

# IMPACT OF GLOBALIZATION ON RELIGIOUS PLURALISM, AND CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IN PAKISTAN

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20917847>

### Keywords

Globalization, Religious Pluralism, Christian Community, Pakistan, Minority Rights, Social Marginalization

### Article History

Received: 25 April 2026

Accepted: 04 June 2026

Published: 21 June 2026

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### Abstract

*This study provides a critical analysis of the complicated and occasionally conflicting influence of globalization on religious pluralism and the life conditions of the Pakistani Christian community based on the qualitative and interpretive research methodology, the proposed research study includes an analysis of the existing secondary sources and personal interviews of experts from the community in question. Globalization is seen as a two-faced process that provides religious minorities with more visibility, representation, and opportunities to attract international attention. At the same time, globalization strengthens identity-related tensions and promotes the image of foreigners among the members of religious minorities, thus contributing to their socio-political vulnerability, it can deepen anxieties about identity, nationalism, and religious difference, sometimes reinforcing marginalization and social exclusion. That practice of religious pluralism in Pakistan is still nominal rather than substantive and is limited by the existence of discriminatory legislation, the lack of institutional capacity, negative stereotypes propagated in the media, and socioeconomic discrimination. The effect of globalization is seen as a factor promoting the localization of global religious conflicts and leading to symbolic persecution of Christians in Pakistan framing religious pluralism as a mediated and contentious issue, it is evident that the lives of the Christian community have been impacted not only by policies made by the government, but also through mundane processes of interaction within society. Conclusively, what emerges from this study is an argument that globalization should be recognized as neither necessarily liberating nor entirely harmful but as transformative power that both produces possibilities for inclusion as well as exclusion in Pakistan.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Globalization has transformed the modern world by making people socially, economically and culturally interdependent across national borders. Although globalization has been linked to the spread of ideas, technologies and economic opportunities, its effects on religion are not as simple as they are multi-faceted. This is because religious beliefs and identities are reactionary and responsive to the global forces as religious institutions and communities' bargain over their

place in an increasingly globalized world. Researchers have pointed out that not all societies secularized by the trend of globalization; instead, it transforms religious environments through the cross-border migration of ideas, migrants, media, and political discourses (Naz & Raza, 2023). In Pakistan the strong historical context of religion and post-colonial nationalism, a globalization is implicated in conflictual interactions with religion as it relates not only to majority Muslims but also to religious minorities who frequently inhabit the

peripheral roles in social, economic, and political life (Naz & Raza, 2023). Therefore, the effects of globalization on the religious pluralism cannot be analyzed without a local history, power relations, and institutional organization.

Christian community in Pakistan demonstrates complex process of globalization and religious identity is in a Muslim dominated society. Christians are heirs of various historical events, such as the missionary conversion during the period of the British colonial rule, and they have also made a great contribution to the education and social spheres of the nation (Minority Rights Group, 2025). Despite such efforts, Christians in Pakistan have been characterized by social and economic marginalization of Christians, who are more likely to occupy with occupations of low level occupations such as sanitation workers, menial workers and bonded labor in extreme structural inequality (Minority Rights Group, 2025). These trends of marginalization are closely related to international social inequalities and ancient caste traditions that still influence the social stratification in South Asian countries. In this regard, globalization has increased the visibility possibilities and the risk of exclusion of religious minorities as global discourses regarding human rights and religious freedom confront local discrimination and exclusion.

Globalization has also affected the social discourse of religious minorities in Pakistan, which is generally contradictory. On the one hand, the topic of human rights debates and international advocacy organizations have drawn human attention to the problems of the Christian communities, forcing domestic institutions to respect the rights of the minorities. In contrast International media and interfaith struggles have been given space in Pakistani discourse in a way, heightens fear of cultural invasion or religious betrayal. This dichotomy is indicative to the problem with the study of globalization in general, as the principles of pluralism and human rights in the world, manifested by local cultural politics and identity fears, have an asymmetrical relationship with each other. Simply put, globalization has increased sensitivity of religious pluralism and has, also, made it a source of socio-political response

and protected images of national identity, which marginalize the religious minorities.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This study employs a critical thematic literature review to examine existing theoretical and empirical scholarship on globalization, religious pluralism, and minority rights. The review not only synthesizes key debates but also critically evaluates gaps in the literature, particularly the lack of qualitative, community-based perspectives on the lived experiences of religious minorities in Pakistan.

Globalization and its relation to religion is one of the main topics of discussion in the social theory especially in the debates on classical and contemporary globalization views. Influenced by Max Weber and Emile Durkheim, the classical schools of thought regarding modernization predominately thought that the process of modernization and globalization would result in the secularization and the slow weakening of religion in the life of the masses. This perception was subsequently supported by the theorists of modernization who believed that rationalization, industrialization and scientific advancements would undermine the power of religion and belief system (Berger, 1967). In this paradigm, religion was typically represented as a conservative process that contradicts the globalization logic that is rational and universal. Nevertheless, empirical projects in the late twentieth century disproved this premise because religion did not only survive, but also re-emerged in many parts of the world as a very strong social and political factor.

There is an increasing literature which views religion as qualitatively transnational in the state of globalization. Beyer (2006) and Levitt (2007) point out that religious groups now trans-border on a diasporic, missionary networks, and humanitarian groups, and global advocacy networks. This theoretical background proves to be a very important basis of understanding the impact of globalization on religious pluralism and minority groups especially in a society like Pakistan where religion continues to play a key role in social and political existence.

Religious pluralism is an idea with a philosophical and a sociological background which tries to describe the manner in which various religious groups peacefully co-exist in a common social and political environment. Pluralism as a philosophy is based on liberal theories of justice and equality which suggest that the state should remain indifferent between conflicting conceptions of the good life and provide freedom of belief and practice to every citizen (Rawls, 1993). In this view, religious pluralism is not just a diversity but a normative devotion to accept the difference as valid and worthy of equal respect. Philosophers like John Locke, more recently John Rawls, have stressed that institutional mechanisms needed to ensure peaceful coexistence in diverse societies is based on the safeguarding of individual conscience and minority rights against the domination of the majority.

The discourse of global human rights has been an important mode of conceptualizing and advancing the idea of religious freedom in a world that is becoming more interconnected. The main premise of this argument is that the freedom of thought, conscience and religion is a basic and non-negotiable human right that should apply to everyone irrespective of cultural, religious and national background. According to human rights theorists, the freedom of religion is not only vital in human dignity, but also in the social peace and democracy, because it prevents the minority religious beliefs to be forced by the majority (Donnelly, 2013). With the globalization process, expectations of the responsibility of states toward minority religions are formed as norms of human rights move across borders via international institutions, transnational advocacy groups, and international media.

Combined with education and media, it is shown that both serve as vital institutional locations of strengthening religious pluralism, or weakening it. Researchers stress that the effects of biased educational curricula and exclusionary media framing do not exist in a vacuum; on the contrary, they support each other through the use of dominant religious discourses at the different levels of social life (Apple, 2019). To the religious minorities, this intersection influences common

sense of belonging, citizenship and security. It is critical analysis of education and media that is therefore necessary to understand how religious narratives are created, reproduced and debated and the way they affect interreligious relations and minority inclusivity in Pakistan.

There are an increasing number of studies on the topic of globalization, religious pluralism, and minority rights in Pakistan, there is still an evident research gap that can be identified regarding how the global processes are perceived, negotiated, and interpreted by the minority religious communities, especially Christians. The current literature has focused mainly on legal structures, policy arguments, and occasional descriptions of violence, and this does not provide much of an understanding of the social realities of day-to-day life that determine religious co-existence. The absence of integrative qualitative studies that provide the systematic relationship between the globalization theory and the lived experiences, institutional practices, and local socio-cultural processes can be observed.

Furthermore, there are not many studies that incorporate deep secondary analysis with community-based approaches that seek to examine the intersection of education, media, transnational religious events, and global discourses on human rights as a way of influencing religious pluralism. This void is what makes the context sensitive, qualitative study that goes beyond state-centric and event-based analysis to offer a more nuanced, comprehensive perspective on the opportunities and difficulties of globalization in respect of pluralism of religion in Pakistan and Christian community.

### 2.1 Research Questions

1. What dimensions of globalization affect religious pluralism in Pakistan?
2. How has globalization influenced the Christian community's experience of pluralism?
3. What social and institutional factors mediate the influence of globalization on Christian community in Pakistan?

## 2.2 Research Objectives

1. To identify key dimensions of globalization affecting religious pluralism in Pakistan.
2. To examine the influence of globalization on religious pluralism of the Christian community.
3. To analyze the role of social and institutional factors in mediating globalization's impact on Christians.

## 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The proposed research adopts a qualitative, exploratory, and interpretative research design to examine the impact of globalization on religious pluralism and the Christian community in Pakistan. The qualitative approach facilitates an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences, perceptions, and social realities, while the exploratory design enables the investigation of a relatively under-researched phenomenon (Stebbins, 2001; Creswell, 2014). The study primarily relies on secondary sources, which are critically and thematically interpreted to identify historical patterns, institutional dynamics, and theoretical insights (Bowen, 2009; Hennink, Hutter, & Bailey, 2011). These findings are supplemented by twelve semi-structured interviews that provide contextual understanding and enrich the interpretation of secondary data (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). Furthermore, purposive sampling ensures the selection of knowledgeable participants capable of providing rich and meaningful insights into the research problem (Creswell, 2014). Through thematic interpretation and critical analysis, this study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of the complex relationship between globalization, religious pluralism, and the lived experiences of the Christian community in Pakistan.

## 4. Significance of the Study

This research is an important contribution to the academic literature because it provides a sensitive and situational assessment of the linkage between globalization and the religious pluralism in a Muslim-dominated society. Literature on

globalization tends to either use religion as a secondary variable or a monolithic phenomenon whereas research on religious pluralism tends to ignore the influence of global processes in determining local religious processes. This study combines the theory of globalization with the analysis of religious pluralism thus bringing two categories of literature which are seldom researched concurrently in Pakistan. The research is theoretically useful as it shows that globalization is a contradictory phenomenon as it creates ideals of tolerance, inclusion, and at the same time, increases identity-based exclusion and social insecurity among religious minorities.

One of the main contributions of this research is that it is devoted to the experiences of the Christian community in Pakistan. This analysis of religious pluralism presents a more grounded and human-centered understanding of the phenomenon by anticipating the views of the leaders of the Christian community and addressing scholarly interpretations of the issue in academia. It also emphasizes the role of minority identities being generated not merely by the state policies but also by the attitude of people, the practices of institutions, and the world discourse, which adds more richness to the empirical richness of the study of minorities.

The study also provides valuable implications to the educational policy-makers in terms of the importance of the curricula, textbooks, and institutional discourses in the formation of the attitudes toward the religious variety. In addition, the study avails a theoretical basis on how to create interfaith dialogue programs that transcend the superficial form of engagement to an actual process of social integration and establishing trust between religious groups.

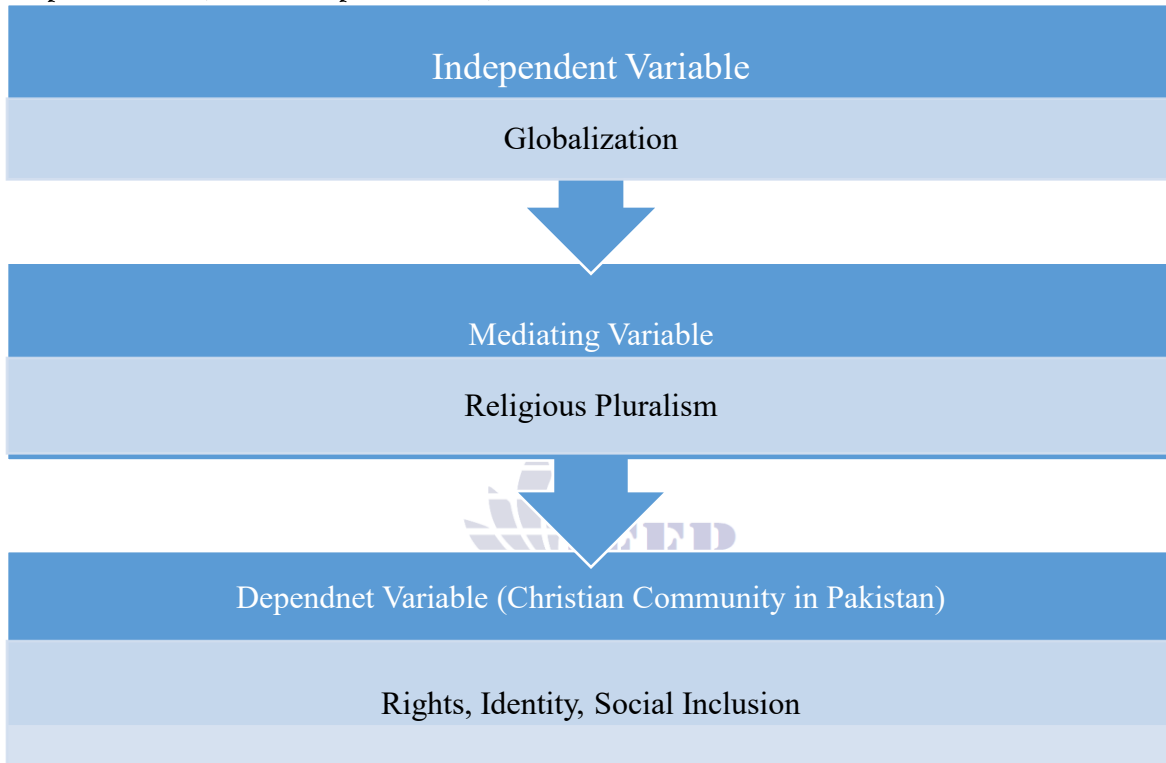
Lastly, the larger importance of this study is that it might lead to social cohesion and inclusive citizenship in Pakistan. The analysis of the interplay between the forces of the global and the local reality allows the research to defy the simplistic discourses that present globalization as a process either entirely positive or, by definition, destructive. Rather, it encourages a moderated perception of how globalization can be utilized to

bring about the support of religious pluralism and minimize its exclusionary impacts.

5. Conceptual framework

The framework identifies globalization as the independent variable, religious pluralism as the mediating variable, and the Christian community’s social outcomes as the dependent variable.

Table 5.1  
Conceptual Model (Textual Representation)



Note. Developed by Researcher

6. GLOBALIZATION AND RELIGIOUS PLURALISM IN PAKISTAN

6.1 Global Communication and Digital Connectivity

The process of global communication and digital connectivity has dramatically transformed the production, circulation and contestation of religious narratives in Pakistan. The sudden growth of the internet and social media has changed the nature of religious identities being expressed and discussed in the open arena. According to scholars, digital media has intensified the notion of gatekeeping by the religious authorities through virtual means as individuals and groupings are able to express

religious interpretation to a broad audience (Eickelman and Anderson, 2003). This change in Pakistan has made it easier to spread a wide range of religious discourses, such as those promoted by the minority groups, and at the same time contributed to the strengthening of the polarization and rivalry of ideologies and the control over religious power and national identity. Facebook, X (previously Twitter), YouTube, and WhatsApp are some of the social media platforms that have been impactful in spreading religious discourse. These websites allow religious leaders, activists, and even everyday users to post sermons, commentary and religious symbols in real time and in many cases geographical and institutional

borders. Studies have shown that these digital spaces increase emotionally colored materials, which can support sectarian and religious divides when a story describes identity in exclusionary or hostile terms (Ahmed and Psoiu, 2020). In the case of religious minorities such as Christians, social media is not only a chance to be visible but also an intensified exposure of online persecution, surveillance, and misinformation.

The transnational movement of religious discourses into Pakistan has equally been supported by the globalization of digital communication. Religious works of the Middle East, Europe, and North America are disseminated with the help of the Internet that impact the local discourses about faith, morality, and politics. According to scholarly observations, such transnational narratives tend to overlap with the local grievances, distorting religious discourse in such a way that it confirms global ideological trends and is not necessarily due to domestic issues (Mandaville, 2014). These influences have played a part in Pakistan in terms of re-forming religious identities with the worldwide discussions of Islam, secularism, and minority rights being selectively adopted in local political and cultural terms.

Simultaneously, online connectivity has given minority groups the power to disrupt the mainstream religious discourse and impose other identity images and a sense of belonging. Christian activists and organization groups are beginning to apply more social media to record cases of discrimination, organize, and involve international human rights networks. Research indicates that these Internet practices have the capacity to interfere with the narrative monopolies by establishing counter-publics that challenge the exclusionary discourses and seek acknowledgment (Bunt, 2018). Nonetheless, the success of such interaction is limited by digital disparities, control over platforms, and the danger of backlash within a very polarized digital world.

All in all, the aspects of global communication and digital connection have created an ambivalent and multifaceted effect on the religious discourse in Pakistan. On the one hand, social media listen to religious expression, and plural voices are formed, which is a good practice of democratization; on the

other hand, it increases the speed of misinformation and hate speech spread, including transnational ideological control. Researchers stress on the fact that digital religious texts do not exist in a vacuum but coexist with offline structures of power, legal and social hierarchy (Eickelman and Anderson, 2003). Such dynamics are vital to determining how in contemporary Pakistan religious discourse, identity construction, and intercommunal relations are being transformed by globalization and digital media.

## 6.2 Transnational Religious Discourses

Transnational religious discourses have taken a new face in modern religious living in Pakistan due to the occurrence of globalization, migration, and development of communication technologies. These discourses are beyond national borders and connect local religious groups to the international ideological, institutional, and political associations. According to scholars, these transnational flows restructure the religious power by bringing new meanings, resources as well as mobilization that interact with local situations in multifaceted ways (Mandaville, 2014). Both the Christian evangelical networks and Islamic revivalist movements in Pakistan explain how religious discourses across the world affect the formulation of religious politics, identity and curricular discourse on religion.

Evangelical Christian networks are a significant aspect of transnational religious activities influencing the Christian life of Pakistan. International evangelical groups offer finances, education materials, and lobbying forums that empower the local churches and religious-based non-governmental organizations. Studies have shown that these networks ease the exchange of the theological thoughts that focus on personal faith, social service, and human rights connecting Pakistani Christians to the wider global Christian solidarities (Brouwer, Gifford, and Rose, 1996). Meanwhile, researchers point out that such visibility of transnational evangelical aid may leave some suspicions in Pakistan, where Christian activism is occasionally viewed as externally produced, or politically motivated and therefore

makes local attempts at community mobilization and interfaith dialogue complicated.

Another strong transnational discourse that is influencing the religious and political life of Pakistan is Islamic revivalism. Pakistan Revivalist movements inspired by the Middle East and other regional Muslim world have had a role in shaping the religious practices, education and politics in Pakistan since the late twentieth century. According to scholars, these movements are directly associated with the world political happenings, the Cold War geopolitics, regional conflicts and expansion of petro-dollar-financed religious institutions (Roy, 2004). Transnational Islamic discourses tend to focus on moral reform, scriptural orthodoxy, and centrality of religion in the social life that strengthens ideological systems that influence the state policies and social orientations.

The dynamics between transnational Islamic revivalism and world politics have important impacts on religious minorities. International discourses of the supposed threat of Western cultural and political domination are often being generalized in Pakistan, fueling majoritarianism and reducing the opportunity to pluralistically understand citizenship. According to the scholars, these discourses may indirectly discriminate against the minority groups as they make religious difference to be viewed as a security issue or a cultural problem instead of being regarded as a part of national diversity (Mandaville, 2014). This interaction shows that global politics and ideological battles find reflection in local religious discourse, influencing intercommunal relations and inclusion of minorities.

Transnational religious discourses in general, bring about a complicated and highly controversial religious landscape in Pakistan. By both giving prominence and protecting to Christian communities and at the same time opening them up to the accusation of foreign influence, evangelical networks, on the other hand, Islamic revivalist movements redefine the discourse in society by making use of ideologies that are informed on a global scale. Researchers stress that such transnational flows are not autonomous but they overlap with domestic

structures of power, legal formations and pasts (Roy, 2004). Such interactions are important in understanding the mediating nature of globalization in the analysis of the religious authority, political identity, and experience of living in a religious community in Pakistan.

### 6.3 Global Human Rights Advocacy and Local Resistance

Human rights activism all over the world has emerged as a force that is affecting the minority protection and religious freedom discussion in Pakistan. The discrimination, the violence of blasphemy and the lack of religious freedom are the cases that are regularly emphasized by international organizations, foreign governments, as well as transnational advocacy networks and framed within the context of global human rights norms. According to scholars, these interventions are components of a bigger process in response to which international human rights regimes aim to affect domestic legal and political practices (Donnelly, 2013). Such advocacy has caused the international attention to the plight of religious minorities, including Christians, in Pakistan as well as created complicated political reactions at the national level.

The international pressure usually works via the diplomatic relations, conditional aid, human rights reporting, and the multilateral forums like the United Nations. The international NGOs and UN agencies have continuously reported that Pakistan should change a law and increase protection of minorities. It has been argued in research that such external pressures may promote incremental law and policy reform especially when those pressures have some connection to trade incentives or even international reputation (Risse, Ropp, and Sikkink, 1999). Nevertheless, the success of international advocacy is not uniform because the impact of domestic politics often dictates the adaptability of adhering to global norms by states, their adherence to or disobedience to them.

Domestic politics is also important in balancing the reactions to the global human rights advocacy. Political leaders in Pakistan are frequently under conflicting pressures on the one hand, there is the

need to retain international legitimacy and economic relations; on the other, domestic constituencies where religious sentiment is composed of great mobilizing forces. Researchers observe that the human rights reforms involving religion are especially delicate since they can be politicized by the opposition communities as an imposition on national sovereignty or religiousness (Talbot, 2012). Consequently, foreign lobbying can be viewed as intrusion, which is nationalistic and religiously counterproductive instead of reforming.

The local opposition to the global human rights discourse is often voiced by specifics of cultural purity, religious roots, and postcolonial sovereignty. Opponents maintain that the international human rights standards represent the liberal patterns of the West which might not be compatible with local societal and religious factors. Research indicates that this opposition is not only rhetoric but embedded in institutional practices which retard or obstruct reform especially on matters concerning religious law and public morality (Merry, 2006). This process generates a paradox of a situation where minority issues are brought into the focus of advocacy in the world, but, at the same time, deepen the resistance of the actors who perceive human rights rhetoric with suspicion.

Nevertheless, in spite of such tensions, global human rights advocacy is still influencing local discourse and offers material to work with minority movements in Pakistan. The international networks are also used strategically by Christian organizations and human rights defenders to raise local complaints, demand and reform the law, and provide security to vulnerable groups. The scholars stress that the localization of the global norms tends to bring about meaningful change, i.e. when international principles are re-packaged in culturally appealing language and brought to the level of the domestic law (Risse et al., 1999). It is thus very crucial to understand how international pressure and local resistance interact in order to determine the potential and constraints of human rights advocacy in the cause of minority protection in Pakistan in its complex political and religious setup.

#### 6.4 Identity Anxiety, Nationalism, and Backlash

The concept of identity anxiety among the post-colonial South Asian states has greatly influenced the attitude of the society towards the religious minorities especially Christians who are considered to be culturally and politically foreign. This image is entrenched in the historical context of the linkage of Christianity to European colonialists, and the British colonial rule, in particular, which has left behind the legacies of domination and cultural intrusion. Christianity is often positioned in nationalist discourses not only as a source of religious identity but also as an indication of outside power and West intervention. These kind of narratives are particularly powerful during times of political insecurity when it is more important to establish a single national identity and this is frequently done by exclusivist religious or cultural constructs (Chatterjee, 1993). Thus, the Christians are put in the position of outsiders whose allegiances are doubted despite their years of existence and citizenship in South Asian societies.

Religious nationalism has fueled anxieties over identity by advancing majoritarian definitions of nationhood that have equated national identity to the major religious traditions. In places like India and Pakistan, nationalist ideas have been growing more focused on religious homogeneity as an indicator of political legitimacy, cultural fidelity. In this situation, Christianity is often being depicted as something which does not fit well into the local values, and this serves to perpetuate the stereotypes that Christians are Westernizers/cultural erosionists (Juergensmeyer, 2008). International human rights activism and the existence of geopolitical tensions world-wide also enhance this perception, and are occasionally perceived by the nationalist actors as outside pressure to weaken national sovereignty. Consequently, the Christians are being used symbolically as the targets of more widespread battles related to gains of culture and political influence.

The foreignness of the Christians is also perpetuated by the heritage of missionary work especially in education and social welfare sectors.

Although missionary institutions have traditionally been involved in the field of literacy, healthcare, and social reform, they have been identified with the Western standards and languages, which has aroused suspicion over cultural assimilation and conversion. The critics of nationalism have frequently made the argument that Christian work of education and humanitarianism is a continuation of colonialism in the name of social service (Frykenberg, 2008). This story hides the fact why missionary activity had multiple motivations, ignores the agency of local Christians, most of whom have indigenized religious activity and helped the country develop greatly. However, fears about the identity continue to thrive on the lingering sense of Christianity as an imported religion.

These fears often culminate into social and political backlash in the form of discrimination, exclusion, and in other countries, violence against the Christian communities. The allegations of forced conversion, disloyalty or cultural betrayal are frequently used to justify the restrictive laws and hostility in society. According to scholars, this denunciation is not really about religious doctrine but about fears of social change, mobility, and changing power-relations, especially among marginalized communities who in the past have chosen to convert to Christianity to avoid the oppression of caste or classes (Robinson, 2011). The construction of foreign-ness of Christians becomes a convenient discourse in limiting social change and supporting the status quo through nationalist discourse.

The situation of Christians in South Asia has become more complex in the modern times due to the globalization process and transnational religious networks. Although the international relationships can give the minorities resources and visibility to their rights and need, this also strengthens the nationalist demands that Christians are not members of the nation-state but alliances of foreign force. This process intensifies identity anxiety because of associating religious difference to geopolitical suspicion especially in sensitive security settings. But factual research shows that the Christian communities in South Asia have always shown national loyalty and civic

participation and have surpassed the foreign verses the indigenous identity in black and white (Bhargava, 2010). To interpret identity anxiety and backlash of Christians therefore involves a more subtle analysis that positions nationalism within the context of historical memory and colonial pasts and present day political anxieties instead of considering religious difference as divisive as such.

### 6.5 Globalization as Opportunity and Risk

Globalization has posed a paradoxical situation on religious minorities such as the Christian communities in South Asia and Pakistan, and has both brought them some chances of empowerment and given them some chances to be marginalized. On the one hand, globalization finds its way through the borders of countries and states where minority communities are able to gain access to the global discourses of human rights, religious freedom and social justice. Conversely, the same transnational relations may also become a cause of nationalist fears and exclusionary tactics in host cultures. The scholars point to the fact that globalization is not a neutral or a homogenous process but mediated by the local power structures, historical legacies, and identity politics (Robertson, 1995; Beyer, 2006). To the Christians living in Muslim dominated societies, globalization therefore becomes a two-sided process which redefines the life of religion, citizenship and security in rather multifaceted and contradictory manner.

Besides education, globalization has increased the possibility of advocacy and visibility by transnational civil society networks and global media outlets. World human rights bodies, religious activists, and international religious movements have given Christian minorities a voice to express their grievances and mobilize as well as demand accountability on rights abusers. According to researchers, globalization has made minority advocacy a domestic matter into an international precept and supervision (Donnelly, 2013). Heightened global presence has the potential to create moral pressure in states to ensure the constitutional guarantees and international commitments. Nevertheless, even as this advocacy has increased the awareness on

minority issues, it also puts the communities in the line of political retaliation especially when the advocacy is viewed as an outside influence.

Concurrently, globalization has also heightened mistrust and marginalization by strengthening the ideas of Christians being culturally/politically aligned to foreign powers. Global connectivity is perceived as a social fragmentation rather than as an expression of divided loyalty in nationalist and majoritarian discourses. The academics observe that transnational religious as well as human rights activities have often been strategically presented as challenges to the national sovereignty and religious authenticity especially in the postcolonial states with weak national identities (Juergensmeyer, 2008; Asad, 2003). This kind of suspicion has been enhanced by the global geopolitical tensions in which the Western political acts are symbolically associated with the local Christian minorities. In turn, globalization may intensify the anxiety of identity, which results in an increase in surveillance, social alienation, and in severe instances, mass violence toward minority groups.

Freedom of choice and danger combine to illustrate the inherently ambivalent nature of globalization to religious minorities. Whereas global education, advocacy, and visibility can make Christian communities more powerful and assertive in their claims to equal citizenship, it may also spark defensive responses that can make exclusionary nationalism stronger. Researchers point to the significance of contextual mediation, as they say the consequences of globalization rely on national legal systems, the strength of institutions and the comprehensiveness of national identities discourses (Robertson, 1995; Bhargava, 2010). To the Christian minorities survival in the globalization process involves a trade in both attending to the global standards and responding to the local sensibilities and power arrangements. The concept of globalization as an empowering and limiting process is thus crucial to measuring its influence on the notion of religious pluralism, minority security and social cohesion in modern Pakistan.

## 7. CASE STUDIES AND EMPIRICAL INSIGHTS

The empirical results of the research using qualitative data gathered in the form of twelve semi-structured interviews with scholars, community leaders and practitioners is to critically examine the issue of globalization and its effect to religious pluralism in Pakistan with specific reference to the Christian community. It combines theoretical frameworks that have been discussed in the earlier with interview data to go beyond abstract arguments. The discussion is concerned with the experience of globalization in the daily social, cultural and institutional life. This method can be used to learn more about the lived reality of a plural society.

### 7.1 Nature and Scope of Empirical Data

Empirical data used in this study is the twelve semi-structured interviews carried out with the participants who have various professional backgrounds. These are scholars, religious leaders and community practitioners who are equipped with pertinent information on pluralism and globalization. A purposive sampling procedure was adopted to have meaningful and contextualized insights. The participants provided their own experiences in a unique way, depending on the lived and professional experiences. This variety enhances the validity and richness of the results. Analysis of the interviews was done in themes to determine the frequent patterns and meanings in the responses. The data presented a number of important themes, such as legal pluralism, and issues of identity, and the influence of globalization. Additional themes were opportunities, exclusion, human rights discourse and policy implications. These themes were used to give an organized interpretation and discussion. Each of the themes is discussed in the following sections.

### 7.2 Religious Pluralism in Pakistan: Between Law and Practice

One of the main findings of the research is the discrepancy between constitutional affirmations and lived experiences of religious minorities. The participants reiterated that laws are in place, but

not in practice. One of the respondents emphasized the idea that minority rights are constitutionally guaranteed but socially deregulated (Ali, personal communication, March 14, 2026). This implies that pluralism is more of a legal than a social reality. This has led to marginalization of the minorities in their daily lives.

Pakistan is officially a plural society consisting of several religious groups that live together. Nonetheless, participants said that Christians are prone to discrimination and exclusion. This is an indication of structural inequalities that are entrenched in social institutions and practices. These circumstances are compatible with the postcolonial situations when social equality is not guaranteed by legal equality (Shah, 2017). Thus pluralism in Pakistan is not even but rather disputed in practice.

Religious pluralism is more than diversity but it is equal participation and recognition. Based on the interviews, it is evident that minorities do not have equal opportunities and dignity. This makes it feel like a social outcast and marginal. Respondents pointed out the fact that this discrepancy undermines institutional trust. Therefore, pluralism is an incomplete social project in Pakistan.

### 7.3 Educational Advancement

Globalization has made international education and scholarships available. Participants said that there has been a global exposure which has enhanced educational desires in the Christian community. Students have become more global in their academic standards and competition. According to one of the respondents, education has emerged as one of the major avenues of mobility (Lamuel, personal communication, March 18, 2026). This can be attributed to wider globalization trends in the field of education (Giddens, 1990).

### 7.4 Advocacy and Global Visibility

Minority issues have gained international visibility due to globalization. The media and human rights

bodies are all significant in advocacy. Governments can be pressured by this worldwide focus to enhance protection of minorities. Nevertheless, it can also strengthen the external stereotypes regarding local communities. Thus, the issue of global visibility is a two-sided phenomenon. Mariyono et al. (2025).

### 7.5 Identity Anxiety and the Politics of Belonging

Globalization has heightened identity fears among the minority groups. Respondents pointed out that Christian people are considered synonymous with the Western states. Such perception breeds suspicion and social exclusion at local levels. According to one of the respondents, this influences a sense of national belonging (Ali, personal communication, March 14, 2026). These perceptions lead to insecurity of identity.

The other respondent pointed out that the fact that the two are associated historically is erroneous. But it is still firmly ingrained in societal attitudes and discourse. This results in exclusion and misconception of minority identities. This tension can be attributed to the critique of modernity by Asad (2003). In this way, globalization makes identity forming in plural societies challenging.

### 7.6 Global Human Rights Discourses and Local Realities

International human rights conventions affect domestic policies and minority rights discourses. Pakistan is a member of various international conventions. Respondents reported that foreign scrutiny influences government reactions. According to one respondent, compliance is incomplete and inconsistent (Ali, personal communication, March 14, 2026). This is an indication of lack of congruency between international standards and local application. Nevertheless, outside influences tend to lead to nationalist retaliation. Rather than reform, it can have a stimulant effect and create a political sensitivity. This was one of the challenges identified by the participants to engage

constructively. This is tension between universality and sovereignty explained by Donnelly (2013). Thus, the discourse of human rights is still complicated in practice.

### 7.7 Religious Nationalism and Globalization

In Pakistan, religious nationalism has a powerful influence in identity and policy making. According to the participants, it tends to override international factors. This curbs the transformative nature of globalization towards inclusivity. A respondent pointed out that minorities are working within this system of domination (Ali, personal communication, March 14, 2026). Consequently, the level of integration is low.

An additional participant pointed to the misunderstanding between state identity and religion. Understanding of secularism is misinterpreted to cause social tensions and mistrust. This has an impact on interfaith relations and discourse. Juergensmeyer (2017) contends that globalization may enhance religious nationalism. Thus, both forces are complicatedly interacting.

### 7.8 Social Cohesion and Internal Security

The social cohesion and stability of nations are affected by discrimination of minorities. The participants stated that exclusion undercuts a sense of belonging and trust within the society. One of the respondents said that alienation destroys unity (Lamuel, personal communication, March 18, 2026). This gives rise to social problems in the long term. Thus, cohesion requires inclusion.

Berger (2014) writes that an unequal pluralism brings about fragmentation. This is an opinion that is supported by the interviews in the Pakistani context. Respondents noted that minority issues that are not resolved can be a source of instability. This underscores the need to intervene proactively in policy. Social peace requires freedom of equal acknowledgment of every community.

## 8. DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

### 8.1 Globalization as a Contradictory Process

The results of the current research, backed by the secondary information and analysis of interviews, prove that globalization is not a unidimensional process, but a contradictory and multidimensional one. The participants of the interviews (Christian community leaders and academic experts) stressed that globalization has led to raising awareness, connectivity, and advocacy opportunities. Meanwhile, they emphasized the fact that these benefits are not distributed equally and can be associated with the emergence of new types of exclusion and vulnerability. This duality supports the thesis that globalization brings about marginalization and inclusion at the same time. The way that these observations are being described can be associated with the notion of globalization, in which global processes are reconstituted at local settings (Robertson, 1995). Interview respondents observed that the digital media and communication networks around the world have given the minority groups the opportunity to access international organizations and be heard at the international platforms. Some of the respondents articulated that acts of discrimination or violence against Christians are now more readily reported internationally than was used to be the case. They have however noted that such visibility also results in a backlash at the local level where minorities are seen as being in a position of adhering to foreign interest. This perception leads to distrust and marginalization. Therefore, globalization strengthens the voice of the minority groups and increases their vulnerability (Beyer, 2006). The other important lesson of the interviews is that due to globalization cultural and religious anxieties have increased in the society. Respondents noted that exposure to the influences of global cultures tends to elicit defensive response, in which local religious identity is sought to be defended. In Pakistan, it has helped to consolidate a stronger religious nationalism and mistrust against minority communities. Interviewees emphasized that international religious events are often localized and interpreted in such a way that influences interfaith relations within the country. This relationship depicts the fact that globalization can

at the same time enhance diversity and entrench divisions (Giddens, 1990).

### 8.2 Re-evaluating Religious Pluralism in Pakistan

The results, supplemented with the analysis of interviews, can be seen as a lawfully acceptable but socially disputable phenomenon of religious pluralism in Pakistan. The participants of the interviews repeatedly stressed that there was a discrepancy between the promises of constitutional religious freedom and the reality experienced by the minority communities. Although the law officially promotes equality, respondents reported that the law is usually unequally applied and in most cases, the application is affected by social and political pressure. This disparity is a manifestation of structural inequalities that are institutionalized. Thus, pluralism should be interpreted as an ideal and a practice in law (Shah, 2017).

The data obtained during the interview has also shown that globalization has added new aspects to the discussion of religious pluralism. Respondents recognized the fact that minority rights have become more aware in Pakistan because of the international human rights frameworks. They however also observed that at times these global discourses are considered as foreign influence. Such perception may cause resistance and support negative feelings against minorities. Pluralism is difficult to achieve due to the conflict between international standards and local interpretations (Asad, 2003).

To sum up, the synthesis of the analysis of interviews and secondary data shows that the process of religious pluralism in Pakistan is controversial and complicated. It is influenced by the combination of legal systems, social views, politics, and world impacts. The gap between theory and practice needs to be addressed by radical reforms and evidenced overtime, in order to change the perception of society. Pluralism can only then proceed past the symbolic recognition to meaningful inclusion. This reconsideration emphasizes the significance of perceiving pluralism as a lived experience and a dynamic reality (Shah, 2017).

### 8.3 Identity, Power, and Global Influence

The results of the interview go a long way in supporting the thesis that globalization has aggravated identity politics among religious minorities in Pakistan. Respondents highlighted the importance of identity being more and more influenced by local experiences, as well as global narratives. Lots of the participants remarked that the image of Christians is frequently perceived through the prism of global religious and political processes instead of local conditions. This association has impacts on their social acceptance and belongingness. Therefore, globalization also helps to build the complex and layered identities (Juergensmeyer, 2017).

The participants of the interviews emphasized that a common understanding of Christians is that they represent Western or global Christian groups. This viewpoint is still held even though they have a long history of being in Pakistan. According to the respondents, these associations instill uncertainty in their loyalty to the country and carry on with their marginalization. This shows the extent to which global discourses can influence local identity politics. It also highlights the problems of minorities in creating their identity in a dominant cultural framework (Khan, 2018).

The concept of power relations became one of the major ideas that surfaced during the interviews, and the participants mentioned that the discourse of national identity is dominated by dominant groups the most. The respondents noted that the minorities tend to have fewer chances to voice themselves in the society. Globalization has the power to increase such inequalities with making the dominant narratives more visible and relegating other views. This brings an imbalance in the construction and meaning of identities. As such, identity becomes a contested terrain that is influenced by relations of power (Rehman, 2010). Simultaneously, interviewees also admitted that globalization opens new perspectives to minorities to express their identities and promote their rights. Minority groups are able to express their experiences and defy the mainstream through social media and international networks. Other participants emphasized the bright examples of

international activism that could raise awareness of the local problems. They also warned however that increased visibility does have a backlash and increased risks. This twofold effect shows the nature of identity politics in globalized world (Beyer, 2006).

In general, the combination of both theoretical standpoint and insights gained through the interview proves that there is a strong interdependence between identity, power, and globalization. Local structures and the global influence shape the minority identities in Pakistan in a dynamic and contested process. To overcome these problems, it is necessary to spread inclusive discourses where diversity can be seen as the national identity. In the absence of such efforts, globalization will further entrench existing inequalities. This discussion indicates the necessity of a balanced identity and inclusion (Juergensmeyer, 2017).

#### 8.4 Theoretical Contribution

The research offers a broad theoretical framework which integrates both empirical evidence and existing theories. It emphasizes the multi-dimensionality and complexity of globalization and religious pluralism. A result of including an analysis of interviews, the research provides a more context-sensitive and grounded comprehension of these phenomena. The implications of these contributions on the study of minority rights and social inclusion are wider. Finally, the research also demands more comprehensive and detailed methodologies of globalization analysis in various settings (Juergensmeyer, 2017).

#### 9. Key Findings

The current research reveals some important findings that point out the complex association of globalization and religious pluralism in Pakistan. Among the major discoveries is that globalization empowers and marginalizes minority populations. Interview information indicated that global networks provide the platform on which minorities can advocate and be seen, but also bring them into the backlash locally. This two-fold impact is indicative of the paradoxicality of globalization. It further highlights the importance

of the close monitoring of its effects on its vulnerable population.

The other key observation is that there are legal protections of religious minorities but these are not effectively implemented. The Constitution as much as ensures freedom of worship and equality as citizens, these are not always observed in reality. Major challenges identified by the participants of the interview were weak law enforcement and judicial systems. They emphasized that social and political pressures tend to affect legal processes. This disjunction between law and practice is a major limitation to the efficacy of legal protections.

It is also in the course of the interaction between the global and the local forces that identity politics has been intensified, as the study determines. Globalization relates the local minority identities to larger global narratives, and this has an impact on the way they are viewed in the society. According to the respondents interviewed, this usually causes mistrust and social distancing. The minority communities are at times perceived as agents of foreign interest as opposed to being a part of the nation. This movement adds to their marginalization and puts their belongingness to the test.

Another important area that is impacted negatively by globalization is social cohesion since discrimination against different religions is still persistent. The participants of the interview pointed out that negative stereotypes and prejudices are still entrenched in the society. Historical legacies and institutional practices support these attitudes. These tensions are at times enhanced by global influences instead of being addressed. This leaves the potential of meaningful social integration limited.

#### 10. Policy Recommendations

The proposed study include a series of policy suggestions that should be implemented to overcome the problems detected in the research. The initial point of focus is legal and institutional change to enhance the safeguarding of minority rights. Laws that are already in place should be enforced effectively in order to bring justice and equality to the citizens. The participants of the

interview noted that there should be open and fair judicial procedures especially in cases that implicated matters of religious sensitivities. Trust in the minority communities may be achieved through the strengthening of the institutional accountability.

Legal reforms must also deal with loopholes that enable laws that are used to discriminate the minorities. There must be clear guidelines and protection to avoid discrimination and assure due process. Law enforcement agencies can be trained to handle the sensitive cases better with the training programs. Independent oversight mechanisms can further enhance accountability and transparency. These steps are critical towards developing a more just legal system.

The second recommendation area is the reform of education as a long term measure of advancing religious pluralism. Schools are very important in inculcating societal attitudes and values. Prejudice can be alleviated by having inclusive curricula that focus on tolerance, diversity, and mutual respect. Interview participants noted that there was a necessity to amend the textbooks in order to make them reflect positive depictions of minority groups. Education could be a strong instrument in terms of promoting social cohesion. Training programs to teachers should also be reinforced to enable inclusive and non-discriminative teaching methods.

The third policy recommendation area is on media regulations and responsibility. Media is an important factor that shapes the opinions of people towards religious minorities. There should be an attempt to dispel falsehood and hate narratives that help in polarizing the society. Ethical journalism and accountability can be facilitated by regulatory structures. The participants of the interviews stressed the need to balance and make accurate presentations of minority issues.

The fourth recommendations area is on encouraging interfaith dialogue so as to improve social cohesion. Engagement programs at the community level can help open avenues of interaction and comprehension among the various religious communities. The respondents of the interview emphasized the significance of

grassroots in the establishment of trust. The interfaith programs can be institutionalized to make them sustainable and effective. Such programs can make tensions less and bring about harmony.

Religious leaders should be instrumental in fostering interreligious understanding and respect. These efforts can be facilitated by government and civil society organizations in terms of funding and policy. Interfaith dialogue can also be incorporated in the programs of educational institutions.

The last recommendation area is dedicated to the creation of a balanced global engagement approach. The instrument of promoting inclusive development and protecting minorities can be applied with the help of globalization. International commitments should be supportive of local implementation by policymakers. The participants in the interviews indicated that global frameworks have to be adjusted to the local context. The strategy will be able to minimize resistance and maximize efficacy. The policies must be crafted in such a manner that they take advantage of every section of society in terms of international interaction. The adverse effects of globalization can be maximized by a balanced approach. It is also capable of assisting in dealing with the challenges that were identified in this study.

## 11. Conclusion

This research study concludes that the process of globalization has had a massive impact on the religious pluralism in Pakistan and, more specifically, on the Christian population in the country in complex and multidimensional ways. The results indicate that globalization has increased the communication, visibility, and accessibility to international systems. Simultaneously, it has heightened the identity fears and strengthened the social exclusion trends. The interplay between the forces of the world and local socio-political has resulted in uneven and sometimes conflicting results. Thus, globalization should be comprehended as a process that both provides opportunities and challenges.

The events surrounding the Christian community indicate that with the rise of globalization, they have found themselves more exposed in national and international circles. The concerns of minorities are now more discussed and understood through the digital media and worldwide networks. This enhanced visibility, however, has also contributed to more questioning and suspicion of the local society. Findings of the interview revealed that Christians are occasionally perceived as having external or foreign interests. This image influences their social acceptability and makes them marginalized.

In Pakistan, religious pluralism is still weak and conditional even with the constitutional rights of equality and the freedom of religion. The paper shows that there is a huge discrepancy between law and practice in real life. The inequalities of structures, poor institutional frameworks and the social biases still continue to inhibit the achievement of pluralism. Interviewees highlighted that the law is usually compromised by the pressure of the society and political interests. This implies that pluralism is more of a principle than a lived reality.

Another thing that the study concludes is that globalization has contributed to the strengthening of identity politics, by connecting local minority experiences to global discourse. International religious and political developments tend to consider Christians in Pakistan. This connection defines their perception in their own society and has an impact on their sense of belonging. It poses problems to integration and strengthens the sense of being excluded. Consequently, identity turns into a disputed and dynamic process that is influenced by both the regional and global processes.

In short, the effects of globalization on religious pluralism in Pakistan are highly multidimensional and contextual. Although globalization offers opportunities to empowerment and advocate, it solidifies the existing inequalities and tensions. A multi-pronged approach, which combines legal, social, and institutional reforms is necessary to address these challenges. The results highlight the need to consider pluralism as an experience and dynamic process. Conclusively, the only solution

to encouraging inclusive coexistence is long-term action across various levels of the society.

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