

METHOD

This research employed qualitative semi-structured interviews with five Coptic priests (Abunas) across Rome, Milan, Barcelona, and Budapest.

The interviews were conducted in Arabic, and participants discussed their experiences with refugee integration and the role of the Church.

Data were collected, transcribed, and analysed thematically to identify key patterns and insights into the intersection of faith, trauma, and displacement. The research utilised a flexible approach, capturing nuances across diverse European contexts.

Diagrams or flowcharts were not present in the methodology section, but the thematic analysis process involved coding and comparing transcripts to uncover recurring themes.

INTRODUCTION

The study investigates the role of Coptic churches in assisting Coptic refugees, focusing on how these religious minorities cope with displacement and their integration into European host countries. It explores the dual role of the Church as a source of quasi-governmental aid and as a cultural hub for maintaining identity. The main objectives are to understand how Coptic refugees find support in their religious communities and how the Church facilitates their integration while reinforcing their Coptic identity.

"For us Copts, the church is built revolving around the people; it is the people that came here first, so the church is established because they want one."

"Displacement changes everything – family, language, culture, and jobs. For most Copts, their identity is already largely cemented within Coptic communities, especially as persecuted minorities in Egypt."

"He gave some young men the express role of making 'Orban'... to give them a feeling of community."

"When I am inside the Church, I have protection."



REFERENCES

- Hirschman, C. (2006). The Role of Religion in the Origins and Adaptation of Immigrant Groups in the United States. *International Migration Review*, 38(3), pp.1206–1233. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-7379.2004.tb00233.x>.
- ZETTER, R. (1991). Labelling Refugees: Forming and Transforming a Bureaucratic Identity. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 4(1), pp.39–62. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/4.1.39>.
- Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, E. (2015). *South–South Educational Migration, Humanitarianism and Development*. Routledge.

 

Religion, Displacement, Resilience and Community:

An Exploration of Localised Communitarian Support Network for Religious Minority Refugees

By: Navyaa Sharma, Mariam Habib Matta, Jonathan Gibson, Anaiyah Tarafder
Supervised by: Dr. Ionna Gouseti

RESULTS

Churches as Safe Spaces: Coptic churches function as emotional and spiritual support hubs, creating safe spaces for refugees to process trauma and reconnect with their cultural identity.

Humanitarian Aid: Churches provide food, clothes, and other essential supplies, sometimes in formal partnerships with local governments or larger NGOs.

Linguistic and Administrative Support: Churches assist refugees with translation services, navigating bureaucratic procedures, and overcoming language barriers.

DISCUSSION

The study's findings highlight the critical role of Coptic churches in helping refugees navigate post-displacement challenges. Churches provide more than spiritual guidance; they serve as multifunctional institutions that address emotional, physical, and administrative needs. These institutions also help Coptic refugees maintain their cultural identity while integrating into new societies, offering a model for understanding how religious communities can foster resilience among displaced people.

CONCLUSION

This research emphasises the significance of Coptic churches in supporting Coptic refugees in Europe. By providing spiritual, emotional, and practical aid, these churches serve as essential support systems for religious minority refugees. The study suggests that religious institutions play a vital role in helping refugees integrate into their new environments while preserving their cultural identity. Future research should examine the long-term impact of these religious communities on refugee integration and compare the roles of various faith-based organisations across different contexts.