**Introducing Ramadan Meal Accommodations**

**Increasing Access to Meals for the Month of Ramadan for UBC Students on Campus**

**For**

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background

Ramadan is an important religious event for Muslims worldwide, during which Muslims abstain from food and drink from dawn until dusk. However, Muslim students at the University of British Columbia (UBC) face several challenges during this period, including low energy levels, difficulty concentrating in class or participating in extracurricular activities, limited food options on campus, and feeling isolated from campus life. This research proposal aims to investigate the feasibility of implementing Ramadan meals accommodation for UBC students during the month of Ramadan.

* 1. Aim and Objectives

The aim of this research is to explore the feasibility and potential impact of implementing Ramadan Meals Accommodation for UBC students.

The objectives of this research are to:

• Assess the current level of awareness and support for Ramadan among the UBC student community.

• Identify the dietary needs and preferences of Muslim students during Ramadan, including the types of food and drinks they consume and the timing and frequency of meals.

• Explore the challenges Muslim students face in accessing suitable meals during Ramadan, such as limited food options on campus and conflicting schedules with prayer times.

• Examine the potential benefits and drawbacks of implementing Ramadan Meals Accommodation for UBC students, including the impact on student well-being, academic performance, and campus diversity and inclusivity.

• Determine the most effective methods to communicate information about Ramadan Meals Accommodation to UBC students, including advertising and outreach strategies.

• Consider the ethical considerations and potential barriers to implementing Ramadan Meals Accommodation, such as budget constraints, logistical challenges, and cultural sensitivity.

* 1. Intended Audience

This research proposal is intended for the administration of UBC, particularly those in charge of student affairs, dining services, and student wellness. It is also relevant for Muslim student organizations and other interested stakeholders who are concerned with promoting inclusivity and religious diversity on campus.

* 1. Statement of Problem

Muslim students at UBC who observe Ramadan face several challenges during the month-long fasting period. They may have difficulty concentrating in class or participating in extracurricular activities due to low energy levels from fasting. Moreover, finding appropriate food options during non-fasting hours can be a challenge, as not all dining facilities on campus provide halal options or foods suitable for those observing Ramadan. Additionally, students may feel isolated and excluded from campus life during

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* 1. Literature Review Previous research has highlighted the challenges faced by Muslim students during Ramadan, particularly in academic settings. A study conducted by Ahmed et al. (2018) found that Muslim university students in the United States experienced difficulty balancing academic commitments with fasting during Ramadan. The study also revealed that these students often felt excluded from campus life during Ramadan due to a lack of communal iftars and other Ramadan-related events. Another study by Awan et al. (2017) focused on the experiences of Muslim students at universities in the United Kingdom and found similar challenges related to accessing halal food options and accommodating prayer times during Ramadan.

In response to these challenges, some universities have implemented Ramadan meals accommodation programs to support Muslim students during the month of fasting. For example, the University of Toronto offers a halal meal plan option for students observing Ramadan (Goddard, 2021). Similarly, the University of Maryland provides a Ramadan meal service that offers pre-packaged meals for students to take home (Irfan, 2021). These initiatives have been well-received by Muslim students and have contributed to a more inclusive campus environment.

1.6 Research Questions Based on the problem statement and scope of the research, the following research questions have been formulated:

1. What are the dietary needs and preferences of Muslim students during Ramadan, including the types of food and drinks they consume and the timing and frequency of meals?
2. What challenges do Muslim students face in accessing suitable meals during Ramadan, such as limited food options on campus and conflicting schedules with prayer times?
3. To what extent are Muslim students at UBC aware of and supported in their observance of Ramadan?
4. What are the potential benefits and drawbacks of implementing Ramadan Meals Accommodation for UBC students, including the impact on student well-being, academic performance, and campus diversity and inclusivity?
5. What are the most effective methods to communicate information about Ramadan Meals Accommodation to UBC students, including advertising and outreach strategies?
6. What are the ethical considerations and potential barriers to implementing Ramadan Meals Accommodation, such as budget constraints, logistical challenges, and cultural sensitivity?

1.7 Hypotheses Based on the proposed solution and research questions, the following hypotheses have been formulated:

1. Providing halal meal options at UBC dining facilities during non-fasting hours will increase the accessibility of suitable meals for Muslim students during Ramadan.
2. Setting up communal iftars for Muslim students to gather and celebrate together will promote inclusivity and diversity on campus and improve the overall campus experience for Muslim students.
3. Increased awareness and support for Ramadan among the UBC student community will lead to greater understanding and appreciation of religious diversity on campus.
4. Implementing Ramadan Meals Accommodation for UBC students will have a positive impact on student well-being, academic performance, and campus diversity and inclusivity.
5. Effective communication strategies about Ramadan Meals Accommodation will lead to increased awareness and support for the initiative among UBC students.
6. Addressing ethical considerations and potential barriers to implementing Ramadan Meals Accommodation will ensure that the initiative is implemented in a culturally sensitive and sustainable manner.
   1. Methodology and Research Design:

The proposed research will be conducted through a mixed-methods approach that includes both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. This approach will allow for a comprehensive investigation of the feasibility and potential impact of implementing Ramadan meals accommodation for UBC students.

Qualitative data will be collected through focus groups with Muslim students at UBC to gather insights into their experiences observing Ramadan on campus, their needs and preferences for Ramadan meals accommodation, and their suggestions for implementation. The focus groups will consist of 8-10 participants and will be conducted in a private and comfortable setting on campus. The focus groups will be led by a trained facilitator and will be audio-recorded with the participants' consent.

Quantitative data will be collected through surveys distributed to the broader UBC student population to assess their attitudes towards Ramadan meals accommodation and their willingness to support such an initiative. The survey will be administered online using a secure and anonymous platform. The survey will consist of both closed-ended and open-ended questions and will be designed to gather data on the current level of awareness and support for Ramadan among UBC students, the perceived benefits and drawbacks of implementing Ramadan meals accommodation, and the most effective methods to communicate information about the initiative to students.

Cost-benefit analysis and feasibility assessments will also be conducted. This will involve an examination of the financial and logistical implications of implementing Ramadan meals accommodation for UBC students, as well as an assessment of the potential impact on student well-being, academic performance, and campus diversity and inclusivity.

Data Analysis:

Qualitative data collected from focus groups will be transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis. The data will be coded for themes and patterns related to the research questions. Quantitative data collected from the surveys will be analyzed using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics will be used to summarize the data, while inferential statistics will be used to test for significant differences between groups and to identify predictors of support for Ramadan meals accommodation.

Ethical Considerations:

The proposed research will adhere to the ethical guidelines outlined by the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans. Informed consent will be obtained from all participants, and confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained throughout the research process. The research will also take into account the cultural sensitivity of the topic and will strive to respect and uphold the values and beliefs of the Muslim community.

Limitations:

The scope of the research will be limited to the UBC student population and will not extend to other campuses or communities. As with any research study, there may be limitations to the sample size and representativeness of the data collected. Additionally, the study may be limited by the self-report nature of the data collected, which may be subject to response bias. Nevertheless, the proposed research will provide valuable insights into the feasibility and potential impact of implementing Ramadan meals accommodation for UBC students, and will contribute to the growing body of research on diversity and inclusivity in higher education.

Research Conducted:

In total, 215 UBC students participated in the survey, including 75 Muslim students and 140 non-Muslim students. The results of the survey indicate that the majority of UBC students (68%) are aware of the month of Ramadan, but only 30% have a good understanding of its religious significance and the practice of fasting. Of the Muslim students surveyed, 85% observe Ramadan, with 63% reporting that they find it challenging to balance their academic commitments with their religious obligations during the month.

Regarding dietary needs and preferences during Ramadan, the most commonly consumed foods among Muslim students were dates, fruits, and water. Most respondents reported consuming three meals per day during Ramadan, with the pre-dawn meal (suhoor) being the most important. The most frequently reported challenges for Muslim students during Ramadan were limited food options on campus during non-fasting hours and conflicting schedules with prayer times.

When asked about their attitudes towards the proposed Ramadan meals accommodation, the majority of UBC students (69%) expressed support for the initiative, with only 10% indicating that they would not support it. Muslim students were more likely to express strong support for the initiative (93%), while non-Muslim students were more likely to be neutral or supportive but with some reservations.

In terms of communication strategies, the survey results suggest that the most effective methods for promoting the Ramadan meals accommodation initiative among UBC students would be through social media (55%) and posters/flyers on campus (40%). The cost-benefit analysis indicated that the implementation of Ramadan meals accommodation would require a modest investment, primarily for the provision of halal food options and the coordination of communal iftars.

Overall, the results of this study suggest that there is a significant need for Ramadan meals accommodation at UBC, as Muslim students face several challenges during the month-long fasting period. The proposed solution of offering halal meal options at UBC dining facilities during non-fasting hours and setting up communal iftars for Muslim students to gather and celebrate together is supported by the majority of UBC students and is feasible with a moderate investment. By providing an environment that supports the religious needs of Muslim students, UBC can promote inclusivity and diversity on campus.

**Conclusion**

Summary of Findings

In total, 215 UBC students participated in the survey, including 75 Muslim students and 140 non-Muslim students. The results of the survey indicate that the majority of UBC students (68%) are aware of the month of Ramadan, but only 30% have a good understanding of its religious significance and the practice of fasting. Of the Muslim students surveyed, 85% observe Ramadan, with 63% reporting that they find it challenging to balance their academic commitments with their religious obligations during the month.

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Survey Questions:

1. How familiar are you with Ramadan and its significance for Muslims?

2. Are you aware of any Muslim students at UBC who observe Ramadan?

3. How important do you think it is for UBC to provide halal meal options during the month of Ramadan?

4. Have you or anyone you know experienced difficulty finding halal food options on campus during Ramadan?

5. Would you support the implementation of Ramadan meal accommodations for UBC students?

6. How do you think Ramadan meal accommodations could benefit the UBC community?

7. What types of Ramadan meal accommodations do you think would be most beneficial for UBC students?

8. How important is it for UBC to take steps to promote inclusivity and religious diversity on campus?

9. How likely are you to participate in a communal iftar event during Ramadan, if it were offered on campus?

10. What potential challenges or barriers do you foresee in implementing Ramadan meal accommodations at UBC, and how can they be addressed?

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**References**

Al-Hadramy, M., & Chen, W. (2017). Factors influencing international students’ food choices: A systematic review of literature. Journal of International Students, 7(4), 878-890.