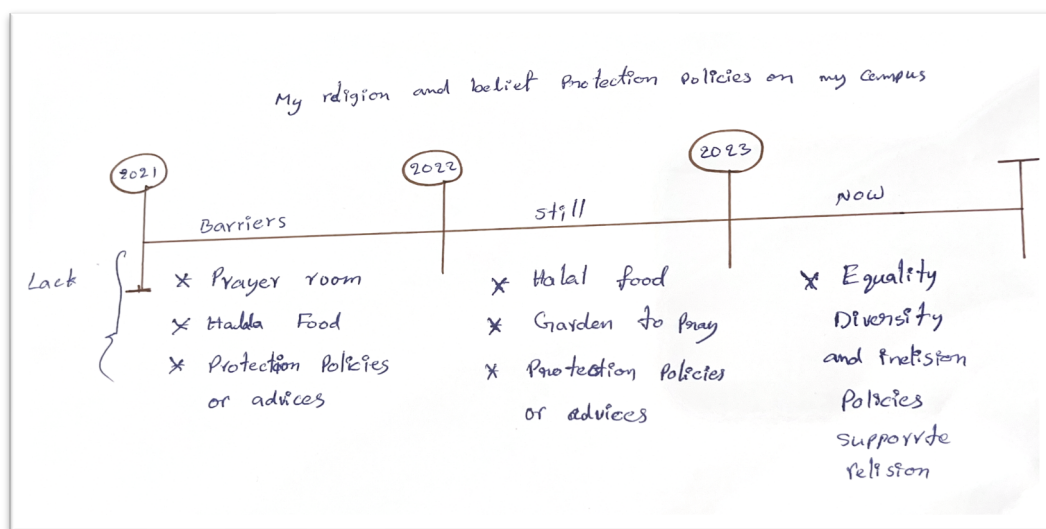


Along with the lack of awareness about and activation of EDI and policies protecting religion, Fahad's feedback highlighted the systemic barriers that Muslim students face in accessing and engaging with policies that protect their beliefs and support their religious practices. The timeline map shown in Figure 6.17, representing Fahad's journey from 2021 to 2023, sheds light on several barriers regarding his religious needs on campus that he encountered during his first year. These obstacles included the absence of a dedicated prayer room and Halal food

options, as well as the absence of protection policies or guidance on addressing these challenges. Moving on to the second year, Fahad still noted the lack of these essential accommodations. Furthermore, in the third year, there was no mention of any progress in terms of EDI initiatives or support.

Figure 6.17

Fahad's Timeline Map



Fahad confirmed these issues during the interview by stating his concerns,

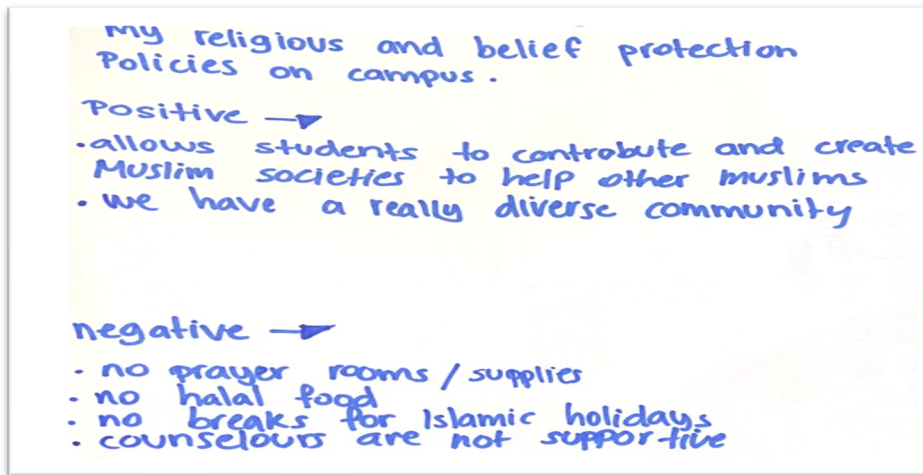
"...we don't have a prayer room or Halal food...and what EDI is I'm coming here and before for 3 years, and I don't see any activated EDI or Islamic protection policies...I don't know why there is no awareness as well" (Participant, Fahad).

Fai further supported this,

"As I said, there is no opportunities for Muslims in my university...there's not much awareness when it comes to religions protection policies" (Participant, Fai).

Figure 6.18

Fai's Timeline Map



Fai's timeline map provided a detailed account of her experiences in an inclusive academic environment. She highlighted the university's commitment to fostering student involvement and creating a supportive community for Muslim students' beliefs. The university's dedication to diversity and inclusivity is also evident, which she saw as contributing to a vibrant atmosphere that encouraged intellectual growth and intercultural exchange. Fai also pointed out areas where the university fell short in meeting the needs of Muslim students, however. Specifically, she raised concerns about how the lack of dedicated prayer rooms hindered religious practices. The absence of Halal food options was also seen as making adherence to dietary requirements harder. Additionally, the limited provision of breaks during Islamic holidays and a shortage of supportive counsellors made it difficult for Muslim students to engage fully in their religious practices, as well accessing necessary assistance.




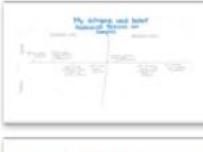


Fai's timeline map was the final contribution to the body of knowledge about Faith university. Its inclusion brings this particular findings chapter to a close, paving the way for further discussion in Chapter 7, which focuses on a comprehensive examination and discussion of the findings as a whole.

6.6 Participant Experience Analysis

Within this section, the following tables present summaries of communication challenges encountered by Muslim students at Emerald university, Modern university, and Faith university. These summaries shed light on the distinct communication obstacles faced by Muslim students across different university settings.

Table 6.1

Summaries of Communication Challenges Faced by Muslim Students at Emerald University







Participants	Communication Barriers	Settlement Experiences	Timeline Maps
Eman	Lack of open communication from the university regarding religion and belief issues.	Confusion and uncertainty, lack of clarity and information about religious policies. Lack of diversity awareness and respect for cultural and religious beliefs.	
Esraa	Discrimination, limited access to participate in activities, and lack of awareness raising.	Sense of isolation, exclusion, fear. Challenges in expressing oneself, negative experiences with a teacher, insufficient emphasis on protecting Muslim students, positive experiences with other tutors.	
Ekram	Intolerance and lack of acceptance of diversity.	Initial happiness and positive <u>experiences</u> , but struggles to connect with others and communicate. Lack of resources and support for Muslim beliefs.	
Ebtehal	Absence of diversity and inclusivity, lack of opportunities for learning and dialogue.	Limited access to information and participation in activities. Discomfort due to the possibility of criticism and encountering Islamophobia.	
Estabriq	Constraints in expressing religious beliefs due to possible misinterpretation.	Fear of disrupting communication flow, negative reactions, lack of awareness and understanding of religious diversity, discrimination from lecturers, closure of multi-faith room.	
Ehaab	Language barriers and restricted access to information.	Difficulty understanding policies, engaging in activities, and expressing oneself, suggestion for more information in multiple languages, desire for more centres dedicated to Muslim students.	

In the analysis of experiences at Modern University, communication barriers were identified as a common challenge. Lack of suitable prayer facilities on campus was a major concern. Participants Maria, Maha, Malika and Mai shared their experiences, highlighting issues such

as Islamophobia, communication challenges, uncertainty about available facilities, and the absence of inclusivity events and clear presentation of Halal food options.

Table 6.2







Summaries of Communication Challenges Faced by Muslim Students at Modern University

Participants	Communication Barriers	Settlement Experiences	Timeline Maps
Mai	Lack of access to suitable facilities for prayer, shortage of Halal dining options	Favourable attitude towards Ramadan, nearby mosque, Islamic society events, supportive community	
Malika	Difficulty finding relevant policies information, high international fees	Positive campus atmosphere, presence of Islamic society, concern about the lack of explicit policies addressing issue	
Maria	Sensitive nature of religious beliefs, uncertainty about addressing Islamophobia	Initial happiness and positive experiences, but struggles to connect with others and communicate, lack of resources and support for Muslim beliefs.	
Maha	Challenges in communicating policies, uncertain facility availability, lack of clarity	Informative poster promoting inclusivity, Muslim students in leadership roles, lack of external support and events	
Mariam	Did not identify significant barriers, overall satisfaction	N/A	
Mohammad	Occurrence of racism, lack of university awareness about religion protection policies	Positive overall satisfaction, university examples of inclusivity, Halal food availability, resources for Muslim students	

The experiences shared by Muslim students at Faith University also revealed communication barriers. Participants Fatima, Farah, Farida, Faisal, Fahad and Fai reported prevalent discrimination, absence of awareness and support from the university, communication challenges, and a lack of essential facilities.

Table 6.3

Summaries of Communication Challenges Faced by Muslim Students at Faith University

Participants	Communication Barriers	Settlement Experiences	Timeline Maps
Fai	Lack of dedicated prayer rooms, absence of Halal food options, limited provision of breaks during Islamic holidays, shortage of supportive counsellors.	University commitment to fostering student involvement and creating a supportive community for Muslim students, dedication to diversity and inclusivity, potential difficulties in fully engaging in religious practices and accessing necessary assistance.	
Fatima	Lack of awareness and accessibility of policies and facilities specifically designed to support Muslims, discrimination based on religious beliefs.	Lack of awareness of policies and facilities for religious practices on campus, prevalence of discrimination based on religion.	
Farah	Lack of awareness surrounding university policies for protecting against discriminatory practices, absence of dedicated spaces for prayer, lack of support from the university in resolving conflicts.	Lack of information related to university's protection strategies on religion and belief, discrimination as a Muslim student, limited engagement and involvement.	
Farida	Lack of clear communication channels between students and management for effective communication and feedback on religious protection policies, presence of alcohol consumption at events.	Breakdown in effective information exchange, avoidance of participating in university events, absence of communication channels specifically catering to Muslim students.	
Faisal	Absence of essential facilities and resources to support Muslim students, lack of communication and sharing of information about ongoing initiatives or events related to Islam, absence of designated prayer room.	Freedom to practise religion without restrictions, limited engagement with Islamic activities, lack of dedicated facilities and resources, uncertainty about student or Islamic groups on campus, lack of awareness regarding religion and belief protection policies.	
Fahad	Absence of dedicated prayer room, lack of Halal food options, absence of protection policies or guidance on addressing religious challenges.	Systemic barriers in accessing and engaging with policies that protect beliefs and support religious practices, lack of progress in terms of diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives or support.	

Overall, the experiences of the participants underscore the need for increased awareness, support and inclusive policies to address the barriers faced by Muslim students on English university campuses.

6.7 Summary

This chapter has presented a thorough analysis of the opportunities and challenges faced by Muslim students enrolled in the three case-study universities in respect to communication with the university regarding policies related to religion and belief protection. The study utilised two primary data collection methods: timeline maps and interview feedback. Timeline maps

provided insights into participants' levels of satisfaction with their campus experiences, capturing both positive and negative encounters, as well as barriers encountered throughout their academic journey. The interviews allowed for an exploration of participants' satisfaction with their settling experiences and the obstacles encountered by Muslims.

A total of eighteen participants were involved in this research to address RQ3. The findings showed how Muslim students had different opportunities and experiences across the three universities, with Emerald and Modern Universities offering specific resources and support, while Faith university focused on fostering a welcoming and diverse environment. Muslim students on Emerald campuses benefited from various opportunities to engage with policies that protect religion and belief. This included access to multiple prayer rooms, accommodating their religious practices, as well as a supportive faculty that respected mental health concerns. The campus's diverse community fostered cross-cultural understanding, and Muslim students felt accepted and integrated into the neutral environment. Additionally, a friendly welcome during the induction week promoted a sense of belonging from the start of their university journey. At Modern university, meanwhile, Muslim students had opportunities for open discussions and considerations related to Islam, particularly during Ramadan. An Islamic society provided a platform for faith-based engagement and connections with like-minded individuals. A mosque was available for religious observance, and the university showed support through informative posters about the Hijab and the leadership of the Joint Muslim Students' Union. Halal food options in the canteen catered to dietary needs, and a multi-faith prayer room in proximity to lab facilities accommodated religious practices during academic pursuits. Muslim students at Faith university also had opportunities for communication about policies protecting religion and belief. The friendly environment, as noted by participant Farida, created a welcoming atmosphere. The university's willingness to

allow Muslim societies promoted mutual support among students, and a diverse community encouraged cross-cultural understanding.

The findings also highlighted various barriers faced by Muslim students when settling into university, including cultural differences, lack of support and communication, discrimination, isolation and religious prohibitions. It is important to recognise, however, that not all Muslim students experienced these barriers, and the severity of the barriers varied between individuals and across university environments.

The analysis of findings began with a comprehensive examination of Emerald university received from six participants. One interviewee, Eman, provided valuable insights by expressing a mix of positive and negative experiences during her time at the university. She noted the university's helpfulness and respect towards mental health issues but also highlighted incidents such as the mosque being closed without sufficient information or alternative arrangements. Another participant, Esraa, discussed the impact of discrimination, limited participation in activities, and a lack of awareness-raising, contributing to her feeling isolated and facing challenges in expressing her identity as a Muslim student. The timeline maps provided additional insights from other participants, such as Ekram, who brought attention to the issue of intolerance and a lack of acceptance of Muslim beliefs within the university community. Ebtihal emphasised the absence of diversity and inclusivity, limited opportunities for learning and dialogue, and a lack of confidence in expressing her beliefs due to the potential for criticism. Estabriq's timeline map, meanwhile, depicted positive initial experiences, but also highlighted encounters with discrimination and racism. Despite these challenges, Estabriq gradually adapted and found ways to cope within the academic setting. Ehaab emphasised the lack of understanding of policies and the presence of a language barrier, proposing the establishment of dedicated centres for Muslim students.

Chapter 7. Discussion

7.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a discussion of the quantitative and qualitative findings outlined in chapters 4, 5 and 6 in terms of the research questions (RQs) set out at the start of the thesis. The key themes explored in the findings include access, experience, learning, the presence of inclusive environments and facilities on campus, the communication channels used to convey policies to Muslim students, the effectiveness of policies and communication strategies in promoting religious inclusivity, and the barriers faced by Muslim students within their university setting.

Furthermore, this research study fills a crucial void in the literature by introducing a robust methodology that incorporates various elements such as EDI reports, timeline maps, interviews and questionnaires, that together make it possible thoroughly to explore the experiences of participants and their satisfaction with respect to how their religious beliefs are protected. The satisfied settling theory, as discussed in the research, highlights how minority status can lead individuals, like Muslim students, to feel a sense of belonging but in a one-sided manner, primarily driven by positive academic experiences (Islam, Loewe & Johnes, 2018). Factors influencing Muslim students' satisfaction regarding the protection of their religion and belief include the quality of Islamic education, internationalisation, and Islamisation of HEIs, as well as the proximity to mosques and religious communities in their living spaces (Ahmed et al., 2017).

The theory suggests that individuals naturally gravitate towards locations that provide social satisfaction in terms of the extent to which their religion and beliefs are perceived to be protected. Santos et al. (2019) supported this notion by highlighting the importance of

religiosity and the perception of the university environment as accepting of one's religion in predicting satisfaction with the university experience, mediated by positive social relations.

Throughout the discussion, I will analyse the perspectives of Muslim students in light of relevant literature, emphasising their significant implications for the research theory surrounding satisfaction and how this connects with the communication of religion and belief protection policies. The chapter is organised into three main sections. In section 7.2, I explore the perceptions of Muslim students regarding the policies of English universities regarding the protection of religion and belief. Section 7.3 concentrates on investigating the approaches adopted by the three chosen universities to communicate their policies for the protection of religion and belief to Muslim students. Finally, in section 7.4, I highlight the significant barriers faced by Muslim students in respect to communication of and communication about policies protecting religion and belief at their respective campuses. Section 7.5 will present the final conclusions drawn from this chapter.

7.2 Discussion of Findings Regarding on RQ1: What are Muslim Students' Perceptions about English University Policies on Protecting Religion and Belief?

The first RQ sought to identify the perceptions of Muslim students regarding the policies protecting religion and belief at English universities. This section examines the findings in relation to this question, first in terms of the variations in perception across the three case study universities, and then in respect to the detailed findings for each university in turn.

7.2.1 Perceptions Across the Three Studied Universities

The research findings revealed variations in the perceptions of Muslim students across the three selected universities. As indicated in the research framework, the 'satisfied settlement' lens

was chosen for the initial exploration of the concept of satisfied settling experiences due to its ability to capture diverse interpretations and realities. These methods are commonly used to extract meaning from minority groups (Given, 2008; Connolly & Troyna, 1998). Among the twelve statements related to theme one, five were considered important and received agreement from the majority of respondents, indicating positive experiences. These included opportunities for academic success, fulfilling their potential, and receiving respectful treatment. Six statements were rated as neutral, suggesting mixed views or lack of strong opinions. Krosnick (1991) and Roberts et al. (2019) both observed that respondents who engage in ‘strong satisficing’ look for cues in survey questions to provide defensible answers without fully considering the question. The inclusion of a neutral option serves as one such cue, prompting respondents inclined towards strong satisficing to utilise it.

Only one statement, mentioning the consideration of leaving university due to feeling unwelcome, was rated as unimportant. Although only a minority view (34%) assigned importance to this statement, this percentage still suggests that these negative feelings were experienced by some participants, which raises questions about the universities’ effectiveness in addressing the needs and concerns of these Muslim students. The UK Office for Students, in 2020, also highlighted how feeling a sense of belonging and community was a significant factor influencing students’ decisions to either discontinue or continue their studies at HEIs (Office for Students, 2020). Skea (2017), meanwhile, questioned the prioritisation of student satisfaction over other objectives within the realm of HE, arguing that student satisfaction should not be given undue privilege or be considered more significant than the broader goals of HE itself. Furthermore, a noteworthy finding that emerged from the study was that approximately half of the participants reported feeling that their opinions were devalued by fellow members of the university community, suggesting a lack of inclusion and respect for

diverse viewpoints. This lack of care and sensitivity has been well-documented in research-intensive universities (Buitendijk, Curry & Maes, 2019).

Similarly, over half of the respondents believed they needed to exert more effort than their peers to be recognised and valued, indicating the presence of systemic biases and inequalities. Overall, the challenges and disparities reported by participants suggest that Muslim students face discrimination, lack of inclusion, and communication barriers. This finding may be compared with those of a study conducted by Masoud (2022), where the focus was to understand how Muslim students navigate their identities in HE environments in the UK. Masoud's findings revealed that approximately one in three respondents reported experiencing instances of abuse or criminality at their institution, with a significant proportion attributing these incidents to discrimination based on their religious identity. In this current study, meanwhile, Muslim students reported less favourable experiences at the Faith university compared to Emerald and Modern Universities. Patel et al. (2020) found that Muslim students often face challenges in feeling a sense of belonging and having their opinions valued at university, which can negatively impact their overall experience. Ryan and Deci (2000) explained how individuals' need for competence, autonomy and relatedness influences their motivation and engagement in academic settings.

Theme two of the investigation highlighted that, from the perspectives of Muslim students, the three selected universities supported students from diverse backgrounds by prioritising the creation of an inclusive environment, both by promoting inclusivity in general and by providing specialised facilities. Respondents displayed relatively positive attitudes towards individuals with different identities and nationalities, indicating acceptance and cultural competence. In line with Smith et al.'s (2019) findings, this statement underscores the importance of fostering inclusive environments that embrace and respect diverse identities.

Furthermore, Johnson et al. (2019) emphasised the importance of cultural competence in facilitating positive cross-national interactions within contemporary British society.

The findings also indicate, however, that respondents exhibited relatively fewer positive attitudes towards individuals of a different gender, thus underscoring the persistent challenges in achieving full acceptance and inclusivity within gender-related interactions. Despite the central role played by the Athena Swan Charter, managed by Advance HE, in promoting gender equality in UK institutions, it is evident that institutions continue to face hurdles in attaining complete gender parity. The comparison between universities revealed notable disparities in respect to theme one, with Muslim students reporting less favourable experiences at Faith university compared to Emerald and Modern Universities. However, no significant differences were observed between Emerald and Modern universities in this aspect.

Furthermore, the study revealed significant distinctions among the participating universities, with the Emerald university demonstrating a notably comprehensive and superior environment compared to both the Modern and Faith universities. The contrast between Emerald and Modern universities, as well as Emerald and Faith universities, was particularly salient, while the disparity between Modern and Faith universities was relatively smaller. These findings align with Kayyali's (2023) assertion that HEIs exhibit variations in multiple dimensions, including academic disciplines, student demographics, resources and cultural context. Notably, Russell group universities excel in research funding, academic programmes, and student satisfaction levels (Smith et al., 2019; Johnson et al., 2019).

7.2.2 Emerald University

The findings from Emerald university revealed that the university excels in providing resources to support a diverse and positive learning experience. Approximately 78% of students

expressed satisfaction with the accessibility of learning resources. It was noteworthy, however, that a small percentage 26% of Muslim students, all international students, expressed a desire to leave due to feeling unwelcome. Ding (2016) highlighted the significant influx of international students in the UK, making them a prominent group on university campuses (Kruid, 2017). These specific groups of students are more likely to experience dissatisfaction with their overall student experience (Neves & Hillman, 2016; Higher Education Funding Council for England, 2016). The inclination of international students to view themselves as outsiders on campus can be attributed to a campus culture that emphasises racial differences (Yao et al., 2020). These negative experiences contribute to feelings of isolation and disconnection, especially when students encounter race-related incidents in the present context (Yao et al., 2020). Numerous studies have highlighted the importance of colleges and universities in creating a supportive college climate for international students (Koo, 2021; Yao et al., 2020; Green & Kim, 2005). As universities become more market-driven, they increasingly promote EDI to attract students/consumers from international markets (Morgan, 2022; Newfield, 2021; Troiani & Dutson, 2021). It is significant to note the reliance on international students in UK universities goes beyond stabilising institutional finances; it also plays a crucial role in bridging economic disparities by significantly contributing to the local economy and supporting job creation (Scott & Mhunpiew, 2021).

When considering the experiences of international students and local Muslim students in terms of Satisfied settling, there could be notable differences. International students face unique challenges related to cultural adjustment, language barriers and social integration, all of which may impact their settling process differently from local Muslim students. The settling aspects for international students could involve finding a sense of community, adapting to a different educational system, and building networks within the university and local environment. On the other hand, local Muslim students may have a better understanding of the

cultural context within their setting but may still encounter specific challenges related to their religious identity. Their settling aspects could revolve around feeling accepted and included within the university community, having access to appropriate facilities for religious practices, and receiving support for their religious beliefs and practices.

Moreover, in the interviews conducted as part of the study, students (Eman and Esraa) expressed concerns about the university's handling of their religious holidays. This finding supports the findings of a study by Jeldtoft (2011), which highlighted the significant connection between religious holidays such as Eid, Bayram, and Ashura, and the cultural, ethnic, and national identities of Muslim students, along with their specific needs.

Furthermore, incidences of discrimination reported by students (Estabriq and Esraa) underscore the university's responsibility to address and combat such behaviour. During Estabriq's experience, she faced discrimination from one of her lecturers, negatively impacting her educational journey. Furthermore, Esraa expressed struggles with discrimination, shared that she encountered discrimination for wearing the Hijab and felt fearful and discriminated against at the university. This finding aligns with a study conducted by Uddin, Williams, and Alcock (2022), which revealed that individuals who visibly display their Muslim faith often face increased levels of discrimination. Karlsen and Nazroo (2002) highlight that discrimination can manifest in different ways and impact various aspects of an individual's life.

The demand for improved support services for Muslim students is evident (Ebtihal), particularly in addressing individual beliefs and respecting religion, this could include designated prayer rooms equipped with necessary facilities and resources to practice their faith comfortably. These findings align with several studies that underscore the importance of recognising and understanding spirituality, beliefs, and worldviews, with a particular focus on

the Muslim community (Ansary & Salloum, 2013; Dharamsi & Maynard, 2012; Fischer et al. 2010).

The quantitative findings related to theme two highlighted the commendable efforts of Emerald university in promoting inclusivity and respect for diverse social classes, identities and religious beliefs. It was reported that 66% of the participants had interactions with individuals from different nationalities. Some of the responses from the interviews, however, indicated that there is still room for improvement in fully embracing and supporting students from different national backgrounds. One participant (Ebtehal) specifically emphasised the need for greater attention in this regard. Previous studies have shown that Muslim students often face misconceptions and false assumptions from fellow students, staff, and teachers, which hinder their integration into co-curricular activities and social spaces on campus (Rockenbach & Mayhew, 2014). Furthermore, the findings emphasised the significance of offering dedicated prayer rooms and dietary accommodations for Muslim students. Although some students referred to the existence of a multifaith room, it was deemed inadequate in meeting the requirements of Muslim students. Tyrer and Ahmad (2006) found that some institutions overlooked the provision of Halal food, despite having a significant Muslim student population. This shortage was linked to insufficient promotion, causing difficulty for students to ascertain the availability of suitable dietary options in university canteens.

7.2.3 Modern University

The collective perspectives and experiences of Muslim students on the campuses of Modern university reveal that 65% of them have reported a positive impact on their academic development. Aune and Guest (2016) have corroborated the notion that post-92 universities, possess a strong dedication to vocational education and expanding access to HE for historically marginalised communities, and that these universities are driven by a shared ethos that

prioritises accessibility, equal opportunities and innovative teaching and learning methods. The fact that a significant percentage of Muslim students did not report a positive influence on their academic growth, however, represents an important aspect to consider. This hints at the possibility that a notable percentage of Muslim students might have faced obstacles impacting their academic progress. It highlights a potential inadequacy in the university's support system and resources, which may not be sufficiently tailored to address the specific requirements of Muslim students. Gan, Wong and Jiao (2023) indicate that religiosity and healthy lifestyle behaviours positively correlate but do not directly influence academic achievement (Gan, Wong & Jiao, 2023).

Furthermore, it is worth noting that there is a lack of dedicated campus resources specifically tailored to meet the needs of the international student population (Herpich, 2020). The negative experiences and lack of support reported by this group could stem from various factors, such as inadequate representation of their cultural and religious perspectives in the curriculum (Maha, Mai and Malikah), limited access to prayer facilities (Mai and Maha), insensitivity towards their religious practices, or incidents of discrimination and bias (Mohammad). These factors could affect their overall experience and hinder their academic progress. Rehman, Jaspal and Fish (2021) conducted the first UK study exploring the experiences of minority stress. Their analysis, informed by the minority stress theory, highlighted the stressors faced by individuals due to their intersecting sexual, gender, religious, and cultural identities.

It is noteworthy that a substantial majority of Muslim students in Modern university 90% share the perception that their university is dedicated to upholding the EDI principles. The positive response observed in this study reflects the commendable efforts of the institution in cultivating an inclusive atmosphere, distinguishing it from other universities (Fuentes, Zelaya & Madsen, 2021). In addition, the findings by Branch et al. (2018) reinforce that the inclusion

of a diversity statement in the course syllabus enhances the likelihood of undergraduate students perceiving a positive and inclusive class environment.

On the other hand, a relatively small proportion of Muslim students 21% experienced a sufficiently strong sense of feeling unwelcome to consider leaving the university. The same proportion of Muslim students also felt that others do not value their opinions. This suggests a lack of respect and recognition for their perspectives and contributions within the university community.

The finding that only 39% of Muslim students believed the university was inclusive towards individuals from diverse nationalities raises concerns. It indicates a notable portion of Muslim students feel the university is not adequately meeting the needs of those from varied national backgrounds. This observation resonates with the concerns voiced by participant Malikah, highlighting potential gaps in inclusivity efforts.

Efforts must be made to implement strategies that foster cultural understanding and respect for diverse national backgrounds. This can include initiatives such as the development of inclusive policies and practices, the provision of support services specifically tailored to address the unique needs of Muslim students from different nationalities, and the promotion of intercultural dialogue and engagement among the university community. It is evident that implementing policies that prioritise diversity contributes to creating a more inclusive campus environment (Muntinga et al., 2016).

Moreover, it is crucial for the university to engage and collaborate actively with Muslim student associations to ensure that their voices are heard and their concerns properly addressed. Within theme two, Muslim students expressed their desire for enhanced support, resources, and events that cater to their religious beliefs and protective policies. While meeting student needs is commendable, it is important to critically evaluate the suitability of a market-driven

approach, which assumes that ‘the customer is always right,’ within the HE sectors (Sheng, 2023).

Regarding an inclusive environment, some participants faced difficulties in finding women’s prayer rooms and Halal food options, while others appreciated the opportunities to interact with people from different backgrounds. Evidence from studies conducted by Asmar, Proude, and Inge (2004) and Ahmed and Hashem (2016) supports the notion that Muslim students face difficulties navigating the Western campus culture, which encompasses prevalent alcohol consumption and close cross-gender contact.

7.2.4 Faith University

In the context of Faith university, the findings demonstrate that the Muslim students in the study perceived that they had the same academic opportunities as their peers, with a high agreement percentage 99% from fifty Muslim students. This indicates that the university's efforts to protect and accommodate religious beliefs have influenced the perception of equal educational experiences among Muslim students. Similarly, Muslim students at Faith university strongly believed that the university enabled them to reach their maximum capabilities and excel academically 98%. This indicates that these students perceived Faith university as a supportive and empowering environment that valued their potential and provided them with the necessary resources and opportunities to succeed.

In contrast, it is notable that only a small percentage 20% of participants expressed their belief in the university's strong commitment to EDI. Further investigation is necessary to understand this perception better and find ways for improvement. Gill (2022) and Tazzyman et al. (2021) emphasise the importance of collecting comprehensive EDI data, including factors

like ethnicity and social class, to implement targeted measures that promote equality and inclusivity within academia.

A considerable majority of Muslim students at Faith university 83.2% perceived that the institution offered opportunities for them to engage and interact with students from diverse nationalities, as suggested by the statistical results for theme two. In contrast, when students with different identities to the dominant group at Faith university were asked about their experiences, only a minority 34.8% reported perceiving any level of interaction with individuals from diverse backgrounds.

In terms of gender diversity, only 21% of students expressed a lack of interaction and communication with students of a different gender. Furthermore, while Faith university fostered a welcoming environment for all religious backgrounds, it is important to acknowledge that certain faith groups may not experience the same level of inclusivity and support as others on campus. The study by Bowman and Toms Smedley (2013) sheds light on how church-affiliated HEIs have traditionally upheld Christian values. While this support for Christian norms is well-known, it can inadvertently create a privileged environment for Christianity, impacting the experiences of minority religious groups on campus. Interestingly, the concept of Christian privilege has not been a major focal point for students historically, and universities in the UK may have leaned towards promoting traditional Christian beliefs or secularism instead, as highlighted by Guest (2020).

Education Office by church of England (2020) report on faith in HE does acknowledge that the category of 'religion' itself has a history rooted in the Western Enlightenment and the secularisation of Christian belief and practice. It also recognises that some people may resist the idea that there could be a 'Christian' or 'theological' perspective on 'secular' subjects, on the grounds that the autonomy of such subjects would be compromised or that there simply is no

relevant theological wisdom on them (Church of England, 2020). This emphasises the ongoing debate about the role of religion and spirituality in academia. The Church of England has been involved in initiatives to improve relations with Islam, such as an agreement established between the Archbishop of Canterbury and al-Azhar al-Sharif in Cairo (Fetzer & Soper, 2005; Sudworth, 2009). The relationship between the state and long-established Christian churches shapes the accommodation of Islam as a 'new' religion, it means that the existing relationship between them opens up avenues for Muslims to assert their rights and respond politically in a legitimate manner (Koopmans, 2005). In terms of this within theme one, the interviewees expressed a desire for increased awareness and education on cultural and religious diversity. They highlighted the lack of support for Islamic societies, limited opportunities for students to engage with and learn about different cultures, beliefs and customs, as well as the absence of classes, workshops or events focused on diverse cultures and religions. The participants suggested that integrating religious diversity into the curriculum and academic content would foster tolerance and respect. This aligns with previous research conducted by Modood, Dobbernack, and Meer (2010), the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (2017), Verkuyten, Yogeeswaran, and Adelman (2019), and Verkuyten and Killen (2021). Overall, understanding cultural differences and potential clashes is crucial for promoting tolerance and respect (Albada, Hansen & Otten, 2021).

Several interviewees in this study articulated experiences of discrimination and revealed a lack of support to deal with this. They reported feelings of being unwelcome, instances of racism, challenges with accurate representation and understanding, and a lack of appropriate action by university management when incidents occurred. This contradicts the findings of research conducted by the European Website on Integration (Modood, Dobbernack & Meer, 2010) and the International Academic Forum (2020), which emphasised the significance of embracing religious diversity in the UK.

In addition, the interviewees highlighted the lack of an inclusive environment and facilities for Muslim students in campuses affiliated with the church. They mentioned the absence of opportunities for Muslims, limitations in interacting with students from different religious backgrounds, feeling unwelcomed, and the lack of prayer rooms and Halal food options. This aligns with research by Zainuddin (2018), Shaffait (2019), Islam (2021) and Uddin (2021).

Overall, the findings indicate that Muslim students at Faith university perceived equal academic opportunities and believed that the university enabled them to reach their maximum capabilities. They also perceived opportunities for engagement with diverse nationalities. There were also areas of concern, however, such as a relatively low belief in the strength of the university's commitment to EDI, and a lack of interaction with diverse identities, particularly for students with different identities from their own. Additionally, there were issues related to Christian privilege and a lack of support for the Islamic Society, diverse cultural education, and inclusive facilities for Muslim students. Overall, Muslim students may value finding a more supportive community within the university, whether it be through student organisations, affinity groups, or Islamic societies networks.

7.3 Discussion of Findings Regarding RQ2: How do the Three Universities Communicate their Policies for Protecting Religion and Belief to Muslim Students?

The second RQ sought to understand how universities communicate with Muslim students regarding their policies for protecting religion and belief. This section examines the findings in relation to this question, first in terms of the variations in perception across the three case study universities, and then in respect to the detailed findings for each university in turn.

7.3.1 EDI Reports Analysis: Communication of Religion and Belief Policies for Muslim Students in Three Universities.

Based on the analysis of the EDI reports of the three universities, it can be concluded that Emerald university and Modern university have implemented several initiatives and policies to communicate and protect religion and belief for Muslim students. Both universities have established purpose-built facilities such as a Muslim prayer room and a multi-faith room to cater to the diverse religious needs of their campus community. They have also focused on fostering positive relationships between different communities through various initiatives and setting specific targets to increase diversity among students. Additionally, both universities emphasise the importance of creating opportunities for interaction, learning and mutual understanding to promote good relations between diverse communities.

Faith university's EDI reports, however, revealed that the university had made limited efforts in supporting prayer or worship on campus, with initiatives restricted mainly to social spaces and encouragement for community and self-development. The university's initiatives did not appear to include significant investments in this area. This finding raises potential concerns regarding the inclusivity and support for religious diversity on campus, particularly for students and staff who rely on prayer or worship as a fundamental aspect of their faith practice. Inadequate communication of policies may lead to a lack of understanding of available support for religious needs, including prayer and worship. This lack of awareness can hinder inclusivity and support for religious diversity on campus, impacting the ability of individuals to fully engage in their religious practices while at the university. The study conducted by Chen, Tabassum, and Saeed (2019) confirms that religious practices and institutional barriers can negatively impact the academic performance of Muslim students. Challenges arise from the lack of accommodations for religious practices and dietary restrictions, particularly during holy months like Ramadan. This raises concerns about the level

of understanding, support and accommodations provided by the institution to students of diverse faith backgrounds. It is important to recognise that, even in faith-based institutions, there can be variations in the level of religious inclusivity and support for students of different faiths. Factors such as institutional policies, resources and cultural norms within the university community may influence the experiences of religious minority students. This highlights the significance of examining not only the religious affiliation but also the specific practices and policies within each institution. Exploring the methods used to communicate these policies to students, such as through workshops, campaigns, providing facilities or information sessions, can shed light on how effectively the universities are fostering awareness and understanding among their student body.

Overall, while the three universities have made efforts to communicate their policies for protecting religion and belief to Muslim students, there are still areas for improvement. The analysis of the EDI reports highlighted the importance of providing tailored support for Muslim staff and students, promoting intercultural competence among staff, and investing in supporting prayer or worship on campus. Additionally, universities should strive to create a culture of inclusivity and respect by raising awareness about biases that may exist and equipping staff members with tools to overcome them. According to Attum et al. (2023), it is crucial to implement diversity and inclusion training programmes for faculty, staff and students in order to raise awareness and promote understanding of different cultures and religions.

7.3.2 Perceptions Across the Three Studied Universities

The findings show that, according to Muslim students, the selected universities prioritised equity in their educational practices when it comes to communicating policies for protecting religion and belief. The high agreement percentages 68% for statements related to equity-based education suggest that Muslim students perceived their university education as fair and equal.

It should be noted, however, that the present analysis solely encompassed the perspectives of Muslim student participants and omits viewpoints from other groups, including non-Muslim students, faculty and administration. To ensure a thorough understanding of how university policies are communicated, it is essential to consider perspectives from all stakeholders. Research by Panjwani (2020) has shown that teachers' attitudes towards Islam and Muslims can impact their engagements with Muslim students, underlining the importance of inclusive perspectives in shaping effective communication strategies within educational institutions.

Furthermore, the findings highlight the need for improvements in how Muslim students are involved in decisions that affect their learning experiences. The lower scores for the statement regarding the student voice in decision-making indicated a lack of empowerment and inclusion of Muslim students in these processes. Enhancing their meaningful participation and inclusion in decision-making is essential for effective communication of policies and strengthening their engagement and sense of belonging within the academic community.

Mercer-Mapstone, Islam, and Reid (2021) examined how to promote fairness and diversity in programmes where students and staff work together in universities. They focused on the perspective of staff members responsible for these programmes in eight UK universities. The study identified barriers and suggested ways to overcome them. The research highlighted the importance of considering intersectionality in HE, where students are active contributors to knowledge. This perspective can lead to positive changes. Student-staff partnerships benefit historically marginalised groups by boosting confidence, belonging, leadership skills, awareness of power dynamics, conflict resolution, resilience and empowerment. Challenges exist, however, such as the overrepresentation of privileged students and barriers that prevent certain students from benefiting (Mercer-Mapstone, Islam & Reid, 2021).

The study's findings reveal that Faith university outperformed both Modern university and Emerald university in factors related to theme three. It is noteworthy that Emerald university had the highest variability in participant responses, indicating a wider range of opinions. On the other hand, Modern university showed more consistent feedback. Faith university demonstrated the lowest variability, signifying a greater consensus among participants. The study also identified significant differences in mean scores between Emerald university and both Modern university and Faith university, indicating distinct perceptions among the universities.

In theme four, which focused on religious accommodation for Muslim students, the majority of respondents believed that universities had designated spaces for prayer to cater to the religious needs of Muslim students, and that they allowed Muslim students to join Islamic societies. This indicates that respondents were aware of the existence of student organisations tailored to meet the religious and cultural needs of Muslim students. These societies can provide a supportive community and foster a sense of belonging on campus. All universities offered Halal options for Muslim students, and this provision also received a relatively high ranking. This implies that there is a recognition of the importance of offering food options that adhere to Muslim dietary restrictions. This can help Muslim students feel more included and accommodated in terms of their dietary preferences. Conversely, there might be room for improvement when it comes to acknowledging and honouring Islamic holidays within the university's academic calendar or policies. The respondents perceived a lack of attention or accommodation for these holidays, which can be important religious observances for Muslim students.

Emerald university had the highest mean score in theme four, suggesting a strong consensus and positive perception in this area. Both Modern and Faith universities had lower mean scores, however, indicating a relatively lower level of agreement and positive perception

among Muslim students. Statistically significant mean differences were found between Emerald university and both Modern university and Faith university within theme four, but no significant difference was observed between Modern and Faith universities.

7.3.3 Emerald University

The examination of how Emerald university communicated its religion and belief protection policies to Muslim students exposed differing viewpoints within this demographic. This shed light on the diverse perceptions held by Muslim students regarding the clarity, visibility, understanding, and utilisation of these policies within the university context. While some students perceived acceptance and value for their religious beliefs, others expressed concerns about a perceived bias against Arab Muslim students. Chaudry's (2021) study provided additional evidence supporting the previously-mentioned findings. It revealed that British Muslim students from diverse backgrounds studying in Russell Group universities often experience Islamophobic microaggressions that specifically target their appearance. These distressing encounters resulted in considerable negative effects on their psychological well-being. It is crucial to acknowledge that these findings extend beyond Arab students, encompassing a broader spectrum of British Muslim students within the institution.

Indeed, previous research examining the experiences of ethnic minority students and staff in UK HEIs consistently reveals prevalent racism (Equality Challenge Unit, 2011; National Union of Students, 2011). Boliver's research (2013, 2016) specifically sheds light on the discrimination faced by Muslim students during the application process to Russell Group universities.

Muslim students' decision-making process when selecting a university extends beyond mere academic considerations to encompass factors such as limited program options and

potential encounters with Islamophobia. The weighing of academic pursuits and future opportunities against concerns of discrimination is a complex evaluation influenced by individual circumstances, support systems, and personal aspirations. Choosing a university based on academic offerings does not imply acceptance of Islamophobic behaviour; rather, it underscores the intricate balance between achieving personal goals, adapting to constrained choices, and navigating adversity within educational settings.

In terms of law, policy and monitoring, Emerald university performed well in certain areas, such as respecting Islamic traditions of Muslim women. There are opportunities for improvement, however, in areas such as showing respect for Islamic holidays and Halal practices. When individuals of different religious backgrounds engage and educate themselves about the variances in Muslim beliefs, they are more likely to develop understanding and awareness about Halal practices. Interestingly, some non-Muslims intentionally opt for Halal food due to their belief that it is beneficial for their health (Wibowo et al., 2021). The study emphasises the importance of understanding and accommodating Muslim women's religious practices and the need for clear and well-defined policies that explicitly address religious beliefs. Conversely, Haque et al.'s (2019) research uncovers instances where Muslim women wearing the Hijab encountered uncomfortable interactions, such as inappropriate inquiries regarding the permissibility of washing their hair according to their religion.

In the case of British Muslim women, the 'double bind' refers to the intersection of gender and religious discrimination, which creates a unique set of challenges for them. Malik and Wyke's (2018) identified the situation faced by British Muslim women who experience discrimination based on both their gender and their religion as 'double bind'. This means that they face multiple barriers to accessing HE and the labour market, which can limit their opportunities and outcomes. The term 'double bind' was first coined by psychologist Gregory

Bateson (Corrêa, 2023) to describe a situation where a person is given conflicting messages or expectations, making it difficult or impossible to meet both.

The study revealed varying perspectives among Muslim students at Emerald university regarding the university's communication of these policies, indicating a need for the university to address issues of discrimination and racism and create a safe and inclusive learning environment. Attum et al. (2023) further note that Islam is a monotheistic faith, with approximately 20% of Muslims identifying as Arabs. Additionally, Modir and Kia-Keating (2018) suggested that Arab students can experience mental and emotional distress when wrongly associated with media-presented violence and stereotypes.

7.3.4 Modern University

Modern university has made progress in communicating and implementing policies for protecting religion and belief. The results indicate that Muslim students perceived their university education to be based on principles of equity and fair processes for determining protection strategies. They also felt that support was provided equitably. The university offered Halal options for Muslim students and allowed them to join Islamic societies. These options were connected to communicating policies that protect religious beliefs and ensure fair processes to determine protective strategies, showing a university's respect for diversity and commitment to inclusivity. There is room for improvement, however, in areas such as providing facilities for prayer and understanding and accommodating Muslim women's religious practices. The interviews revealed a lack of awareness about specific policies and strategies among some Muslim students, highlighting the need for clear and well-defined policies that explicitly address religious beliefs. Direct communication from the university regarding these policies was also a concern raised by Muslim students. Taylor (1994) posited that the development of self-identity is not an isolated affair but rather a dialogical process,

necessitating interactions with others for recognition to occur. Recognition, in this context, encompasses the approval and acceptance of one's identity, as well as the treatment that aligns with their self-perception. Conversely, the absence of recognition can engender detrimental consequences, as individuals may find themselves constrained or diminished by the distortive or derogatory reflections projected upon them by society or others (Taylor 1994 cited in, Hunter & McCallum Guiney, 2023). On this basis, it might be assumed that, while Modern university has made efforts in communicating its policies, there are areas that require improvement if the needs of Muslim students are to be addressed effectively, and if clear and direct communication is to be achieved. The findings suggest that the university has made progress but can further enhance its communication strategies and accommodation of religious practices. The lack of policy awareness among Muslim students affected their understanding of their rights and access to necessary resources, potentially limiting their ability to assert their religious identity and impacting their sense of belonging and overall satisfaction at the university. Shah (2009) further highlighted the challenges faced by Muslim learners in English schools, particularly in managing their Muslim identity in the post-9/11, 7/7 scenario. Without a clear understanding of university policies and available support services, Muslim students may not be fully aware of their student rights. This lack of awareness can lead to a phenomenon known as 'Satisfied settling,' where students unknowingly accept a less enriched university experience due to insufficient attention to their religious requirements. Islam, Lowe, and Johnes (2018) confirmed that this scenario may occur when students do not advocate for their religious needs, potentially impacting their overall satisfaction and fulfilment while at university.

7.3.5 Faith University

The study revealed areas of dissatisfaction among Muslim students regarding the communication and implementation of policies protecting religion and belief at Faith

University. The research suggests that there is a need for the university to address issues of discrimination and hostility towards Muslim students so as to create a safe and inclusive learning environment. The study also highlighted the need for better communication directly addressing the needs of Muslim students, providing safe spaces for discussions on religion-related topics, and effectively communicating updated policies and making them accessible to all students. The study also revealed that some Muslim students expressed dissatisfaction with communication, and a lack of encouragement for dialogue about religious beliefs within their universities.

French (2022) conducted a study exploring the reasons behind limited interaction between Muslims and non-Muslims, and how this limitation impacted their college experience. The participants expressed concerns regarding the lack of cross-cultural communication skills among both them and their non-Muslim peers, and how this hindered meaningful interaction and socialisation. The fear of being misunderstood and the potential for racial or religious conflict further discouraged them from engaging with non-Muslims, leading them to avoid situations that could potentially result in racism or discrimination based on their Muslim identity. The study also highlighted the need for proactive management of tensions and support for students facing discrimination. The findings suggest opportunities for enhancing student engagement, improving equity in education, and ensuring transparency in the university's processes.

7.4 Discussion of Findings Regarding RQ3: What are the Barriers Faced by Muslim Students in Communicating Policies that Protect Religion and Beliefs on Campuses?

The third RQ considered the barriers encountered by Muslim students in understanding and engaging with universities' policies protecting religion and belief. The analysis of both timeline

maps and interview feedback revealed several recurring barriers faced by Muslim students conducted at Emerald university, Modern university and Faith university. A significant concern highlighted across both data sources was the lack of access to Halal dietary options on campus, which was mentioned multiple times, indicating a pressing need for universities to address dietary requirements. Additionally, the availability of prayer facilities emerged as a critical issue, with numerous participants expressing frustration over inadequate or inaccessible spaces for prayer. This lack of suitable facilities not only hindered students' ability to practice their faith but also reflected broader challenges in the universities' commitment to inclusivity. By synthesising the findings from both timelines and interviews, it became evident that these barriers—specifically related to Halal food and prayer facilities—were central to the experiences of Muslim students. Addressing these issues is essential for fostering a more inclusive environment and ensuring that Muslim students feel supported in their religious practices.

Moreover, identified barriers included discrimination, limited engagement in activities, intolerance towards diversity, language barriers, difficulties in accessing pertinent policy information, and inequitable international fees. Disparities in fees based on nationality or international status can further exacerbate existing inequalities and impede the educational experience. These barriers were also identified in Nojan's (2023) study into the negative experiences of Muslim students. That study addressed stereotypes and the structural conditions promoting Christian normativity by utilising intersectionality and counter-storytelling methods to shed light on Muslim students' experiences and critiques of campus climates. Other studies also suggest that universities need to address issues of marginalisation and discrimination more proactively and make efforts to transform their campus culture to be more inclusive and supportive of Muslim students (Boamah & Salahshour, 2022; Sahu, Jeffery & Nakkeeran, 2017; Nojan, 2023).

7.4.1 Emerald University

The evidence gathered from both timeline maps and interviews revealed significant barriers faced by Muslim students at Emerald university. Communication barriers identified by participants were a lack of open dialogue from the university, discrimination, limited access to activities, intolerance towards diversity, and language barriers. Muslim students also encountered challenges such as limited access to information, discomfort due to fear of criticism and Islamophobia, and difficulties in understanding policies, participating in activities, and expressing themselves. To address these barriers, the participants suggested the provision of more information in multiple languages and the establishment of centres dedicated to Muslim students.

Mahmud and Islam's (2023) research further highlighted the prevalence of Islamophobia and exclusion experienced by Muslim academics in UK HE, stressing the importance of visibility, representation and support for Muslim academics. The study called for genuine inclusivity and proactive measures to address Islamophobia and racism in university settings.

The findings indicated the pressing need for universities to address issues of marginalisation and discrimination, and to transform campus culture to foster inclusivity and support for Muslim students. Sabirjanovna's study (2023) aligns with existing research on culture shock, highlighting its impact on individuals adapting to new cultures. Communication challenges arise from differences in symbols, behaviour and stereotypes, leading to discomfort and unfamiliarity, even in everyday aspects like dietary choices. The prevalent drinking culture on campuses further reinforces the sense of exclusion and alienation for certain individuals, particularly Muslim students (Islam, Lowe & Jones, 2018; Stevenson, 2017). If the challenges of culture shock are understood and addressed, however, individuals can successfully navigate

new cultural environments. Pearce, Lindekilde, and Parker's (2023) study explores British academics' perceptions and responses to suspected student radicalisation cases. Academics express uncertainty regarding risks, reporting responsibilities, and factors like unclear thresholds, fear of consequences, and the value of free speech contribute to this uncertainty. Incorporating Prevent training and safeguarding initiatives can foster confidence. Addressing these factors ensures better student support and community safety. The study also unveils the absence of diversity and inclusivity, and the presence of language barriers as significant obstacles to effective communication (Haxton et al., 2019). These issues reflect the growing Islamophobia and the urgent need to combat hate crimes against Muslims. Increases in anti-Muslim hate crimes following incidents like the Paris attacks and the Christchurch massacre underscore the severity of the issue. These barriers can be attributed to the concept of a 'campus bubble' (Lowe, 2017), where closed social networks contribute to exclusion and alienation for certain individuals, particularly Muslim students.

Emerald university participants identified various communication barriers as mentioned earlier and faced challenges such as limited access to information, discomfort stemming from fear of criticism and Islamophobia, and difficulties in understanding and participating in policies and activities. The participants suggested the provision of more information in multiple languages and the establishment of centres dedicated to Muslim students to address these barriers. The studies by Sabirjanovna (2023), Pearce, Lindekilde, and Parker (2023), and Haxton et al. (2019) support the need for understanding and addressing these challenges, emphasising the impact of culture shock, perceptions of student radicalisation, and communication barriers faced by diverse student populations.

In the presence of an array of opportunities and resources offered by Emerald university, Muslim students highly valued specific aspects of their experience on campus. They appreciated the availability of multiple prayer rooms, which provide dedicated spaces for their

religious practices. The presence of tutors who respect mental health issues was also felt to demonstrate the university's support for their overall well-being. Meanwhile, the openness and engagement of other nationalities in conversations fostered cross-cultural understanding, creating an enriching environment for interactions. Muslim students appreciated the ability to adjust to the campus environment, viewing it as a symbol of being welcomed and included in the overall campus community. The friendly welcome received during the induction week plays a crucial role in promoting a strong sense of belonging from the very beginning of their university journey. Collectively, these valued aspects contribute to a supportive and inclusive campus atmosphere that recognises and appreciates the religious beliefs and needs of Muslim students at Emerald University.

7.4.2 Modern University

The evidence from the timeline maps and interviews highlighted various barriers in Modern university, including inadequate prayer facilities, limited Halal dining options, difficulties in accessing policy information, disproportionate international fees, religious beliefs being a sensitive topic, uncertainty in addressing Islamophobia, challenges in communicating policies effectively, and a lack of clarity and external support. These findings align with the historical existence of negative portrayals of Muslim religious identities and support the argument that universities need to address these barriers to create inclusive environments for Muslim students (Hailu, Collins & Stanton, 2018; Islam, 2021). Research conducted by Universities UK (2002) uncovered significant changes in UK university administration, funding and operations driven by persistent underfunding, resulting in higher international fees. Such practices disproportionately burden international students, however, creating a financial barrier to their education. By addressing these financial barriers, universities can work towards creating a more inclusive and equitable educational environment for all students, including Muslim

international students. These findings align with Hubble and Bolton's (2021) research, emphasising the importance of universities considering and supporting the diverse needs of postgraduate students from minority ethnic groups with lower socioeconomic status to ensure their academic opportunities and success. Finally, Arellano and Vue (2019) confirm the rising concerns about race relations and Islamophobia on college campuses, with students protesting against racism and injustice. This broader national discussion highlights the institutional negligence towards racial minority students and the need for universities to actively address these issues.

Overall, the analysis suggests that Muslim students faced barriers in the communication of policies for protecting religion and belief on campuses. It also calls for action to address these barriers, promote inclusivity, and support the diverse needs of students.

In the presence of numerous opportunities and resources provided by Modern university, Muslim students highly valued several aspects of their experience on campus. They appreciated the open and inclusive atmosphere that encourages discussions and considerations related to Islam, allowing them to explore and deepen their understanding of their faith. The flexibility offered during the Islamic holy month of Ramadan was valued, as it acknowledges and supports their religious observance. The presence of an Islamic society provides a sense of community and connection with like-minded individuals, fostering support and friendship. The availability of a campus mosque signifies the university's commitment to accommodating their religious practices and accessibility. Muslim students also valued the respect and assistance extended to them by the university, as well as the presence of informative posters about the Hijab, which contribute to a more understanding and accepting environment. Moreover, the leadership of Muslim students in the Joint Muslim Students' Union empowered and represented their community within the university. The availability of dietary options in the campus canteen further demonstrated the university's commitment to meeting diverse dietary needs or

preferences. These aspects collectively contributed to a positive university experience for Muslim students at Modern university, where their religious beliefs and practices were valued, respected, and supported.

7.4.3 Faith University

The results of the timeline maps and interviews conducted in respect to Faith university suggest that Muslim students there faced significant barriers in the communication of policies aimed at protecting religion and belief. The barriers identified were the lack of awareness and accessibility of policies and accommodations, discrimination based on religious beliefs, communication challenges, and the absence of dedicated resources and facilities, which have discouraged free speech within universities. It is important to recognise that feeling ‘othered’ or facing challenges related to religious beliefs or cultural identity can have a significant impact on an individual's willingness and ability to express themselves freely. Factors such as experiencing discrimination or a lack of supportive resources can create a chilling effect on free speech, leading some Muslim students to limit their expression, whether consciously or subconsciously.

This aligns with the findings of Guest (2020), based on a national survey of over 2,000 students, as well as conversations with over 250 staff and students on six campuses. His findings indicate that universities need to foster an inclusive environment, effective communication channels, and the provision of essential resources to support Muslim students’ religious practices. UK Universities have taken a proactive step in addressing Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hatred by publishing practical guidance for universities (Universities UK, 2021). Rissler, Duncan and Caruso (2014) confirmed that the degree of religiosity plays a significant role in predicting students' understanding and acceptance of evolution, with religiosity being more influential than education.

The evidence revealed the existence of substantial barriers, emphasising the importance that universities need to attach to creating an inclusive environment, establishing effective communication channels, and providing essential resources to support Muslim students' religious practices.

While some participants in Faith university expressed negative satisfaction, there were still aspects that Muslim students valued on this campus. One significant factor was the friendliness of students and staff, which created a welcoming environment. The university's support for the creation of Muslim societies also reflected a commitment to fostering mutual support among students. The diverse community also presented an opportunity for cross-cultural understanding, indicating an appreciation for diversity. Despite any negative experiences mentioned, these positive aspects contributed to the overall value that Muslim students found in Faith university.

7.5 Summary

The research findings indicate that there are variations in the perceptions of Muslim students regarding English university policies on religion and belief across the three universities studied. While some positive experiences were reported, such as opportunities for academic success and respectful treatment, there were also mixed views and concerns raised about feeling unwelcome and having their opinions devalued. Muslim students faced challenges such as discrimination, lack of inclusion and communication barriers. In comparison, Muslim students reported less favourable experiences at Faith university compared to Emerald and Modern Universities. I explored diverse strategies, such as conducting in-depth interviews and surveys, using mixed methods combining qualitative and quantitative analysis, involving various stakeholders, and utilising a comprehensive research methodology, to navigate the contrasting

feedback and gain a comprehensive understanding of Muslim students' experiences across the universities studied.

Emerald university demonstrated a more comprehensive and superior environment, while the Modern and Faith universities had notable disparities. This characterisation implies that Emerald university may excel in various aspects such as academic opportunities, student support services, inclusivity, resources, research initiatives, faculty-student relationships, and overall campus atmosphere. The findings underscore the importance of creating an inclusive environment that embraces diverse identities, but challenges remain in achieving full acceptance and inclusivity, especially in gender-related interactions. Renowned institutions with research excellence and reputation tend to have better resources and student satisfaction levels. According to findings from Emerald university, the institution excels in providing resources to support a diverse learning experience, and a high percentage 78% of students expressed satisfaction with the accessibility of learning resources. Nonetheless, a small percentage 26% of Muslim students, all international students, expressed a desire to leave due to feeling unwelcome. The negative experiences of international students can be attributed to a campus culture that emphasises racial differences, leading to feelings of isolation and disconnection. However, there is a lack of thorough exploration to support these claims fully, particularly regarding the complexities of international students adapting to a foreign culture. The notion of a campus culture emphasising racial differences appears contradictory to earlier acknowledgments of inclusivity efforts, which could inadvertently highlight racial or religious distinctions on campus. Two main approaches to equality in terms of religious treatment include the "multi-cultural approach" and the French model of strict secularisation in education, each with its own implications and challenges.

Many studies emphasise the importance of creating a supportive college climate for international students. As universities become more market-driven, they increasingly promote

EDI to attract international students. The experiences of international students and local Muslim students in terms of satisfaction and settling may differ due to the unique challenges they face. International students may struggle with cultural adjustment, language barriers and social integration, while local Muslim students may face challenges related to their religious identity. Concerns about the university's handling of religious holidays and incidents of discrimination reported by Muslim students highlight the need for improved support services. The findings of this study at Faith university indicate that Muslim students perceive equal academic opportunities compared to their peers, with a high agreement percentage 99%. This suggests that the university's efforts to accommodate religious beliefs have positively influenced the perception of equal educational experiences among Muslim students. They also strongly believe that the university enables them to excel academically 98%, indicating a supportive and empowering environment that values their potential. Only a small percentage 20% of participants, however, expressed belief in the university's strong commitment to EDI, indicating the need for further investigation and improvement.

While a majority of Muslim students at Faith university perceived opportunities to engage with students from diverse nationalities, there was a lack of interaction reported by students with identities different from the majority. This suggests a potential lack of inclusivity or meaningful engagement with diverse backgrounds. There was limited interaction and communication within gender diversity. This could indicate a scenario where different genders or gender identities may not be effectively interacting, sharing perspectives, or engaging in open dialogue, possibly leading to gaps or barriers in understanding and collaboration within the diverse gender spectrum.

The study acknowledges the existence of Christian privilege on campus, which impacts the experiences of minority religions. The participants expressed a desire for increased awareness and education on cultural and religious diversity, as well as improvement in

inclusive facilities for Muslim students. Instances of discrimination and insufficient support were reported, indicating areas for improvement in creating an inclusive environment.

Muslim students across three English universities had varying perceptions of their university's policies on religion and belief. While positive experiences were reported, concerns were raised about feeling unwelcome and having their opinions devalued. Muslim students faced challenges like discrimination, lack of inclusion, and communication barriers. Students at Faith university had less favourable experiences compared to those at Emerald and Modern Universities. These findings emphasise the importance of inclusivity, but challenges remain, especially in gender-related interactions. Selective research-intensive institutions with research excellence tend to have better resources and student satisfaction.

A small percentage of Muslim students at Emerald university, however, expressed a desire to leave due to feeling unwelcome. International students' negative experiences can be attributed to a campus culture that emphasises racial differences. Creating a supportive college climate is important for international students. Concerns about the university's handling of religious holidays and incidents of discrimination highlighted the need for improved support services. Faith university was perceived positively in terms of academic opportunities, equal education experiences and academic excellence, but the university's commitment to EDI needs further investigation and improvement. While Muslim students at Faith university perceived opportunities to engage with diverse nationalities, there was limited interaction with identities different from the majority, indicating a lack of inclusivity. This indicates a lack of inclusivity within the university community. The distinction being drawn here is that while there may be diversity in terms of nationalities, there might be a lack of interaction or inclusion of minority identities or perspectives within the broader student body.

Chapter 8. Conclusion

8.1 Introduction

This final chapter summarises the key findings of the study in this thesis. In its effort to examine the perceptions and experiences of Muslim students regarding the EDI policies and communication strategies aimed at safeguarding religious freedom and belief at three English universities the study highlights the significance of the legal framework provided by the Equality Act (2010) and provides recommendations for English HEIs to cultivate an inclusive environment that promotes positive relationships among individuals with different beliefs, including Muslims.

8.2 The Main Aims, Theoretical Framework and Methodological Approach Adopted by the Study

The research framework drew on the ‘satisfied settling’ lens, a sociological perspective that illuminates the decision-making processes of individuals, including students, when choosing where to live, work and study. This lens suggests that individuals naturally gravitate towards locations that provide social satisfaction. By applying this lens, the research aimed to analyse the factors related to the protection of religion and belief that influence Muslim students’ satisfaction within the university setting. Chapter two presented the literature review on on-campus protection policies regarding religion and belief in England. It specifically addressed the implications of the Equality Act (2010) for how English universities seek to protect religion and belief, as well as the implementation of EDI strategies at the English campus level. It also discussed the conflicts that may arise with Islamic epistemologies. In addition, it sought to analyse the nature of the protection of religion and belief provided to Muslim students on

university campuses. The review highlighted the challenges faced by Muslim students in non-Muslim contexts and the dearth of research evaluating how effective university protection policies are in meeting the specific needs of Muslims. The literature review also emphasised that having inclusive policies and practices regarding religion and belief is important to mitigate concerns of discrimination and marginalisation. It also discussed various approaches to foster a welcoming environment for students with diverse religious backgrounds, such as establishing religiously-affiliated student clubs, designating religious observance days, and offering spiritual support programmes.

Furthermore, the literature review discussed work that has applied a satisfied settling lens to understand the perceptions of Muslim students and examined a selection of theories that link satisfied settling to the overall student experience in HE, seeking thereby to provide insights into the unique experiences and challenges faced by Muslim students in HEIs. The review discussed the concept of student satisfaction and argued for a broader perspective that took into account ontological unsettlement and transformative learning experiences. It also highlighted the need for theories that specifically address the concerns of Muslim students regarding the communication of policies that protect their religion and beliefs.

Chapter three presented an overview of the research methodology, and explained how a mixed-methods approach, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection, was designed and used. This involved triangulating data collection, including administering questionnaires, conducting semi-structured interviews, creating timeline maps, and reviewing relevant EDI policies.

By incorporating the above elements, the research methodology aimed to provide a comprehensive triangulation of data collection methods to explore the experiences of Muslim students, encompassing both qualitative and quantitative insights. The findings underwent

member checking to ensure the accuracy and credibility of the results. A pragmatic research paradigm was adopted, on the basis that this allowed for a deeper understanding and description of the subjective experiences and perspectives of Muslim students. The research strategy was an exploratory research, and the research approach involved multiple case studies, which involved studying three specific universities located in one metropolitan area of England. These case study universities were selected intentionally to capture a diverse range of perspectives and experiences among Muslim students, as well as a range of different institutional contexts (Russell Group university, post-92 university, and church-affiliated university). This approach contributed to the richness and depth of the study, offering valuable insights into the diverse experiences of Muslim students across different university settings.

The research consisted of two stages: the pilot study and the main study. The process involved framing the research framework, selecting suitable participants, and administering the interview questions to gather data that addressed the RQs. The pilot study involved a preliminary assessment of the research design and procedures, aiming to identify any issues, refine the interview questions, and gain a better understanding of the study population and context. The main study, on the other hand, was designed to address the RQs and collect data to draw conclusions. The sample populations for both the pilot and main studies were selected using purposive sampling methods based on study criteria.

Ethical considerations were an essential aspect of the research methodology used in the study. I obtained prior informed consent from all potential respondents before conducting the full-scale data collection process. Anonymity was maintained for both the participants and the selected universities in this study, and pseudonyms were used to protect their identities. The study avoided sensitive topics, and participants were given the option to withdraw from the study by simply closing the online questionnaire tab. It was recognised that discussing one's sense of integration and belonging in a different cultural and educational environment can

evoke negative personal experiences, including feelings of exclusion or discrimination. It is therefore essential to handle such topics with sensitivity and ensure participants feel comfortable and safe during the study. To address the potential sensitivity, I clearly explained the purpose of the study and the questions related to integration before participants began. I made sure they understood the voluntary nature of their participation and that they could withdraw at any time without consequences. I assured participants that their responses would be treated confidentially. I ensured that the study had undergone an ethical review and received approval from the university ethics committee. I followed ethical protocols when approaching and contacting participants, and the collected records were carefully secured on a laptop protected by a password. After the transcription process, the records were promptly deleted to ensure the confidentiality and privacy of the participants' information. Overall, the study upheld ethical standards throughout the research process, ensuring the protection of the rights of research participants, maintaining data confidentiality, and preventing any potential harm to the subjects involved.

8.3 Key Findings Regarding RQ1: Exploring Disparities in Muslim Students' Experiences and Perceptions

In Chapter four, the primary focus of the study was to find the answer to RQ1, which aimed to investigate how three universities communicate their policies for protecting religion and belief to Muslim students. The chapter presented three case studies for the respective universities, as follows:

8.3.1 Emerald University

The research findings indicate that the majority of students at Emerald university felt that the institution provided sufficient resources to support a diverse student body. They also reported

feeling respected within the university, and that their experience at the university positively impacted their academic growth. The study also revealed positive findings regarding prayer facilities, the presence of inclusive environments like Islamic societies, and catering to dietary needs. The university received high satisfaction scores, with approximately 78% of students expressing contentment with the accessibility of learning resources. A small percentage (26%) of predominantly international, Muslim students, however, expressed a desire to leave due to feelings of being unwelcome, signalling potential issues of isolation and disconnection.

While the majority of students perceived acceptance and value for their religious beliefs, there were concerns raised about the potential bias against Arab Muslim students, which would imply that these students perceived or experienced unfair treatment, discrimination, or prejudice within the university environment due to their Arab or Muslim identities.

The research also highlighted the need for improvements in engaging Muslim students in decision-making processes that affect their learning experiences. The lower scores awarded for the presence of a student voice in decision-making indicated the perception of a lack of empowerment and involvement in such processes. The study found instances where students expressed a desire to have a greater say in curriculum development, the allocation of resources, and policies related to accommodations for religious practices. These findings underscore the need to create avenues for meaningful student engagement and empowerment in shaping their own learning experiences.

8.3.2 Modern University

The research findings suggest that the majority of students in Modern university felt valued as individuals and respected within the institution. There were areas of concern, however, with

some students expressing feelings of not belonging and a perception that their opinions were not valued within the university environment. The research findings were mixed regarding religion facilities, inclusion in Islamic societies, and catering to dietary needs. While some Muslim students reported positive experiences with these facilities, others expressed concerns about the lack of access and representation regarding policies related to religion and belief on campus. For instance, Mai and Mariam reported positive experiences with prayer rooms on campus, while Malika and Mohammad expressed negative experiences related to the lack of access to Muslim dietary options and prayer spaces. Although high percentages 68% of Muslim students perceived their university education as fair and equal, the findings also highlighted the need for improvements in how Muslim students were involved in decision-making processes that affect their learning experiences. The lower scores for the statement regarding the presence of a student voice in decision-making indicated a perception of a lack of empowerment and lack of involvement in decision-making processes, such as in respect to curriculum and programme development, resource allocation and policymaking.

8.3.3 Faith University

There were several areas of concern in the findings arising from students at Faith university. A significant percentage of students expressed negative experiences and feelings towards their campus experience related to discrimination and lack of support for Muslim students. This could include inadequate accommodation of religious practices, insufficient resources for cultural celebrations or events, or limited understanding of their unique needs and challenges. Additionally, the interviewees highlighted the lack of facilities on campus to support Muslim students, such as prayer rooms and Halal food choices. It can be concluded that Muslim students at Faith university did not exhibit a high degree of agreement with the university's policies and practices related to the protection of religion and belief, and they were not satisfied

with the prayer facilities, inclusion in Islamic societies, and the extent to which their dietary needs were catered for. Nonetheless, the findings did indicate that Muslim students at Faith university overwhelmingly 99% perceived themselves as having equal academic opportunities as their peers.

8.3.4 Comparative Analysis of RQ1: What are the perceptions of Muslim students regarding the policies protecting religion and belief at English universities?

The research findings indicate notable disparities in the experiences and perceptions of Muslim students across the three universities. Emerald university stands out with predominantly positive results, as Muslim students viewed the institution's policies and practices surrounding religion and belief favourably. Modern university yielded mixed findings, as Muslim students generally had a positive perception of the university's policies and practices. While most felt valued and respected, some experienced a sense of not belonging and perceived their opinions as undervalued within the university environment.

In contrast, Faith university yielded the most negative findings, with Muslim students expressing disagreement with the institution's policies and practices pertaining to religion and belief. The data highlighted areas of concern, including experiences of discrimination and an absence of support for Muslim students. Furthermore, the interviewees emphasised the insufficient campus facilities catering to the needs of Muslim students, including prayer rooms and Halal food choices. Significant differences exist in the experiences and perceptions of Muslim students across the three universities. Emerald university obtained the most positive findings, Modern university displayed mixed results, and Faith university showcased the most negative outcomes. These findings illuminate the different approaches taken to address the religious protection and EDI policies of Muslim students within the three HE settings under study. Since the analysis did not delve into the officially documented policies and procedures

of the universities concerning these matters, the discussion primarily reflects the students' perspectives on their experiences rather than the actual distinctions in operational methods among the three institutions.

8.4 Key Findings Regarding RQ2: Exploring Disparities in Muslim Students' Experiences and Perceptions

The findings presented in Chapter five highlighted the extent to which perceptions of access, learning and the inclusivity of university facilities contributed to the satisfaction levels of Muslim students.

8.4.1 Emerald University

The study findings revealed that the majority of Muslim students at Emerald University felt that the institution provided sufficient resources to support a diverse student body. Additionally, most students reported feeling respected within the university, and stated that their experience at the university positively influenced their academic growth. Some areas of concern were also highlighted by the students, however. For instance, Eman, one of the interviewees, expressed a negative experience in respect to the university's response to their need for time off during religious holidays. She felt that the university was not keen on helping the students and was focused on dumping work on them rather than providing access to resources. This case study demonstrates the importance of not only providing resources but also ensuring that the university's response to religious needs is supportive and accommodating. The research therefore highlighted the need for improvement in the communication of the university's approach to protecting religious practices. The lack of awareness among Muslim students affected their understanding of their rights and access to

necessary resources, potentially limiting their ability to assert their religious identity and impacting their sense of belonging and overall satisfaction at the university.

8.4.2 Modern University

At Modern university, the research findings indicated a generally positive perception among Muslim students regarding their access, experience and learning on campus. The majority of students felt valued as individuals in the university and reported feeling respected. There were again areas of concern, however, since some students expressed feelings of not belonging and perceived a lack of value for their opinions within the university. Additionally, a small percentage of students reported feeling unwelcome enough to consider leaving the university.

The research also revealed that Muslim students faced challenges such as limited access to participation in activities, intolerance, lack of acceptance of diversity, and language barriers. The participants suggested the provision of more information in multiple languages and the establishment of centres dedicated to Muslim students to address these barriers. Additionally, universities may exhibit hesitance in implementing these recommendations due to the legal obligation to solely sponsor visas for international students who have met stringent English language proficiency criteria. Translating fundamental information into multiple languages could raise concerns regarding the academic preparedness of students undertaking courses taught in English. Consequently, such actions may prompt scrutiny from government bodies, such as the Home Office, regarding the sponsoring university's eligibility to support overseas visa applications.

8.4.3 Faith University

The research findings at Faith university revealed that Muslim students had varying perceptions of their university's policies and provisions. While the majority of students felt valued as individuals and reported having opportunities to achieve academic success similar to their

peers, there were also areas of concern. For example, the mean score for the statement, "I have considered leaving the university because I felt unwelcome", was relatively low, indicating that a significant percentage of students had considered leaving the university due to feeling unwelcome. This case study emphasises the importance of addressing issues related to students' feelings of being welcomed and inclusion within the university environment. Additionally, the interviewees highlighted the lack of facilities on campus to support Muslim students, such as prayer rooms and Halal food options.

8.4.4 Comparative Analysis of RQ2: Communication of Religion and Belief Policies to Muslim Students

The findings from the three universities examined in this study demonstrate disparities in the experiences and perceptions of Muslim students. At Emerald university, while most students felt respected and supported, there were concerns regarding the university's response to religious needs, indicating the importance of accommodating religious holidays in a supportive manner. Modern university also received generally positive feedback from Muslim students, although issues were raised in respect to students' sense of belonging and of having their opinions valued within the university environment. Language barriers and intolerance towards diversity were also mentioned as challenges. Faith university exhibited mixed perceptions, with some students feeling valued but others considering leaving due to feeling unwelcome. Concerns were raised about the lack of facilities to support Muslim students' religious practices. Overall, addressing language barriers and providing adequate resources and facilities could help create a more inclusive and supportive environment.

8.5 Key Findings Regarding RQ3: Exploring Disparities in Muslim Students' Experiences and Perceptions

Chapter 6 presented a comprehensive analysis of the communication barriers experienced by Muslim students during their academic journey in English, focusing on university policies protecting religion and belief.

8.5.1 Emerald University

The study findings indicated that the university provides access to multiple prayer rooms, accommodating the religious practices of Muslim students. Additionally, the supportive faculty respect mental health concerns, contributing to a positive and inclusive environment. The campus's diverse community fosters cross-cultural understanding, and Muslim students feel accepted and integrated into the academic environment. Furthermore, a friendly welcome during the induction week promotes a sense of belonging from the start of their university journey. Emerald university has made significant advances in accommodating the diverse religious needs of its campus community. The university has introduced facilities such as a purpose-built Muslim prayer room and a multi-faith room to cater to the religious requirements of Muslim students and those from other faith backgrounds. These facilities were developed with the intention of serving as inclusive spaces for worship.

The study revealed contrasting perspectives among Muslim students. While some students identified feelings of intimidation and bias against Arab Muslim students, others commended the university's attentiveness to Muslim students' concerns. Instances of discrimination were also mentioned, suggesting potential challenges within the university context.

The barriers identified include discrimination, limited access to participation in activities, intolerance and lack of acceptance of diversity, language barriers, inadequate prayer facilities, limited Halal dining options, difficulties in accessing relevant policy information, disproportionate international fees, uncertainty in addressing Islamophobia, challenges in effectively communicating policies, and a lack of clarity and external support. These barriers have also been reported in other studies that have delved into the negative experiences of Muslim students, addressing stereotypes, and structural conditions promoting Christian normativity by utilising intersectionality and counter-storytelling methods to shed light on their experiences and critiques of campus climates. The participants suggested the provision of more information in multiple languages and the establishment of centres dedicated to Muslim students to address these barriers.

8.5.2 Modern University

Muslim students at Modern university had various opportunities for open discussions related to Islam, particularly during the Islamic holy month of Ramadan. The presence of an Islamic society established a platform for Muslim students to engage with their faith and connect with other like-minded individuals. The availability of a mosque on campus signified the university's commitment to providing resources for religious observance. The university also showed support through informative posters about the Hijab displayed both on campus and online, contributing to a supportive environment. The provision of Halal food choices in the canteen demonstrated the university's effort to cater to the dietary needs of Muslim students. Additionally, the knowledge and accessibility of a multi-faith prayer room in proximity to the lab facilities accommodated the religious practices of Muslim students during their academic pursuits. Muslim students at Modern university, however, expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of clear information and accessibility regarding the institution's policies related to religion

and belief. They highlighted the need for universities to communicate updated policies and laws that protect all faiths more effectively and in a clear and accessible manner. Modern University has taken initiatives to promote EDI on campus, evaluating attitudes and culture, organising annual events, and encouraging interfaith collaboration. Efforts have also been made to ensure equitable access to university facilities, such as the creation of a multi-faith room. The study revealed that Muslim students at Modern University had positive relationships and collaboration with non-Muslim colleagues.

8.5.3 Faith University

The study findings in respect to Faith University uncovered diverse perspectives among Muslim students regarding the university's communication of its policies protecting religion and belief. Some students reported a lack of effective communication and a dearth of encouragement for open and respectful dialogue about religious beliefs within the university. Instances of differential treatment towards Muslim students in comparison to their non-Muslim counterparts were also mentioned, which may be attributed to unconscious biases or a lack of awareness regarding their customs and practices. The study also revealed instances of discrimination against and insufficient support for Muslim students, indicating areas in need of improvement to create an inclusive environment. The research highlighted a lack of interaction between Muslim students and students from different backgrounds, suggesting potential issues regarding inclusivity and meaningful engagement with diverse identities. The study acknowledged the existence of Christian privilege on campus, limited access to participation in activities, intolerance and lack of acceptance of diversity, language barriers, inadequate prayer facilities, limited Halal dining options, difficulties in accessing relevant information about policies protecting religion, disproportionate international fees, uncertainty in addressing Islamophobia, challenges in effectively communicating policies, and a lack of clarity and

external support which affects the experiences of minority religions. To address these concerns, participants expressed the need for increased awareness and education on cultural and religious diversity, as well as improvements in inclusive facilities for Muslim students. The main findings related to barriers faced by Muslim students in the communication of policies for protecting religion and belief at Faith university.

The study suggests that Faith university should address these issues of discrimination and hostility, create a safe and inclusive learning environment, and improve communication that directly addresses the needs of Muslim students. It also recommends the establishment of centres dedicated to Muslim students, providing safe spaces for discussions on religion-related topics, and effectively communicating updated policies in an accessible manner. The study emphasises the importance of providing information in multiple languages and involving Muslim students in decision-making processes that impact their learning experiences.

8.5.4 Comparative Analysis of RQ3: Communication of Religion and Belief Policies to Muslim Students

The findings highlight variations in the efficacy of communication within the universities. Emerald university presents mixed perspectives from Muslim students, with contrasting views on the institution's communication of its religion and belief protection policies. While some students reported feelings of intimidation and bias, others commended the university for addressing the concerns of Muslim students. Notably, the university has made significant advances in accommodating diverse religious needs, such as introducing purpose-built Muslim prayer rooms and multi-faith rooms.

Modern university, on the other hand, faces dissatisfaction among Muslim students due to the lack of clear information about and access to policies pertaining to religion and belief. Students emphasise the importance of universities effectively communicating updated policies

and laws that protect all faiths. The university has, however, taken steps towards promoting EDI, such as by evaluating attitudes and culture, organising annual events, and facilitating interfaith collaboration.

Muslim students at Faith university expressed diverse perspectives, with some reporting a lack of effective communication and limited encouragement for open and respectful dialogue about religious beliefs within the university. These findings demonstrate that Muslim students reported less favourable experiences compared to students at Emerald and Modern Universities.

8.6 Findings Across the Studied Universities

Table 8.1 presents a comparative analysis of the key findings across the three universities regarding policies and practices related to religion and belief. It offers insights into the overall findings for each of the RQs. Table 8.2, on the other hand, focuses on examining the positive and negative aspects of the universities based on Muslim students' satisfied settling. It provides a comprehensive overview of the strengths and weaknesses identified within each institution.

Table 8.1

Comparison of Findings Between the Studied Universities

University	Key RQ1 Findings	Key RQ2 Findings	Key RQ3 Findings
Emerald University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Muslim students have a positive perception of the university's policies and practices related to religion and belief - Muslim students are satisfied with the availability of prayer facilities and inclusion in Islamic societies. - Improvement is needed in recognising and respecting Islamic holidays - Concerns about potential tensions between religious groups on campus. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Majority of Muslim students feel that the university provides sufficient resources to support a diverse student body. - Students report feeling respected within the university and state that their experience positively influences their academic growth. - Concerns raised about the university's response to religious holidays, with one student feeling unsupported and overwhelmed with work instead of being provided with access to resources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Access to multiple prayer rooms accommodating religious practices of Muslim students. - Diverse community on campus fostering cross-cultural understanding. - Muslim students feeling accepted and integrated into the neutral environment. - Friendly welcome during induction week promoting a sense of belonging.
Modern University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Muslim students express dissatisfaction with the lack of clear and accessible information and regarding the institution's policies related to religion and belief. - Effective communication of updated policies and laws is needed. - Lack of support for religious practices and beliefs. - Difficulty in navigating daily life on campus. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Muslim students at the university generally have a positive perception of their access, experience, and learning on campus. - Majority of students feel valued as individuals and respected within the institution. - Some students express feelings of not belonging and perceive a lack of value for their opinions within the university. - A small percentage of students report feeling unwelcome enough to consider leaving the university. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Opportunities for open discussions related to Islam, particularly during Ramadan. - Presence of an Islamic society for engagement and connection. - Provision of a mosque and informative posters about the Hijab on campus. - Availability of Halal food options in the canteen. - Accessibility of a multi-faith prayer room near lab facilities. - Mixed experiences of friendliness among students and staff members. - Varied satisfaction levels reported by Muslim students.
Faith University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improvement is needed in recognising and respecting Islamic holidays. - Concerns about potential tensions between religious groups on campus. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Muslim students have varied perceptions of the institution's policies and provisions. - A significant percentage of students considering leaving the university due to feeling unwelcome. - Importance of addressing issues related to students' feelings of welcome and inclusion within the university environment. 	

Table 8.2

Comparison of Positive and Negative Aspects of the Three Selected Universities based on Muslim Students' Satisfied Settling

University	Positive Aspects	Negative Aspects
Emerald University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Excels in providing resources to support a diverse and positive learning experience. - High satisfaction with the accessibility of learning resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Small percentage of international Muslim students express a desire to leave due to feeling unwelcome, indicating isolation and disconnection.
Modern University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Opportunities for engaging with students from diverse nationalities, indicating potential for meaningful interaction and inclusivity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Concerns about feeling unwelcome and having opinions devalued. - Challenges such as discrimination, lack of inclusion, and communication barriers.
Faith University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Perception of equal academic opportunities compared to peers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Instances of discrimination and insufficient support reported. - Less favourable experiences compared to Emerald and Modern Universities.

8.7 Limitations of this Study

The study had several limitations that need to be acknowledged. Firstly, the sample size was limited to Muslim students from three universities in England. This means that the findings are

not applicable to other religious or cultural groups, and may also not in fact be generalisable even to a broader population of Muslim students in different regions.

The reliance on self-administrated data is another limitation, as participants may not always provide truthful or accurate responses, introducing potential biases or inaccuracies in the data. To address these limitations, the study incorporated other research tools such as interviews, timeline mapping, and EDI document analysis.

Other aspects of Muslim students' experiences, such as social interactions and academic performance, were not explored, indicating a limited scope of the study. Furthermore, the study's lack of longitudinal data is a limitation as it only captured a specific period in time (February and March 2023) and may not reflect changes in Muslim students' experiences over time.

Exploring specific incidents and stories related to religion and belief protection policies from various groups within the student population would provide deeper insights. Overall, it is important to note that the findings are based on a specific group of Muslim students in English HE, within a particular timeframe and geographical location (one metropolitan area). To obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the subject matter, future studies should conduct a longitudinal study with a more diverse sample of students from different universities and regions.

A potential limitation of this study is the absence of input from EDI coordinators within the universities, which could have provided valuable perspectives on the communication barriers faced by Muslim students. Future research could benefit from including insights from EDI coordinators to offer a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced in university settings.

8.8 Implications of the Study

This section explores the implications of the study for various stakeholders. As follows:

8.8.1 Implications for Researchers

Researchers should delve further into the experiences and perceptions surrounding communication of policies protecting religion and belief, and their impact on the settlement experiences of students. Research can focus on examining the role of EDI strategies, particularly those derived from the UK Equality Act (2010), and their effectiveness in promoting a supportive environment for students. This can include investigating the need for effective communication channels between students and university management to address the challenges they face. By conducting further research, scholars can contribute to a better understanding of the issues faced by Muslim students in non-Islamic HEIs. Exploring the perspectives, experiences and needs of this marginalised group will lead to a more comprehensive understanding of their settlement experiences.

8.8.2 Implications for University Policy

The findings of this research shed light on the challenges and disparities faced by Muslim students in relation to the protection of their religion and belief. Universities should re-evaluate their policies and EDI strategies to ensure that they accommodate the needs of all students, including both Muslim and international students. The study highlights the importance of creating inclusive environments that value and respect the opinions of Muslim students. Universities should prioritise efforts to foster inclusivity, cultural competence and acceptance of diverse identities. This can contribute to a more positive university experience for Muslim students and enhance overall campus diversity and inclusivity. The study also emphasises the

need for effective communication channels between students and university management. Universities should establish clear lines of communication to address concerns and challenges faced by Muslim students. This can include offering workshops, seminars and speaker panels on religious diversity and tolerance, as well as providing access to comprehensive support services that cater to the religious and cultural needs of Muslim students. The study's findings can be used to raise awareness about the experiences and needs of Muslim students within the wider university community. This can involve sharing research outcomes with faculty, staff and students to promote understanding and sensitivity towards the challenges faced by Muslim students.

8.8.3 Implications for HE Students

The study highlights the importance for students, particularly Muslim students, to be aware of their rights and the policies in place to protect their religious beliefs. Through understanding their rights, students can better navigate any challenges or conflicts that may arise in an academic setting. The study emphasises the need for students to engage actively within the university community. This can include providing feedback and raising concerns through available communication channels. By participating in discussions and dialogue, students can have a direct impact on shaping university policies and promoting a more inclusive environment. This not only benefits Muslim students but also fosters an atmosphere of diversity and respect for all students. This in turn promotes a sense of belonging, positively impacting student well-being and academic success.

8.9 Recommendations for Further Research

This study raises additional questions that should be explored in future research. Based on the limitations and opportunities identified in the study, the following recommendations for further research can be made:

- **Expand the study to include more participants and institutions:** Given the time constraints and limited number of participants in the current PhD study, it is crucial for future research to expand its scope. This can be achieved by including a larger and more diverse sample of Muslim students from different universities and regions. Such an inclusive approach is vital to gaining a comprehensive understanding of the experiences and challenges faced by Muslim students in various contexts. This is particularly important as research indicates that international students from different countries often encounter unique challenges in adapting to a new environment (Duru & Poyrazli, 2011; Chen, Tabassum & Saeed, 2019). By incorporating a broader range of participants, the findings and insights obtained will be more representative and applicable to a wider demographic, contributing to the advancement of knowledge in this field.
- **Comparative analysis with other religious backgrounds:** While the study focused solely on Muslim students, it would be valuable to compare their experiences with those of students from other religious backgrounds. This would allow for a broader understanding of the ways in which religious belief intersects with HE experiences, and the strategies employed to protect those beliefs.
- **Examination of institutional contexts and policy implications:** Further research could explore specific institutional contexts and their influence on the experiences and support available for Muslim students. This would provide a deeper understanding of how institutions' policies and practices can be developed or improved to promote religious EDI.

- **Focus on the strategies employed in other universities:** The current study merely scratches the surface by briefly mentioning EDI strategy reports from only a limited number of selected within a specific time frame and which are accessible online. More research is needed, however, to fully comprehend the subject matter. In particular, there is a need for in-depth investigation and analysis, not only of the strategies implemented but also their actual effectiveness and the profound implications they have on the academic and social experiences of Muslim students

8.10 Personal Reflection on the Study

As I embarked on the journey of accepting a PhD offer to study in England as a Muslim student, my mind was filled with a myriad of concerns and questions. One of the foremost thoughts that occupied my thoughts was how I would be received and accommodated in a predominantly non-Islamic country. Would the academic environment understand and provide facilities for essential Muslim practices like prayer? In light of the prevailing climate of Islamophobia post-events such as 9/11 and the London bombings, I could not help but wonder about the inclusivity and acceptance of diversity within this new setting.

The visibility of numerous Islamic societies within English universities, in stark contrast to the representation of other religious groups, caught my attention. This stark contrast triggered a series of questions for me, which led me to question the underlying motivations driving universities' concerted efforts to attract and cater specifically to these groups. Could these endeavours be solely fuelled by social interests, or were there deeper reasons underscoring these actions? Concurrently, I held steadfast in my belief that, like all students, Muslim individuals were seeking not just academic excellence but also a nurturing and supportive educational environment.

Delving into the selection process of identifying an appropriate university to undertake my PhD, I could not help but notice the rich tapestry of diversity woven through English HEIs. From the research-centric ethos of Russell Group institutions to post-92 universities that placed emphasis on vocational courses, alongside church-affiliated universities deeply rooted in religious traditions, the spectrum of offerings presented an intriguing lens through which to conduct comparative research.

As I embarked on the initial stages of my research journey, following a period of reflective introspection, I found solace in the discovery of the Equality Act, established in 2010, which offered a protective mantle for religion and belief. Aligned with the principles of this Act, universities had developed their own communication channels to safeguard the religious rights and beliefs of students, which associates with EDI strategies. Yet, amid these institutional efforts, I could not help but notice a void in research specifically delving into the experiences and perspectives of Muslim students within academic settings

With this backdrop in mind, my research journey began to take shape, fuelled by a desire to explore and shed light on the nuanced intricacies of Muslim students' experiences within the educational landscape of England. As I navigated the academic sphere, the privilege of engaging with Islamic societies and events within universities provided me with a platform to interact with participants from diverse backgrounds, each contributing unique perspectives and narratives to enrich my understanding. Throughout these encounters, my gender, ethnicity, and cultural background played pivotal roles in shaping my interactions and interpretations of the insights gleaned. I found myself constantly grappling with the influence of these identity markers, examining how they coloured my perceptions and positioned me in relation to the research topic at hand.

As I delved deeper into the intricate tapestry of academia, embracing the myriads of viewpoints and experiences shared by participants, I found myself in a perpetual state of self-reflection. By acknowledging the ways in which my identity intersected with the research landscape, I was able to navigate complex power dynamics and entrenched biases that may have influenced my understanding and interpretation of the data collected.

In the ever-evolving landscape of my research journey, collaborative efforts emerged as a cornerstone of growth and knowledge production. It was within these collaborative spaces that I had the privilege of engaging with esteemed scholars and experts, including a Muslim supervisor. The collective wisdom and diverse perspectives shared in these interactions added layers of depth and nuance to my exploration of issues related to Islam, academia, and beyond.

As I progressed further in my academic pursuit, the interplay between my positionalities and preconceptions continued to shape my engagement with the research process. I found myself treading the delicate balance of staying grounded in my beliefs and perspectives, while remaining open to new insights and perspectives that emerged through my scholarly endeavours. I continue to delve deeper into the intricate complexities of Muslim experiences within academic settings, and remain committed to unravelling the layers of understanding and contributing towards a more inclusive and diverse academic landscape for all students.

8.11 Final Reflections on the Study

The study covers various themes, including access, experience, learning, inclusive environments, communication channels, policy effectiveness, and barriers faced by Muslim students. The research employs different methods to explore participant experiences with ‘satisfied settling,’ such as EDI reports, interviews, timeline maps and questionnaires.

The study reveals that Muslim students encounter discrimination, lack of inclusion, and communication barriers, with Faith university presenting less favourable experiences compared to Emerald and Modern Universities. To address these challenges, universities should create inclusive and supportive environments, educate staff about religious beliefs, and organise workshops on religious diversity. Inclusive education, which promotes respect, belonging and diversity, can help overcome barriers. While the selected universities demonstrate positive attitudes towards diversity, complete acceptance in gender-related interactions remains a challenge. Emerald university stands out as having a comprehensive and superior environment, although some Muslim students express a desire to leave due to feeling unwelcome.

Modern university positively impacts the academic development of Muslim students, but limited representation of cultural and religious perspectives, inadequate access to prayer facilities, and incidents of discrimination and bias hinder their growth. Faith university shows high agreement percentages regarding the accommodation of religious beliefs, although concerns about their commitment to EDI principles persist.

The study emphasises the need for increased awareness of, and education on, cultural and religious diversity, as well as the lack of support for Islamic society and inclusive facilities on church-affiliated campuses.

In conclusion, the study presents varying perspectives among Muslim students at the three universities. It suggests that universities should review their policies and strategies to be more inclusive and accommodating, establish effective communication channels, and provide specialised support and resources. Muslim students should actively engage in shaping university policies and contribute to a more inclusive environment. The study acknowledges

limitations and calls for further research to expand the sample size, include comparative analysis with other religious backgrounds, examine institutional contexts, and explore strategies employed by other universities.

In future studies, it is imperative to address a limitation of this PhD research by incorporating the perspectives of academic staff, administrators and university leaders/EDI leads. This will provide a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of EDI policies and will contribute to a more well-rounded and nuanced analysis of the delicate balance between, on the one hand, student safety and, on the other hand, freedom of expression and critical thinking (Davies, 2016).

8.12 Significance and Contribution of this study

Embarking on this study has been a transformative journey for me as a researcher, shedding light on the experiences of Muslim students within HEIs. By delving into how institutional policies impact religious accommodations, I have gained insight into the intricate challenges these students face in navigating academia. My dedication to amplifying marginalised voices fuels my mission to unveil complexities and advocate for targeted interventions that foster inclusivity and understanding in academic environments. Through this research, I endeavour to offer valuable insights to institutions and uplift the perspectives of Muslim students to cultivate a more equitable and supportive educational landscape.

By exploring the challenges and opportunities these students encounter with institutional protection religion and belief policies, it contributes essential perspectives to ongoing discussions regarding inclusivity and diversity within HE. The study highlights the importance of effective communication strategies and the promotion of respect and

understanding to create a nurturing environment for students from diverse religious backgrounds.

My study aims to shed light on how institutional policies influence Muslim student experiences and contribute to a better understanding of how these policies can be navigated effectively. By focusing on the experiences of Muslim students, my study reveals the complexities they face in adhering to policies that protect their religious beliefs within university settings. This analysis emphasises the necessity of improving communication strategies to foster inclusivity and respect for all students, regardless of their religious background.

An integral part of my study involves going beyond simply amplifying the voices of Muslim students to delve into the intersection of institutional policies and the lived experiences of these students within HEIs. By examining the challenges that Muslim students encounter in comprehending and engaging with policies safeguarding their religious beliefs, I highlight the critical need for targeted interventions to address the disconnect between institutional requirements and student realities. Through a precise analysis, I underscore the complexities involved in navigating religious accommodations within the university environment, emphasising the pivotal role of effective communication strategies in promoting inclusivity and respect. Overall, this research seeks to contribute essential insights that can inform institutional practices and catalyse positive changes towards creating a more equitable and supportive educational landscape for all students. By emphasising the significance of accommodating religious beliefs within HEI policy and practice, my study aspires to guide institutions towards fostering a culture of inclusivity and understanding that benefits students from varied religious backgrounds.

In conclusion, this study plays a role in advancing our understanding of the experiences of Muslim students in HEIs and the impact of institutional policies on these experiences. By addressing the challenges faced by Muslim students in navigating policies protecting their religious beliefs, I advocate for targeted interventions to bridge the gap between institutional requirements and student realities. Through a detailed examination of Muslim student experiences, this research provides valuable insights to help shape institutional practices and cultivate a more welcoming and supportive educational environment for all students, regardless of their religious affiliations.

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Appendix I. Ethics Application Approval

Ethics - Anwaar Almutairi

Ethics status form

Ethics

Ethics approval

Required

Status of application for ethical approval

Approved

Date submitted

Date approved

08 Feb 2023

Application ID

UREC reference: 23/EDN/002

Notes

nwaar Almutairi, PGR - Protecting Religion and Belief on Campus: A Case Study of Muslim Students in Three Universities in England

UREC opinion: Favourable ethical opinion

UREC reference: 23/EDN/002

Research Governance Assessment: Approved – the study may commence.

Appendix II. Participant Information Sheet



PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET: STUDENT INTERVIEWS

Research Ethics Committee Reference Number:

Title of Study: Protecting Religion and Belief on Campus: A Case Study of Muslim Students in Three Universities in England

You are being invited to take part in a research study. You do not have to take part if you do not want to. Please read this information, which will help you decide.

1. What is the purpose of the study?

This research investigates the role HE institutions in England play in communicating religion and belief policies formally through their strategies, such as Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) and aims to answer the following overarching research question:

How effective are the on-campus protection policies on religion and belief from the perspective of Muslim students?

This study is organised by a PhD student at Liverpool John Moores University and self-funded by the student. This study hopes to answer the following sub research questions:

RQ1: What are Muslim students' perceptions of the English university's policies on protecting religion and belief?

RQ2: How do the three universities communicate their policies for protecting religion and belief?

RQ3: What are the barriers faced by Muslim students in the communication of policies of protecting religion and belief on campuses?

2. Why have I been invited to participate?

You have been invited because you are an existing higher education Muslim student in England.

Inclusion criteria:

- Muslim Students in English universities from all nationalities.
- Ability to participate in the English or Arabic language.
- Voluntary participation.

Exclusion criteria:

- Anyone unable to provide informed consent to participate.
- Anyone not enrolled in selected HE institutions.
- Anyone who could not participate in the English or Arabic language.

3. Do I have to take part?

No. It is up to you to decide whether or not to participate. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to download and keep. By completing the anonymous online questionnaire, you will be consenting to be part of this research study. You will also be consenting to the data you provide being used in doctoral research at LJMU. You can withdraw at any point by informing the principal researcher, without giving a reason and without it affecting your rights.

4. What will happen to me if I take part?

You will be invited to complete an anonymous online questionnaire which will be used to capture your spectrum of experience and perceptions regarding your respective university's protection of religion and belief. The questionnaire will take approximately 15 minutes to complete and submit. No personal data will be collected, but you will be asked at the end if you would like to participate in a follow-up voluntary face-to-face or online semi-structured interview.

The interview should take approximately 30-60 minutes. You will be offered regular breaks as necessary. You can also ask to pause or stop the interview at any time. Please remember, you have the right to decline to answer any questions you do not want to.

5. Will I be photographed or audio/video recorded and how will the recorded media be used?

You are free to decline to be audio recorded. Your name will not be attributed to the recordings. You are free to stop the recording at any time and therefore withdraw your participation.

6. Are there any potential risks in taking part?

There are no foreseen disadvantages or risks in taking part in the questionnaire and/or interview. However, the researchers have the responsibility to protect participants from harm and distress. Therefore, if you are personally affected by any of the issues discussed in the research, you may wish to seek advice/further support from the Principal Researcher.

7. Are there any benefits in taking part?

There will be no personal benefit to you from taking part in this study. The potential or hoped for benefits of the study for the wider society are intended to inform research on how English universities' policies act for the protection of religion and belief from the perspective of Muslim students enrolling in those universities. The research is for doctoral study purposes and aims to explore the similarities and differences in the communication of values of religion and belief between the different types of universities.

8. Payments, reimbursements of expenses or any other benefit or incentive for taking part

There will be no payment or any benefit or incentive for taking part in this study. Unfortunately, we cannot reimburse any expenses you may incur.

9. What will happen to information/data provided?

The information you provide as part of the study is the **study data**. Your participation in this study will only involve the use of audio recording of your interview. People who do not need to know who you are will not be able to see your name or contact details. The data collected will include:

- I will use a code/pseudonym so that you cannot be directly identified from the data. Data will only be shared with my supervisory team for the purposes of research.
- Audio recordings (which include your voice). The recordings will be stored on password protected LJMU managed file storage as soon as possible following the completion of data collection. Interview recordings will be deleted once the interview transcript has been verified as accurate and an evaluation has determined that it has no further research value.

Once we have finished the study, we will keep some of the data so we can check the results.

10. What if we find something unexpected?

If you have concerns about any aspect of this study, please contact the Principal Researcher who will do their best to answer your query. The investigator should acknowledge your concern within 10 working days and give you an indication of how they intend to deal with it. If you wish to make a complaint, please contact the chair of the Liverpool John Moores University Research Ethics Committee (researchethics@ljmu.ac.uk) and your communication will be re-directed to an independent person as appropriate.

11. Who is organising?

This study is organised by a Liverpool John Moores University postgraduate research student. This study has received ethical clearance through the Liverpool John Moores University Research Ethics Committee.

12. Whom do I contact if I have a concern about the study or I wish to complain?

If you have concerns about any aspect of this study, please contact *the Principal Researcher or the Research Supervisors* and we will do our best to answer your query. You should expect a reply within 10 working days. If you remain unhappy or wish to make a formal complaint, please contact the Chair of the Research Ethics Committee at Liverpool John Moores University who will seek to resolve the matter as soon as possible:

Chair, Liverpool John Moores University Research Ethics Committee; Email: FullReviewUREC@ljmu.ac.uk;
Tel: 0151 231 2121; Research Innovation Services, Liverpool John Moores University, Exchange Station, Liverpool L2 2QP

13. Data Protection

Liverpool John Moores University is the data controller with respect to your personal data. Information about your rights with respect to your personal data is available from:

- <https://www.ljmu.ac.uk/legal/privacy-and-cookies/external-stakeholders-privacy-policy/research-participants-privacy-notice>

14. Contact details

Principal Investigator: *Anwaar Almutairi*

PhD student in Education

LJMU Email address: a.a.almutairi@2020.ljmu.ac.uk

LJMU School/faculty: Faculty of Arts Professional and Social Studies LJMU Central telephone number: 0151 231 2121

Supervisor Name: *Prof. Michael Thomas*

LJMU Email address: m.thomas@ljmu.ac.uk

Appendix III. Informed Consent Statement



PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM: STUDENT INTERVIEWS

Study title: Protecting Religion and Belief on Campus: A Case Study of Muslim Students in Three Universities in England

Research Ethics Committee Reference Number:

Principal Investigator: Anwaar Ali Almutairi, PhD student LJMU postgraduate research student
 LJMU Email address: a.a.almutairi@2020.ljmu.ac.uk
 LJMU School/Faculty: School of Education, Faculty of Arts Professional and Social Studies.
 LJMU Central telephone number: 0151 231 2121

Supervisor Name: Prof. Michael Thomas
 LJMU Email address: m.thomas@ljmu.ac.uk

If you are happy to participate, please complete and sign the consent form below

		<i>Please initial</i>	
1.	I confirm that I have read the information sheet dated: February 2023 (version No 1) for the above study, or it has been read to me. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.		
2.	I understand what taking part in the study involves.		
3.	I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study and understand that I can refuse to answer questions I can withdraw from the study at any time, without giving a reason and without penalty or my legal rights being affected.		
4.	I have been advised about potential risks associated with taking part in this study and have taken these into consideration before consenting to participate		
5.	To the best of my knowledge, I do not meet any of the exclusion criteria outlined in the information sheet for this research. If this changes at a later date during study participation, I agree to notify the researchers immediately.		
6.	I understand that the investigator will be unable to guarantee control of access to authorised viewing of the audio recordings taken of me during the study and I am happy to proceed.		
7.	I agree that audio recordings can be taken of me during the study. (Participants are free at any time to decline to be audio recorded whilst continuing to participate in the study)	YES	NO
8.	I understand that my information may be subject to review by responsible individuals from Liverpool John Moores University for monitoring and audit purposes		
9.	I agree for my contact details to be stored for the purpose of contacting me about future studies and I understand that agreeing to be contacted does not oblige me to participate in any further studies	YES	NO
10.	I understand that recordings taken of me may be used in the final report and any further outputs.		
11.	I understand that parts of our conversation will be used verbatim in future publications or presentations and that all efforts will be made to ensure I cannot be identified in reports or any further outputs.		
12.	I understand the potential risks of being identifiable in reports and any future outputs when the findings of the study are disseminated.		
13.	I agree to take part in this study.		

Appendix IV. Questionnaire Statements



* Required

Protecting Religion and Belief on Campus

Welcome Page

The data collected will be used to understand Muslim students' perceptions about protecting religion and belief policies at English universities and to inform current and future decisions about supporting a diverse, inclusive and vibrant campus community.

Your participation and responses will be strictly confidential. No individually identifiable information will be reported. This questionnaire is completely voluntary. You do not have to participate in this questionnaire and – if you do choose to participate – you may exit at any time. Completing the questionnaire should take about 10 - 15 minutes.

To ensure the confidentiality of data, this questionnaire is being conducted by Anwaar Almutairi, a PhD student in the School of Education at Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU). The project has been granted ethical approval from the university's ethical committee (UREC reference: **23/EDN/002**).

If you have any questions about the questionnaire – or if you experience any difficulty in completing it – please contact the researcher via email at: a.a.almutairi@2020.ljmu.ac.uk

Thank you in advance for your help with this important study!

Click “Next” to start.

*This questionnaire for Muslim students studying in English Higher Education only.

Consent Agreement

“I have read the information sheet provided in the invitation email, and I am happy to participate in this study. I understand that by completing this questionnaire, I am in consenting to part of this research study and for my data to be used as described in the information sheet provided.” *

- Agree
- Disagree

Participants Information

This Survey for Muslim student studying in English HEIs.

1. At which university are you currently enrolled? please write your university name down

*.....

2. What is your education level? *

- Undergraduate
- Taught Postgraduate
- Research Postgraduate

4. What is your gender? *

- Female
- Male
- Prefer not to say
- A gender identity not listed here
- If a gender identity not listed (Please specify):

5. In which year are you currently studying? *

- Foundation year and 1st year
- 2nd year
- 3rd year
- 4th year and above

6. What is your nationality? *

- British
- Non-British
- If you are not British, please specify your nationality

Part II: Access, experience and learning on campus.

This section asks you to reflect on your perceptions and experiences of protecting religion and belief policies in your university. Please use a scale of 1-5, where 5 means strongly agree and 1 means strongly disagree.

1. I feel valued as an individual in my university. *1 2 3 4 5
2. I feel I belong in my university. *1 2 3 4 5
3. My university has a strong commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusivity. *1 2 3 4 5
4. I have considered leaving the university because I felt unwelcome. *1 2 3 4 5
5. I am treated with respect in my university. *1 2 3 4 5
6. I feel others don't value my opinions in my university. *1 2 3 4 5
7. University is a place where I am able to perform to my full potential. *1 2 3 4 5
8. I have opportunities in my university to achieve academic success that is similar to those of my peers. *1 2 3 4 5
9. There is too much emphasis put on issues of equality, diversity and inclusivity in my university *1 2 3 4 5
10. My university provides sufficient resources to foster the success of a diverse student body. *1 2 3 4 5
11. I have to work harder than others to be valued equally at university. *1 2 3 4 5

12. My experience at university has had a positive influence on my academic growth. *1 2 3 4 5

Please use a scale of 1-5, where 5 means strongly agree and 1 means strongly disagree.

Part III: Good relations, productive dialogue and managing tensions on campus.

In your opinion, during your learning at university, how often have you interacted in a meaningful way with people.

- 1.... whose religious beliefs are different than your own. *1 2 3 4 5
- 2.... whose identity are different from your own. *1 2 3 4 5
- 3.... who are of a different nationality than yourself. *1 2 3 4 5
- 4.... whose gender is different than yourself. *1 2 3 4 5
- 5.... who are from a different social class. *1 2 3 4 5

Please use a scale of 1-5, where 5 means strongly agree and 1 means strongly disagree.

Part IV: Law, policy and monitoring on campus toward Muslim students

In your opinion, which of the following features are helpful to you in terms of the communication of protecting religion and belief policies in your university.

1. My religious beliefs are acceptable at my university. *1 2 3 4 5
2. I have a voice in the decision-making that affects my learning in my university. *1 2 3 4 5
3. My university education is based on clear principles of equity. *1 2 3 4 5
3. There are fair processes for determining protection strategies based on religion and belief at my university. *1 2 3 4 5
4. Support is provided equitably in my university. *1 2 3 4 5

Please use a scale of 1-5, where 5 means strongly agree and 1 means strongly disagree.

Part V: In your experience, your university environment and facilities

- 1.... provides facilities for prayer. *1 2 3 4 5
- 2.... respects the Islamic tradition of Muslim women e.g., dress code. *1 2 3 4 5
- 3.... offers Halal options for Muslim students on campus. *1 2 3 4 5
- 4.... respects Islamic holidays. *1 2 3 4 5
- 5.... allows Muslim students to join Islamic societies. *1 2 3 4 5

Summarise your experience as a Muslim student in your university.

The idea of 'satisfied settling' is defined as: "A mechanism in which (Muslim) students have justified (unconsciously) not having access to a richer and more fulfilled university experience in relation to religious needs" (Islam et al., 2019, p. 94). Bearing the idea of 'satisfied settling' in mind, on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 represents a 'very dissatisfied settler' and 5 represents a 'very satisfied settler', where would you place yourself to summarise your experience as a Muslim student in your university *1 2 3 4 5

Voluntary Interview

The second phase of this research study includes follow-up Semi-structured interviews with Participants

- Would you be willing to volunteer to take part in a 30- to 60-minute interview about the subject mentioned above?

- Yes
- No

-Your response will be anonymous. *

How would you like to conduct the interview?

- Online
- Face to face

Please send me your contact information so that I can invite you to the interview with further details.....Thank you.

Appendix V. Interview Questions

Semi-Structured Interview for Muslim Students Interview Guide

I am conducting research on Muslim students' perceptions of religion and belief protection policies in English HEIs. Through this interview, we are interested in learning about your journey and aim to involve as a Muslim who studying in HE. Bearing the idea of 'satisfied settling' in mind and place yourself to summarise your experience as a Muslim student in your university.

The idea of 'satisfied settling' is defined as: "A mechanism in which (Muslim) students have justified (unconsciously) not having access to a richer and more fulfilled university experience in relation to religious needs" (Islam et al., 2019, p. 94).

Section I: Timeline Mapping Task

Prior to attending the interview, please complete this timeline mapping task to visualise your current journey as a Muslim student currently studying in HEIs.

Take a piece of A4 paper and draw a straight, horizontal line in the middle of the paper.

Write the phrase "My religion and belief protection policies on campus" at the top of the paper as a title.

Section the horizontal line with several vertical lines to represent the different stages of your journey to date. For example, this could represent your school period, undergraduate/graduate education, the first year of study, significant promotions of facilities on campus to Muslims, etc. You may reference key places or people on campus on your timeline (e.g., students, staff, programs, policies, religious communities, prayer facilities, Halal food, etc). The line may trend upwards during satisfied settling as positive experiences and downwards through more challenging barriers on your journey in light of events/policies or your experiences as a Muslim at your universities.

In each section, draw and annotate a line to represent your experiences as a Muslim towards events/policies/ activities in your university and your identity milestones.

Bring the timeline to your interview. We will reflect on your timelines in the interview, and it will be retained by the interviewer as part of the data collection process.

Ref: Islam, M., Lowe, T. & Jones, G. (2018) A 'satisfied settling'? Investigating a sense of belonging for Muslim students in a UK small– medium higher education institution, *Student Engagement in Higher Education Journal*, 2(2), 79–104.

Section II: Access, experience and learning on campus.

1. How useful is this notion of satisfied settling and in what ways, if any, does it help explain your experience of being a university student?
2. How do you feel about the representation of your religion and belief in your university community?
3. What support do you need as a Muslim student to be successful in your studies?
4. How easy is it for you to study with students from different religions?
5. Are you given opportunities to learn about different religions? Please explain.
6. In what ways do you feel the university gives staff and students opportunities to learn about diverse Muslim cultures and beliefs?
7. What do you feel about the level of access to learning resources as a Muslim student?
8. Do you think Muslim students are treated differently to non-Muslim students? If yes, what can the university do to help you have a better experience? If no, please explain.
9. How accessible are religion and belief policies for Muslim students?

Section III: Good relations, productive dialogue and managing tensions on campus.

10. To what extent do you feel part of the student community at your university?
11. How easy do you find interacting with students at your university who are from different religious backgrounds?
12. Do you feel that you fit in with the existing Muslim community in your university? If yes, why? If no, please explain.
13. How confident are you that you can have honest conversations with other students and/or staff about their religious beliefs?
14. How comfortable are you discussing religion-related topics with other students and staff?
15. In response to Islam-related news that might be occurring in the world, how comfortable are you having conversations about them with students and staff?
16. What advice would you give to students with regards to settling in your university?

Section IV: law, policy and monitoring on campus toward Muslim students

17. What do you know about your university's protection strategies on religion and belief? In what ways do they promote equality, diversity and inclusivity for Muslim students?
18. How helpful are your university's policies for improving culturally and religious responsive practices?
19. In what ways do your university's policies help to make your religious practices acceptable or unacceptable?

20. Have you experienced any discrimination as a Muslim student? If so, how have you resolved this conflict, and what role has the university played in assisting you to resolve this conflict?

Section V: Inclusive environments and facilities

21. What kind of facilities are available on campus to support Muslim students?
22. Have you had any experiences in which your university has/has not been mindful of your observance of your religion? e.g., fasting, Islamic holidays, dress code.
23. In what ways do Muslim students have access to the same activities as other students? e.g., social group activities on and off campus.

Section VII: Closing

24. Is there anything else that you would like to share?
- Do you have any questions for me?
- May I contact you by email or arrange a second interview if I need more information or clarification?

Thank you for your time. Please contact me if you have any questions, concerns, or additional information to share prior to our next communication.

Appendix VI. Interviews Thematic Analysis of Muslim Students' Perceptions on University Policies Protecting Religion and Belief

1. Emerald University Interviewees

Theme One. Access, Learning and Experience (To answer RQ1)

Interviewee	Access	Reflection
(Eman,RPG,F,2 nd)	<p>"When we ask them, for example, for a holiday because we have religious holiday, they don't, you don't see that they're keen on helping you, they're more focused on just dumping work on us, instead of giving accessing to resources."</p> <p>"I felt like the opposite. They don't give us opportunities to access, because they don't address the problems that need to be addressed."</p>	<p>The interviewee reported that the university doesn't give Muslim students an opportunity to access the necessary resources as they don't address the underlying problems.</p>
(Esraa,UG,F,1 st)	<p>"Access to learning resources is quite good...I can get access to the library to the books like everyone else."</p> <p>"I felt that I wasn't like being welcomed by others... I believe that some people are accepting for Muslim students, but others are not."</p> <p>"Many people are not learned this quality and they are incapable of actually accepting people from different and diverse backgrounds."</p>	<p>limited acceptance by others, need for counselling services and awareness-raising.</p> <p>Availability of resources and access to the library</p>
(Ekram,TPG,F,2 nd)	<p>"My university allows students to contribute and societies to access group clubs, for example, Islamic society to help other Muslims adapt to their lifestyle adapted here"</p>	<p>Academic calendar breaks for Christian holidays.</p> <p>Faith rooms not for Muslims only.</p> <p>Offered Muslim societies/clubs to help other Muslims adapt to their lifestyle</p>
(Ebtehal,UG,F,1 st)	<p>"The access is easy, I believe, because they give us the information that we need."</p>	<p>The participant reported that access to information about policies protecting religion and belief was easy and that the university provides them with the information they need.</p>
(Estabriq,UG,F,1 st)	<p>"We do have the same access..."</p>	<p>Muslim student mentions that she has access to the same learning resources</p>
(Ehaab,RPG,M,1 ST)	<p>"I think I can access to the library and other forums online sources easily if I need to find any policies. "</p>	<p>Online access to policies sources available.</p>

Interviewee	Experience	Reflection
(Eman,RPG,F,2 nd)	<p>"And I felt like the university in the first impression that we had was when they emphasised on many different things that we are not used to hearing and expected us to adjust. without addressing our beliefs and our cultures and including everyone in the conversation."</p> <p>"They just focused on gays and things that we aren't used to hearing about. And so it was hard on top of the studying to just get that first impression."</p> <p>"They left some out while they included others. So, it was hard."</p>	<p>Tutors did not individually ask students how they were feeling, which Muslim students interpreted as an assumption that they were fine.</p> <p>Gays take a massive matter rather than religion protection policies.</p>
(Esraa,UG,F,1 st)	<p>"I faced, like some discrimination form British students due to the fact that I wear the hijab to the university...sometimes like I feel afraid of going to the university."</p> <p>"My experience being a university student was somewhat negative... I believe that the support that I need is like some counselling services, or awareness that could be raised."</p>	<p>Discrimination and lack of welcoming environment</p> <p>Negative experience.</p>
(Ekram,TPG,F,2 nd)	<p>"And making us feel like we're home, we are celebrating our same beliefs and mentioning our situation...Because this in our generation, our generation is really supportive and helpful and our universities really helpful too"</p>	<p>Supportive and helpful university that makes Muslim students feel at home and they elebrates same beliefs.</p>
(Ebtehal,UG,F,1 st)	<p>"Positives include that there are praying rooms available. Some negatives include that there are not much Halal options available in the university campus."</p> <p>"And I also saw one of the prayer rooms was actually vandalised, and they did nothing about it other than close the prayer room".</p>	<p>The participant reported a mix of positive and negative experiences in relation to the policies protecting religion and belief. Positive experiences included the availability of prayer rooms, while negative experiences include the lack of Halal food options on campus, and instances of vandalism of the prayer rooms. The interviewee faced discrimination in some classes from some teachers.</p>
(Estabrriq,UG,F,1 st)	<p>"Overall, it's good however, I did see some discrimination I faced during...our Kuwaiti students were late for maybe five minutes. The biology teacher was really disrespectful...he didn't provide the same...response to non-quality students or British students...As for the British students, he handed it like they did it even become late. So, it's a little discrimination. However, even in my chemistry class, the chemistry teacher always teachers or like has eye contact with a bit of students. However, he doesn't do any eye contact with the quality students as if like they are the other one...Because they are Muslims"</p>	
(Ehaab,RPG,M,1 st)	<p>"I appreciate that my university helps me feel like a valued member of the community."</p>	<p>Interviewee reported feeling positively.</p>

Interviewee	Learning	Reflection
(Eman,RPG,F,2 nd)	<p>"And I felt like the workload was a lot more than I was used toand we have to search more most of the things on our own, but what is provided is provided for all nationalities."</p> <p>"They didn't tell us about where we might be able to join as Muslim, so they didn't tell us."</p>	<p>Muslim student found the learning workload to be heavier than what she was used to.</p> <p>The style of learning is different and requires Muslim students to search for information on their own.</p>
(Esraa,UG,F,1 st)	"I'm not given any opportunity to learn about any different religions...the only way in order to combat this discrimination is by raising awareness and making sure that they're aware of accepting other religions and students that come from different backgrounds as them."	lack of diversity awareness and acceptance of different backgrounds and religions.
(Ekram,TPG,F,2 nd)	"Some other students learn about our culture and our religion and our beliefs. On campus. It's on campus...we do have some events sometimes, which are our Muslim community create"	Muslim societies/clubs help other students learn about Muslim culture and religion.
(Ebtehal,UG,F,1 st)	" I think I believe that what I need is respect. So, I need them to respect our religion..."	The participants expressed a desire for more respect.
(Estabriq,UG,F,1 st)	"What support okay, we need a little more awareness about the Muslim community here. We also need one to one support...we need support from our teachers because ultimately, they are the ones who teach us, they are the ones who helped us during our academic study here"	The interviewee believes that teachers should be more aware of the Muslim community and provide one-to-one support to Muslim students.
(Ehaab,RPG,M,1 ST)	"I wish there were more opportunities to learn about Islam and Muslim cultures on campus. It's frustrating to feel like I'm constantly having to explain things to others."	Interviewee indicated a need for more education on Islam and Muslim cultures. He noted that the university had limited resources for learning about these topics, and that it fell to Muslim students to educate others about their beliefs and practices.

Theme Two. Inclusive Environment and Facilities (To answer_RQ1)

Interviewee	Inclusive environment	Reflection
(Eman,RPG,F,2 nd)	<p>"I know that there are prayer rooms, multifaith rooms for praying, which is helpful for Muslims because there's they chose that they have taken initiative and that they care."</p> <p>"The closes right after it was vandalised. I didn't think to keep it open for the Muslims themselves because the sounds are they're just a faith."</p> <p>"I feel like the university can be more including for the situations or just to bring light to some sort of issues that my our that they understand and that they acknowledge that we as Muslims</p>	<p>Muslim student mentioned having access to prayer rooms and multifaith rooms, which was helpful.</p> <p>However, the university had to close down the mosque at times due to vandalism, which was shocking.</p> <p>She stated that they want the university to acknowledge her beliefs more and take more</p>

	might have specific requests, like time off for a specific holiday or even to acknowledge that there might be inequalities and if there is to come to them."	initiative to address specific Muslim requests.
(Esraa,UG,F,1 st)	"I felt that I wasn't... being welcomed by others... sometimes like I feel afraid of going to the university...the only way in order to combat this discrimination is by raising awareness and making sure that they're aware of accepting other religions and students that come from different backgrounds as them."	lack of acceptance and welcoming
(Ekram,TPG,F,2 nd)	"And helps us a lot to understand each other "	This university Helps Muslims understand each other, and they celebrate Muslim beliefs
(Ebtehal,UG,F,1 st)	"Not inclusive environment, I need to be surrounded by diversity of people and students and I need them to be understanding of my religion and beliefs and treat me normally." "I feel like it's difficult because my university don't have us mixed with other people other than Muslims and my nationality. So, it's difficult, but in semester two, there are a couple of shared lectures with other nationalities but not as much as there should be."	The participant reported that the university lacks diversity and inclusivity, particularly in the foundation year where only (---) students are allowed to attend. She felt that the university could be more open and welcoming towards students of different backgrounds and cultures.
(Estabriq,UG,F,1 st)	"There is a discrimination, but I think they try understanding, and respecting others' perspectives, and creating a safe space for everyone to express themselves. "	The interviewee believes that there is an effort being made to promote an inclusive environment
(Ehaab,RPG,M,1 ST)	"I don't feel like there's a strong Muslim community on campus. It can be hard to connect with others who share my beliefs."	Interviewee identified a lack of visible Muslim representation on campus as a barrier to feeling included and supported by the university.

Interviewee	Facilities on campus	Reflection
(Eman,RPG,F,2 nd)	"There is a multifaith room, but nothing specific for Islam students is the more for everyone in general."	Muslim students did not feel that there were any specific facilities for Muslim students, other than the multifaith room.
(Esraa,UG,F,1 st)	"Academic calendar breaks in not for Islamic religious holidays, and some room not It's not specifically for us but all can access the faith room, and all boys and girls from different religions can access the faith room."	The academic calendar may not provide breaks for Islamic religious holidays, making it challenging for Muslim students to fully observe their religious practices.
(Ekram,TPG,F,2 nd)	"I have used faith rooms to pray"	Faith rooms that can be used for Muslim praying
(Ebtehal,UG,F,1 st)	"Some negatives include that there are not much Halal options available in the university campus." "I think they should be more open about our religion and more open about our culture. And	The participant reported that while prayer rooms were available, the facilities on campus could be improved to include more Halal food options,

	like I said they should open more prayer rooms and they should also include more headed options."	as well as more prayer rooms to accommodate Muslim students.
(Estabrriq,UG,F,1 st)	"We don't have any Halal option food in our party"	The interviewee mentions that there are no Halal food options in her university canteen.
(Ehaab,RPG,M,1 st)	"It's not always easy to find Halal food options on campus, which can be frustrating. And the prayer rooms can be crowded, dirty and uncomfortable."	Interviewee expressed frustration with limited access to Halal food options and inadequate prayer facilities.

Theme Three. Good Relations, Productive Dialogue and Manging Tensions (To answer RQ2)

Interviewee	Good relation	Reflection
(Eman,RPG,F,2 nd)	"Because you are Muslims, because it was something. There was Pakistani Muslims and they for the other nationalities. They were fine with it, but I think it was the Arab Muslims that they had problems with, or that they weren't. They weren't willing or they weren't taking the initiative to ask how we were."	Muslim student did not mention a good relationship with the university in terms of communication about policies for protecting religion and belief. She mentioned feeling intimidated and that the university did not tend to their religion protected.
(Esraa,UG,F,1 st)	"Ensure...they would conduct meetings with Muslim students, try to listen to them and acknowledge their concerns, and find solutions to their problems."	conduct meetings with Muslim students and acknowledge their concerns.
(Ekram,TPG,F,2 nd)	"A university offers a good amount of help compared to other universities"	She reported that her university have a good amount of help compared to other universities.
(Ebtahal,UG,F,1 st)	"I think they should be more open about our religion and more open about our culture."	The participant reported above she is having positive experiences with some lecturers who were understanding and empathetic towards her, but also she reported instances of discrimination or racism from others.
(Estabrriq,UG,F,1 st)	"What role do they have? They have a bigger role because they could talk to the teacher raise awareness about the issue that is happening and at the same time they should do like questionnaires and online feedback maybe...Who didn't know about this? I didn't know...they didn't show us any or tell us that we have any complaint forms"	The interviewee believes that the university could improve their relationship with Muslim students by fostering better communication regarding religion and belief protection policies.
(Ehaab,RPG,M,1 st)	"I've had good experiences talking to staff members about my religious needs. They seem genuinely interested in making sure I have what I need to succeed."	Interviewee reported feeling positively about his interactions with university staff on matters related to

religion and belief. He noted that staff were generally receptive to their needs and concerns.

Interviewee	Productive Dialogue	Reflection
(Eman,RPG,F,2 nd)	Muslim students did not mention any productive regarding policies for protecting religion and belief	dialogue with the university
(Esraa,UG,F,1 st)	"They listen to Muslim students and find solutions to their problems."	Muslim student finds solutions to her problems.
(Ekram,TPG,F,2 nd)	"Our Muslim society which helps...make group clubs, Islamic group, for example, to help other Muslims adapt to their lifestyle adapted here"	Muslim societies on campus allow for productive dialogue among students.
(Ebtehal,UG,F,1 st)	"I feel like it's difficult because [...] don't have us mixed with other people other than Muslims and my nationality. So, it's difficult, but in semester two, there are a couple of shared lectures with other nationalities but not as much as there should be, or they're given an opportunity to learn about different religions."	The participants expressed a desire for more opportunities to engage in dialogue and discussion about religion and belief, and for the university to facilitate productive dialogue among students from diverse backgrounds.
(Estabrriq,UG,F,1 st)	"They efforts to promote interfaith dialogue and understanding"	Interviewee identified there is a productive dialogue between Muslim students and university staff on matters related to religion and belief.
(Ehaab,RPG,M,1 st)	"Sometimes there can be misunderstandings and it helps to have a dialogue."	He noted that there were times when misunderstandings arose due to a lack of communication.

Interviewee	Manging tensions	Reflection
(Eman,RPG,F,2 nd)	Muslim students did not mention any active efforts by the university to manage tensions surrounding religion and belief	by the university to manage
(Esraa,UG,F,1 st)	"...the only way in order to combat this discrimination is by raising awareness and making sure that they're aware of accepting other religions and students that come from different backgrounds as them."	Ensure acceptance and awareness of different religions and backgrounds.
(Ekram,TPG,F,2 nd)	"Our Muslim society which helps...make group clubs, for example, to help other Muslims adapt to their lifestyle adapted here."	Islamic societies take a part for awareness not university.
(Ebtehal,UG,F,1 st)	"I think they should be more open about our religion and more open about our culture."	The participant felt that tensions could be managed better by the university through promoting understanding and respect.
(Estabrriq,UG,F,1 st)	"I suggest more work needed to raise the awareness regarding the policies on campus and posted everywhere, also teacher must open a space to talk to each other and listen to us..."	The interviewee suggests that teachers could talk to each other to raise awareness and develop strategies to manage tensions.

(Ehaab,RPG,M,1 ST)	"I worry that there could be tension between different religious groups on campus. My university doesn't promote dialogue and understanding."	Interviewee reported feeling concerned about the potential for tension between different religious communities on campus.
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Theme Four. Law, Policies and Monitoring (To answer_RQ2)

Interviewee	Law and Policies	Reflection
(Eman,RPG,F,2 nd)	Muslim students did not mention any specific laws or policies communicated to them by the university regarding protecting religion and belief	
(Esraa,UG,F,1 st)	"I am not aware of any policies that have been set in place."	No policies in place to address the issues faced by Muslim students
(Ekram,TPG,F,2 nd)	"I don't know about a strategy equality and diversity, inclusion strategies, not classes or webinars or any awareness, not meant for Muslim students"	Lack of awareness
(Ebtehal,UG,F,1 st)	"I think that the policy is that we should be welcoming and allow everyone to practice their religion freely. And that's what I know."	The interviewee acknowledges their limited knowledge of the policy.
(Estabrriq,UG,F,1 st)	"In regard to the policies I don't really know about them"	The interviewee is not aware of any university policies regarding protecting religion and belief.
(Ehaab,RPG,M,1 ST)	"I wasn't aware of some of the policies related to religion and belief until recently. It would be helpful if the university made these policies more visible and accessible to students."	Interviewee suggested that the university could do more to communicate these policies to students.

Interviewee	Monitoring	Reflection
(Eman,RPG,F,2 nd)	Muslim students did not mention any active monitoring or enforcement of policies regarding protecting religion and belief	
(Esraa,UG,F,1 st)		
(Ekram,TPG,F,2 nd)	"It was worse before it's getting better. Now, for example, they're allowing us they're hearing us more and they're allowing us to Speak on our beliefs and accept us"	There has been a positive change in the university or community's approach towards the expression of religious beliefs.
(Ebtehal,UG,F,1 st)	"I believe that this programme is only for (...) students. I'm not sure why. But in the future years like in year one and year two, they will be starting to include other nationalities with us. But as a foundation year it's only (...)."	Registered all students in one nationality in one class.
(Estabrriq,UG,F,1 st)	"I don't really know...if there are any complaints filed or anything like that"	The interviewee is uncertain about whether or not there are any monitoring procedures in place to enforce these policies.
(Ehaab,RPG,M,1 st)	"It can be difficult to address incidents of discrimination without the support of the	Interviewee expressed a need for more robust monitoring of

university. I think more monitoring and intervention would help prevent these incidents from happening." incidents of discrimination and harassment related to religion and belief.

Theme Five. Barriers (To answer RQ3)

Interviewee	Barriers	Reflection
(Eman,RPG,F,2 nd)	"It's not something that you couldn't ask the staff because they're not welcoming."	Muslim students felt that there was a lack of open communication by the university regarding issues related to religion and belief.
(Esraa,UG,F,1 st)	"I faced, like some discrimination due to the fact that I wear the hijab to the university...sometimes like I feel afraid of going to the university...the discriminate against Muslim students...they are limiting Muslims...there are social groups such as Muslim social groups. But most of the time I feel like Muslims are limited."	Discrimination, lack of awareness-raising, and limited access to participation in activities
(Ekram,TPG,F,2 nd)	"It's easy, but at the same time, it's hard because of the different religious backgrounds we have different beliefs. And we don't really agree"	- Some people don't have an open mind and don't agree with Muslim beliefs.
(Ebtehal,UG,F,1 st)	"I feel like it's difficult because my university don't have us mixed with other people other than Muslims and my nationality. [...] And there are some classes of people. But like I mentioned, our class is only including (...), Muslims. There aren't any diverse group other than Kuwaitis Muslims, so I haven't been in that group". "I don't feel very confident because we share different beliefs so I'm scared that I might get criticised by them."	The participant highlighted several barriers to effective communication of policies protecting religion and belief, including a lack of diversity and inclusivity in the university, and a lack of opportunities for learning and dialogue.
(Estabrriq,UG,F,1 st)	"I don't feel very comfortable because the students that I might be talking to might be Islamophobes themselves, so it scares me a little bit." "I feel like I can't show my beliefs, especially to non-Muslim students as they might take it in another way. They might that they might not conversate with me normally if I bring in my beliefs, the conversation...there is interest and Islamophobia that highlighted on the media so you don't...defend or protect your religion...I am... afraid...because I feel like they will do harm to me".	The interviewee mentions that some non-Muslim students may not be willing to engage in conversations about religion, which could impact Muslim students' ability to fully express themselves.
(Ehaab,RPG,M,1 st)	"I think there are a lot of students who struggle with English as a second language. It would help if more information was available in other languages to make sure everyone understands their rights."	Interviewee identified language barriers and limited access to information as key barriers to effective communication. He suggested that the university could do more to provide

information in multiple languages and to promote visibility of important policies and resources.

2. Modern University Interviewees

Theme One. Access, Learning and Experience (To answer RQ1)

Interviewee	Access	Reflection
(Mai,RPG,F,4 th)	"The problem we face that we don't have access to the facility for pray. " "I leave the campus to find clean place to pray. " "	Muslim student faced challenges in accessing facilities for prayer on campus. The interviewee mentioned that she had to leave the building in order to access a suitable prayer location.
(Mariam,TPG,F,4 th)	"I think I have a good as a Muslim student, I have a good level of access to learning resources when it comes to any material, even regarding religion regarding my own religion, or any other topic."	The interviewee felt that she had good access to learning resources on their religion.
(Maha,RPG,F,2 nd)	The interviewee did not specifically mention any policies related to access.	
(Maria,UG,F,1 st)	"I think that the wide range of societies that are available on campus and our allow us to do so, I think that you know, the university's Instagram pages, and their promotions really help us with this."	Access to Resources
(Malika,UG,F,1 st)	"I just wish they would make it clearer what the policies are, and where we can go if we have questions or concerns."	She expressed a desire for more access to information about her university policies regarding religion and belief.
(Mohammad,RPG,M,3 rd)	"I feel like the information is sort of hidden away, like they don't want to talk about it. It makes me feel like my beliefs aren't valued." "I feel free to present my Muslim, my Islamic attitude and the university that is not a striction against me, as I said, I feel free that there is no problem at all." "My accent does not reflect if I am Muslim or not. It reflects my being an international student. In general, here they don't lead on focus."	The interviewee described feeling free to present their Islamic attitude without any restrictions from the university. He also mentioned that their accent does not affect how they are perceived as a Muslim student at the university.
Interviewee	Experience	Reflection

(Mai,RPG,F,4 th)	"I think mostly our respect for our religion, especially our supervisors. And if anything happened, my supervisor supported me." "Once time I have exposed to from one of the tutors, I feel that some of the services. At the end of the day, he came and excused me, and my supervisor was so supportive to me."	The interviewee had positive experiences with her supervisors who were respectful of their religion.
(Mariam,TPG,F,4 th)	"My years at university, Islam was talked about and even though it was talked about briefly, it made me feel happy and you're presented. [...] In my experience, at first it was different because of the diversity but I never faced any criticism or any discrimination."	The interviewee experienced a positive environment and felt that her religion was being represented well, especially during induction weeks. She did not face any criticism or discrimination based on her religion.
(Maha,RPG,F,2 nd)	"I have a positive experience during my academic years since I enrolled...."	The interviewee mentioned positive experience.
(Maria,UG,F,1 st)	"I think I get equal access or rights as my fellow peers which I"	Equal Treatment
(Malika,UG,F,1 st)	"I don't feel like the university really cares about my religious beliefs. I've had professors make insensitive comments, and I don't feel like it's a safe space for me to express myself."	While the interviewee reported feeling a negative experience.
(Mohammad,RPG,M,3 rd)	"Good, so I can see that there are many positives, and there are tiny negatives, and overall I am happy with the politics of [...]..; to where the Muslim students." "Maybe? I had. I know I didn't face it by myself. I heard from students from Qatar Jordan. Yeah, three students that they faced racism from one of the lecturers. They are sure that they answer very, very good in their exam. But because of the Muslims or maybe because of their Arab, they failed."	The interviewee described being happy with the politics of the university towards Muslim students. He mentioned that he had not experienced any discrimination as a Muslim student, but he had heard from other students who had faced racism from a lecturer.

Interviewee	Learning	Reflection
(Mai,RPG,F,4 th)	"Yes, due learning. They all go to library ..Yeah, and they give resources for all Yeah. For Muslim and non-Muslim."	Muslim student had access to the same learning resources as non-Muslim students. She reported that library resources were accessible to both Muslim and non-Muslim students.
(Mariam,TPG,F,4 th)	"But I was able to personally learn from the students themselves and from my classmates and peers, but the university would rarely talk about religion in order to spread information in regard to the religion, they would all they would talk about is just letting us know that we can't criticise each other we can't discriminate	Despite the university not talking much about religion to spread information, the interviewee learned about different religions through personal interaction with classmates and peers.

(Maha,RPG,F,2 nd)	anyone in regard to their religion, but that's all there is." "I always need support of like making more events for us as Muslim students, so we know better, how to manage life in new community."	The interviewee emphasized the need for more awareness and events for Muslim students to learn how to manage life in a new community.
(Maria,UG,F,1 st)	"I think there hasn't been discrimination against me with the level of access of learning."	Learning Resources.
(Malika,UG,F,1 st)	"I feel like there's so much we could learn from each other, but we never get the chance. I wish there were more classes or events that focused on religion and belief." "I feel like there's a lack of understanding about different religious beliefs on campus. People make assumptions and stereotypes that aren't accurate, and it's frustrating."	When it comes to learning, she expressed a desire for more opportunities to learn about different religions and beliefs on campus.
(Mohammad,RPG,M,3 rd)	"The support that I need is not specific for me as a Muslim student. I need more instruments to do my lab works as a Muslim. They provided everything."	The interviewee did not require any specific support as a Muslim student to be successful in their studies.

Theme Two. Inclusive Environment and Facilities (To answer RQ1)

Interviewee	Inclusive environment	Reflection
(Mai,RPG,F,4 th)	"The problem we face that we don't have the facility for pray." "We actually we don't go to any Islamic holiday."	Muslim students faced challenges in accessing facilities for prayer on their building and there is no Islamic holiday in their university agenda.
(Mariam,TPG,F,4 th)	"It's actually very nice to be around people from different backgrounds and different religions because I learn a lot and they learn a lot about my movements."	The interviewee felt that the university was very diverse and found it nice to be around people of different backgrounds and religions.
(Maha,RPG,F,2 nd)	"I can find that especially like in some department, like the placement department, cafeteria, we don't see like ladies or even men who are Muslim or who like they can tell you something special about your background. So I don't, it can be better. It can be a better representation."	The interviewee mentioned the need for better representation and visibility of Muslim students on campus.
(Maria,UG,F,1 st)	"I think staff and professors don't discriminate."	No discrimination on campus.
(Malika,UG,F,1 st)	"I think it's important to feel like we're part of the university community, instead of feeling like we're separate because of our beliefs. I think if the environment was more inclusive, that would help a lot." "It's hard to feel like you belong when you don't see any representation or acknowledgement of	Muslim students emphasized the importance of feeling included in the campus community, and identified inclusive environments as key to achieving this

(Mohammad,RPG,M,3 rd)	<p>your beliefs. Inclusivity is important for all students, not just Muslim students."</p> <p>"I think the university is keen to provide the students with inclusion. There is no racism..."</p> <p>"I feel comfortable to talk about Islam and to reflect with everyone."</p>	<p>The interviewee mentioned that there was no racism at the university, and they felt a part of the student community as a Muslim student.</p>
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Interviewee	Facilities	Reflection
(Mai,RPG,F,4 th)	"The problem we face that we don't have the facility for women Muslims pray room and no options concerning the Halal food."	Interviewee discussed the lack of suitable prayer locations for ladies on campus.
(Mariam,TPG,F,4 th)	"But then I realised that, and I found out that there's their prayer rooms that we can have access to and where we're allowed to go to during any time of the university."	The interviewee had access to prayer rooms that allowed them to pray during class times.
(Maha,RPG,F,2 nd)	The interviewee did not provide any specific quotations related to policies related to facilities.	
(Maria,UG,F,1 st)	"There is a prayer room and there is Halal food."	Offered prayer Room and Halal Food
(Malika,UG,F,1 st)	"It can be difficult to find a quiet place to pray, or to have access to Halal food options on campus. I wish these were more readily available and accessible."	Muslim student expressed concerns about the accessibility and availability of facilities for religious practices on campus
(Mohammad,RPG,M,3 rd)	<p>"I think the university could do more to provide resources and support for Muslim students who want to practice their religion on campus."</p> <p>"They provided a multifaith place for praying dissents, and you can find them Quran and the Bible. Anyone can do his rituals with no limitations or restrictions."</p> <p>"There are three rooms, one for Muslims. And not only for Muslims, but you can also find the Bible. There are another two rooms if someone needs to do special rituals, so it's up to him."</p>	<p>The interviewee described that there are prayer rooms available for Muslims and there are also facilities for special rituals.</p>

Theme Three. Good Relation, Productive Dialogue and Managing Tensions (To answer RQ2)

Interviewee	Good relation	Reflection
(Mai,RPG,F,4 th)	<p>"We collaborate for work, and everything can go smoothly, and no problems in this aspect."</p> <p>"I have many Muslim colleagues when I did my master's degree from Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt. So, it was okay."</p>	<p>Muslim students had positive relationships with their non-Muslim colleagues and experienced good relations on campus.</p> <p>The interviewee mentioned that she had Muslim colleagues from different cultural backgrounds, and</p>

		she had no problems working together.
(Mariam,TPG,F,4 th)	"I'm not sure if there were opportunities to learn about different religions, when it comes directly from the university. But I was able to personally learn from the students themselves and from my classmates and peers."	The interviewee did not mention any direct communication from the university itself regarding policies for protecting religion and belief. Communication mostly came from other students.
(Maha,RPG,F,2 nd)	The interviewee provided no specific comments related to this.	
(Maria,UG,F,1 st)	"I haven't experienced personally any discrimination from the staff themselves and from professors."	Positive Interpersonal Relations
(Malika,UG,F,1 st)	"I think it's important to have a good relationship with university staff, so we feel comfortable asking questions and raising concerns." "If we don't trust the people communicating the policies, it's hard to feel like they're genuinely trying to support us."	Muslim student reported that she has a positive relationships with university staff and administration, and identified good relations as key to effective communication of policies.
(Mohammad,RPG,M,3 rd)	The interviewee did not provide any information under this.	

Interviewee	Productive Dialogue	Reflection
(Mai,RPG,F,4 th)	"Usually, we don't discuss about religion with together." "I believe in my gut and profit and my religion, and I don't need anyone to convince me or convince him. I don't need this."	Muslim student reported productive dialogues with non-Muslim colleagues without discussions about religion. She reported that they did not like to discuss religion with anyone and did not engage in conversations about religious topics.
(Mariam,TPG,F,4 th)	The interviewee did not mention productive dialogue from the university regarding policies for protecting religion and belief. Instead, they learned mostly from personal interaction with classmates and peers.	
(Maha,RPG,F,2 nd)	The interviewee provided no specific comments related to this.	
(Maria,UG,F,1 st)	"The ability to discuss it and have conversations about it is something that should be done"	Need more open communication
(Malika,UG,F,1 st)	"I think it's really important to have open communication and listen to student concerns, so that policies can be adapted to meet our needs." "If there's no dialogue, then there's no understanding. We need to be able to have conversations about religion and belief without feeling like we're being judged or marginalized."	Muslim student required a productive dialogue between university staff and students, and identified this as key to effective communication of policies

(Mohammad,RPG,M,3 rd)	"I feel comfortable engaging in conversation about Islam and also learning about different religious practices. "	The interviewee mentioned feeling comfortable engaging in conversation about Islam and engaging with students from diverse religious backgrounds.
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Interviewee	Manging tensions	Reflection
(Mai,RPG,F,4 th)	"Nobody can I do anything? I didn't feel something different. But this happened once a time for me as I told the start of the interview."	Muslim students did not report any significant tensions related to their identity and religion in their interactions with their non-Muslim colleagues.
(Mariam,TPG,F,4 th)	The interviewee did not mention any tensions surrounding communication from the university regarding policies for protecting religion and belief.	
(Maha,RPG,F,2 nd)	The interviewee provided no specific comments related to this	
(Maria,UG,F,1 st)	"I resolve this conflict by speaking to staff and admin"	Conflict Resolution
(Malika,UG,F,1 st)	"Sometimes there can be misunderstandings or conflicts between different religious groups. I think the university needs to have policies in place to address these issues and prevent them from escalating."	Some Muslim students identified tensions between different religious groups on campus and emphasised the need for university staff to effectively manage these tensions.
(Mohammad,RPG,M,3 rd)	"I think it's important for university staff to be aware of the potential for religious tensions to arise, and to be proactive in addressing these tensions." The interviewee did not report any evidence of tensions related to policies for protecting religion and belief communicated by the university.	

Theme Four. Law, Policies and Monitoring (To answer RQ2)

Interviewee	Law and Policies	Reflection
(Mai,RPG,F,4 th)	"No, I don't have any idea about it." "I know that they have policies to prevent people to but, but I don't know actually, what policies they have about this."	Muslim student did not report any significant awareness of the policies related to protecting religion and belief on campus. The interviewee reported that she had no idea about the policies in place to prevent racism and discrimination.
(Mariam,TPG,F,4 th)	"I don't think that there are any rules specific to religion and beliefs but there are rules about discrimination and bullying."	The interviewee did not mention any specific laws or policies regarding Muslim students, but there were rules about discrimination and

(Maha,RPG,F,2 nd)	The interviewee provided no specific comments related to this	bullying that applied to all students.
(Maria,UG,F,1 st)	"I didn't know about the prediction, strategy, strategies"	Lack of awareness for formal Policies.
(Malika,UG,F,1 st)	"I think it's important for the university to have written policies that address religious beliefs, so that we know what we're allowed to do and what the university staff is responsible for." "The policies need to be regularly updated and communicated to students, so that we're aware of any changes or updates."	Muslim student called for identified the importance of clear and accessible policies that protected their religious beliefs.
(Mohammad,RPG,M,3 rd)	The interviewee did not mention any specific university policies related to protecting religion and belief.	

Interviewee	Monitoring	Reflection
(Mai,RPG,F,4 th)	"No, I don't have any idea about it."	The interviewee did not report any significant monitoring of policies related to protecting religion and belief on campus.
(Mariam,TPG,F,4 th)	"Sometimes I think they do depend on whether the Muslim students around me, hijab is or not sometimes they, the students and the staff may feel like a little bit intimidated. By them on how to approach them. But I saw that would they ask about how to approach the students who are Muslim, they become more comfortable, and they become understanding of our limits?"	The interviewee stated that the university staff did not approach Muslim students who wore hijab because they may feel intimidated, but if they were asked about how to approach them, they became more understanding of their limits.
(Maha,RPG,F,2 nd)	The interviewee provided no specific comments related to this	
(Maria,UG,F,1 st)	"I believe maybe it will be more beneficial to promote them more and and encourage them more."	Awareness-raising
(Malika,UG,F,1 st)	"It's not enough for the university to just have policies in place. They need to be actively monitoring them and making sure that they're being followed."	Muslim student mentioned that the importance of monitoring policies to ensure they are being effectively communicated and implemented on campus.
(Mohammad,RPG,M,3 rd)	The interviewee did not report any evidence of Muslim students' religious practices.	

Theme Five. Barriers (To answer RQ3)

Interviewee	Barriers	Reflection
(Mai,RPG,F,4 th)	"The problem we face that we don't have access to the facility for pray. " "I leave the campus to find clean place to pray. "	Muslim student reported challenges in accessing suitable facilities for prayer and she had to leave the building in order to access a suitable prayer location.

(Mariam,TPG,F,4 th)	The interviewee did not mention any specific barriers they faced in communication of policies for protecting religion and belief on campuses.	
(Maha,RPG,F,2 nd)	The interviewee did not specify any specific barriers that they face	
(Maria,UG,F,1 st)	"I think religion is a very sensitive topic."	Sensitivity around religious beliefs
(Malika,UG,F,1 st)	"Sometimes it can be difficult to know where to find information about policies. It's not always clear where to go or who to talk to."	interviewee identified cultural and societal barriers, such as a lack of understanding or acceptance of their religious beliefs protection policies.
(Mohammad,RPG,M,3 rd)	The interviewee did not mention any specific barriers faced by Muslim students related to communicating policies on protecting religion and belief on campuses.	

3. Faith University Interviewees

Theme One. Access, Learning and Experience (To answer RQ)

Interviewee	Access	Reflection
(Fai ,UG,F,1 st)	"I feel like there's not such a great access or representation because as I said earlier, they don't acknowledge us Muslims and the society."	Limited religious representation; The participant thinks that the Muslim student community is not acknowledged, which results in limited religious representation.
(Fatima,UG,F,1 st)	"My university doesn't have any policies access regarding religion or belief to represent." "There is no awareness regarding access accommodations for religious practices."	The interviewee reported that her university do not have any policies regarding religion or belief, suggesting a lack of protection for religious practices and beliefs on this campus. The interviewee emphasised that there is no awareness regarding accommodations for religious practices to Muslims, which may hinder their ability to practice their religion.
(Farah,UG,F,1 st)	"Information related to religion and belief policies is not accessible and not provided in a clear manner for us, which makes it difficult to navigate and understand the policies in place. "	There is no access support provided on campus for Muslim students' religious practices.
(Farida,UG,F,3 rd)	"I think the policy of the university to protect religion and belief is only accessible to students who come from certain religious backgrounds, mainly Christianity on our campus."	Muslim student mentioned that the university's policy on protecting religion and belief is not accessible to Muslim students in particular.
(Faisal,UG,M,2 nd)	"Access to resources such as books, articles, and other materials related to religion and belief protecting policies not available for all students, including Muslim students."	- Information related to religion and belief policies is not easily accessible and provided in a clear manner for Muslim students.

(Fahad,TPG,M,3rd) The participant did not mention any issues with access to university policies on protecting religion and belief.

Interviewee	Experience	Reflection
(Fai ,UG,F,1 st)	"I've been struggling a lot with feeling accepted in my university as I feel like there's a lot of racism towards my religion."	Racism; The participant feels that there is a lot of racism towards Muslim students.
(Fatima,UG,F,1 st)	"It's difficult for me to feel satisfied and settled in my university environment because there is no support for Muslim students." "There is discrimination based on religion on campus."	The interviewee indicated that the lack of support for Muslim students has made it difficult for them to feel satisfied and settled in their university environment. Discrimination based on religion on campus was reported by the interviewee, which can negatively affect the well-being of Muslim students.
(Farah,UG,F,1 st)	"I do not feel that my religion and belief are accurately represented in my university community, which does not foster respect and understanding. "	a lack of respect and understanding towards them.
(Farida,UG,F,3 rd)	"I have experienced negativity from my peers on several occasions because of my faith. When I reported this issue to university management, they didn't take any action."	Muslim student revealed that her experiences with the university's policies on protecting religion and belief were not positive. She felt that her faith was not respected on campus.
(Faisal,UG,M,2 nd)	"As a Muslim student, I would want to see fair and accurate representation of my religion and belief in my university community that fosters respect and understanding because this not applicant."	Muslim students want to see fair and accurate representation of his religion and belief in his university community that fosters respect and understanding, but this may not always be the case.
(Fahad,TPG,M,3 rd)	"I don't see anything that makes me sad or like this in this university. "	The participant did not feel that he has sad or negative experienced on campus.

Interviewee	Learning	Reflection
(Fai ,UG,F,1 st)	"More acceptance and probably more Islamic clubs and societies so maybe just one Islamic society and there's like a few students' member. It's not supportive at all."	Lack of support; the participant needs more acceptance and support, Islamic clubs within university to feel supported in their studies.
(Fatima,UG,F,1 st)	"My university doesn't create opportunities for students to interact with each other and learn about different cultures, beliefs, and customs."	The interviewee reported that her university do not create opportunities for students to interact with each other and learn about different cultures, beliefs, and customs.

	"There are no opportunities for students to learn about different religions and cultures through classes, workshops, and events."	The interviewee also mentioned that her university do not provide opportunities for students to learn about different religions and cultures through classes, workshops, and events.
(Farah,UG,F,1 st)	"Opportunities to learn about different religions are lacking in the university, well... we just focusing on our academic topics. "	There is a lack of opportunities to learn about different religions within the university as the focus is primarily on academic topics.
(Farida,UG,F,3 rd)	"I don't know...the university could include religious diversity in the curriculum and teach students about different religions. This will create awareness about tolerance and respect for all faiths."	Muslim student believes that the university's policies on protecting religion and belief are not integrated into the learning curriculum. She thinks that the university could include religion and belief education in their courses.
(Faisal,UG,M,2 nd)	"No... our university does not provide opportunities for staff and students to learn about diverse Muslim cultures and beliefs through events, workshops, and classes."	Opportunities to learn about different religions are lacking on campus, and the university does not provide opportunities for staff and students to learn about diverse Muslim cultures and beliefs through events, workshops, and classes.
(Fahad,TPG,M,3 rd)	"I don't see any activated for Islam or for Muslim student or I don't know why there is not any awareness as well"	The participant did not mention any activated or awareness with their learning experience related to university policies on protecting religion and belief.

Theme Two. Inclusive Environment and Facilities (To answer RQ1)

Interviewee	Inclusive environment	Reflection
(Fai ,UG,F,1 st)	"I feel like there's not much awareness when it comes to different religions...there is no opportunities for Muslims in my university environment."	Non-inclusive environment; the participant thinks that the university is not inclusive towards Muslim students.
(Fatima,UG,F,1 st)	"My university doesn't create any opportunities for me to connect with each other and form communities." "Interacting with students from different religious backgrounds is not facilitated by my university."	The interviewee reported that her universities do not create any opportunities for Muslims to connect with each other and form communities. Interacting with students from different religious backgrounds is not facilitated by the university, according to the interviewee.

(Farah,UG,F,1 st)	"I do not feel very welcomed in the student community at my university since the university environment is not very inclusive towards Muslims in general."	lack of inclusivity towards Muslims
(Farida,UG,F,3 rd)	"I think my university needs to create a more inclusive environment for all faiths if they want to be a welcoming place for students from diverse backgrounds."	Muslim student felt that it is important for universities to recognise the diversity present on her campus and to work towards creating an environment that is welcoming for all students, regardless of their backgrounds.
(Faisal,UG,M,2 nd)	"I feel I am a part of the student community at my university..."	Whether or not Muslim students feel part of the student community at their university depends on how welcoming and inclusive the university environment is.
(Fahad,TPG,M,3 rd)	"I am happy to join with this university. But we're not talking about most Islam and Muslim in general"	The participant stated that they did not feel any different from non-Muslim students in terms of how they were treated by the university.

Interviewee	Facilities	Reflection
(Fai ,UG,F,1 st)	"They don't even give us a prayer room.... There is no prayer room. The most important month for us Muslims is the holy month of Ramadan, and they don't even respect that. All our exams schedule in this month"	Lack of prayer room, no respect for Ramadan; The participant states that the university does not have a prayer room and does not respect Ramadan, which is an important month for Muslim students.
(Fatima,UG,F,1 st)	"No facilities are provided such as prayer rooms and Halal food options to support Muslim students."	The interviewee reported a lack of facilities provided such as prayer rooms and Halal food options to support Muslim students.
(Farah,UG,F,1 st)	"There is a huge outdoor garden to practice your faith, but it is not suitable for Islamic women's prayer"	Interviewee mentioned that university should consider creating spaces that are appropriate for all students' religious practices, including private and secluded areas for women's prayers where they can practice their religious customs comfortably.
(Farida,UG,F,3 rd)	"The university do not provide prayer rooms for Muslim students on campus and no Halal food options"	Muslim student reports that the university do not improve facilities on campus to accommodate their faith needs.
(Faisal,UG,M,2 nd)	"Facilities to support Muslim students, such as prayer rooms and Halal food options, not available on campus."	
(Fahad,TPG,M,3 rd)	" I am used to prayer and prayer in my office, okay. Yeah. So, there is no specific place no, no go for that."	

Theme Three. Good Relations, Productive Dialogue and Managing Tensions (To answer RQ2)

Interviewee	Good relation	Reflection
(Fai ,UG,F,1 st)	"There is poor communication...the university ignores complaints regarding issues surrounding religion and belief."	Poor communication; the participant thinks that there is poor communication between the universities and Muslim students regarding policies for protecting religion and belief.
(Fatima,UG,F,1 st)	"My university doesn't encourage honest conversations or respectful dialogue about religious beliefs."	The interviewee reported that her universities do not encourage honest conversations or respectful dialogue about religious beliefs, which can lead to miscommunication and misunderstandings.
(Farah,UG,F,1 st)	"There are instances where I feel that Muslim students are treated differently compared to non-Muslim students. "	It is possible that the differences in treatment may stem from unconscious biases or a lack of awareness about the customs and practices of the Muslim religion. This can result in discrimination, intentional or unintentional.
(Farida,UG,F,3 rd)	"The university has established a good relationship with Muslim students by having regular meetings with us to discuss any issues we might have."	Muslim student appreciated the efforts of the university in establishing good communication with her about the policies on protecting religion and belief.
(Faisal,UG,M,2 nd)	" Discrimination occurred, the university didn't offer support and assistance in resolving the conflict."	It is concerning that the university did not offer support and assistance in resolving the conflict in discrimination situation.
(Fahad,TPG,M,3 rd)	The participant did not speak to this.	

Interviewee	Productive Dialogue	Reflection
(Fai ,UG,F,1 st)	"There is limited interaction with university staff regarding questions regarding religion and belief protection policies"	Limited interaction with university staff; the participant feels that there is limited interaction with university staff regarding questions regarding religion and belief protection policies.
(Fatima,UG,F,1 st)	"There is no safe space for students to discuss religion-related topics."	The interviewee mentioned that there is no safe space for students to discuss religion-related topics, hindering their ability to engage in productive dialogue about

(Farah,UG,F,1 st)	"It is not very easy for me to interact with students from different religious backgrounds since there is a lack of understanding and empathy from both sides."	religious beliefs and practices. A lack of understanding and empathy from both sides.
(Farida,UG,F,3 rd)	"The university should communicate its policies in a way that is conducive to productive dialogue between Muslim students and management."	The interviewee feels that it is important for the university to have constructive and productive dialogue with Muslim students about policies on protecting religion and belief.
(Faisal,UG,M,2 nd)	"Discussions of religious beliefs should be approached with honesty and respect, which can foster a sense of understanding and empathy between different groups of people."	Conversations about religion can be challenging, particularly when people have different beliefs or perspectives.
(Fahad,TPG,M,3 rd)	The participant did not speak to this	

Interviewee	Managing tensions	Reflection
(Fai ,UG,F,1 st)	"The university ignores complaints regarding issues surrounding religion and belief."	Ignored complaints; the participant believes that the university ignores complaints regarding issues surrounding religion and belief.
(Fatima,UG,F,1 st)	"There is no clear action in my university to address instances of discrimination towards Muslim students."	The interviewee reported that there is no clear action in her university to address instances of discrimination towards Muslim students, suggesting a lack of emphasis on managing tensions related to religion and beliefs.
(Farah,UG,F,1 st)	"I am not very comfortable discussing religion-related topics with other students and staff since there are instances of discrimination and hostility towards Muslims."	It is understandable for interviewee to feel uncomfortable discussing religion-related topics when there have been instances of discrimination and hostility towards her religion.
(Farida,UG,F,3 rd)	"The university does not proactive in managing tensions between students of different faiths"	Muslim student thought that the university does not improve on managing tensions between students of different faiths on campus.
(Faisal,UG,M,2 nd)	"There is no comfort level when discussing religion-related topics in my opinion, and that may vary depending on their students' experiences and personalities."	The interview reports that It is common for students to have different comfort levels when discussing religion-related topics.
(Fahad,TPG,M,3 rd)	The participant did not speak to this	

Theme Four. Law, Policies and Monitoring (To answer RQ2)

Interviewee	Law and Policies	Reflection
(Fai ,UG,F,1 st)	"There is no way...there is no opportunities for Muslims in my university...when it comes to different religions."	Unclear messaging; the participant finds the messaging of the policies for protecting religion and belief to be unclear.
(Fatima,UG,F,1 st)	"My university doesn't have clear protection strategies and policies in place to promote equality, diversity, and inclusivity for us."	- The interviewee reported that her universities do not have clear protection strategies and policies in place to promote equality, diversity, and inclusivity.
(Farah,UG,F,1 st)	"There is no awareness of policies regarding accommodations for religious practices." "My university's policies do not provide adequate support for Muslim students' religious practices and beliefs, which makes it challenging to navigate daily life on campus. "	Again, lack of awareness of policies and accommodations for religious practices was mentioned as an issue by the interviewees.
(Farida,UG,F,3 rd)	"I think my university should communicate its updated policies and laws that protect all faiths so that all students are aware of their rights."	Muslim student feels that the university should provide updated policies and laws to their students on religious protection.
(Faisal,UG,M,2 nd)	"Information related to religion and belief policies not accessible and not provided in a clear manner for Muslim students."	
(Fahad,TPG,M,3 rd)	The participant did not speak to this	

Interviewee	Monitoring	Reflection
(Fai ,UG,F,1 st)	"The messaging...for protecting religion and belief to be unclear."	The participant believes that policies for protecting religion and belief are not being clear.
(Fatima,UG,F,1 st)	No relevant quotes in this	
(Farah,UG,F,1 st)	"I do not feel very confident about having open and honest conversations with other students and staff about their religious beliefs since there is a lack of respect and understanding towards Muslims. "	The interviewee reported that it is understandable that a lack of respect and understanding towards Muslims can make a student hesitant to have open and honest conversations about religious beliefs with other students and staff.
(Farida,UG,F,3 rd)	"The university should monitor the implementation of its religious protection policies to ensure that they are implemented effectively and fairly."	Muslim student believes that the university should monitor the implementation of its policies and laws on protecting religion and belief.
(Faisal,UG,M,2 nd)	"University policies do not promote in terms of cultural and religious responsiveness."	Interviewee reports that university policies that promote cultural and religious responsiveness to creating an

inclusive and welcoming environment for all students it is not promoted in university.

(Fahad,TPG,M,3rd) The participant did not speak to this

Theme Five. Barriers (To Answer RQ3)

Interviewee	Barriers	Reflection
(Fai ,UG,F,1 st)	"∴ As I said, there is no opportunities for Muslims in my university...there's not much awareness when it comes to religions protection policies"	Lack of awareness; the participant states that there is a lack of awareness of religions protection policies on university campus.
(Fatima,UG,F,1 st)	"There is no awareness of policies and accommodations for religious practices on campus." "Discrimination based on religion is prevalent on campus."	The interviewee reported a lack of awareness of policies and accommodations for religious practices on campus. Discrimination based on religion was again mentioned by the interviewee as a barrier to effective communication of policies related to religion and beliefs.
(Farah,UG,F,1 st)	"As a Muslim student, I need support such as access to prayer rooms on campus, Halal food options, and accommodations for religious holidays and practices." "My advice for new students entering the university would be to be cautious and aware of the lack of inclusivity and support towards Muslim students and to find a support network to navigate the challenges." "Information related to my university's protection strategies on religion and belief is not accessible, and these strategies do not promote equality, diversity, and inclusivity for Muslim students." "I have experienced discrimination as a Muslim student, but the university did not offer much support or assistance in resolving the conflict. "	-Muslim student needs support and accommodations on campus. New students should be cautious and find support for challenges faced by Muslim students. University protection strategies for Muslims lack accessibility, equality, diversity, and inclusivity. Muslim student experience discrimination without enough university support to resolve conflicts.
(Farida,UG,F,3 rd)	"There is no clear communication channel for Muslim students to provide their feedback or raise any concerns about religious protection policies. This poses a challenge for effective communication between students and management."	Muslim student faced many barriers in the communication of policies of protecting religion and belief on campuses. These barriers include language differences, lack of clear communication channels, and inadequate information.

(Faisal,UG,M,2 nd)	"Some facilities and resources related to religion and belief are not available on campus to support Muslim students."	lack of available facilities and resources related to religion and belief which prevents Muslim students from receiving the necessary support on campus.
(Fahad,TPG,M,3 rd)	"Most it's a no we don't have a prayer room or Halal food...And what EDI is I'm coming here and before for 3 years, and I don't see any activated EDI or Islamic protection policies...I don't know why there is no awareness as well. "	The participant noted that there were no specific facilities for Muslim students on campus, such as prayer rooms or Halal food options. He also mentioned that they were not aware of any EDI strategies that focused on Islamic culture or beliefs.

Note: The interviewee code comprises demographic information indicating the participant number, education level (UG for Undergraduate, TPG for Thought Postgraduate), gender (F for female, M for male), and year of study.