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**Exploring food insecurity among gay men in India: an interpretative phenomenological study**

By

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**List of Abbreviations**

- LGBTQ: Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, Queer
- LG Lesbians and gays
- NGO: Non-governmental organization
- IPA Interpretative Phenomenology analysis

## 1.0 Introduction

Accepting same-sex sexual orientation and queer identities has become more prevalent among Indian youth. However, within the framework of family, home, and school, taking sexuality and being free to express their gender choices remain significant challenges for members of the LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer) community (Patel, 2016). For gay men, in particular, there is a lack of adequate health care and nutrition. For example, Gay men face discrimination at work and in school, which causes many to commit suicide or live by themselves away from society. This study aims to identify and bring to the world's attention the food culture among gay men in India. The study will also focus on discrimination as a determinant of food access and nutrition faced by gay men in India. This chapter discusses the background and context of the study, followed by the research question, the research goals, and finally, the limitations.

### 1.1 Background of the study

India is officially known as the Republic of India in South Asia. As a country, India is the seventh-largest country in the world, the second-most populous, and the most populous democracy in the world. Additionally, India has been recognized as a subcontinent with its rich cultural heritage. It is estimated that there are approximately 3000 castes in India. The Hindu population in India is one of the largest religious groups in the country, with a significant presence across the region and across demographic groups. Hindus are divided into four primary caste groups according to the caste system: Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras. Many people consider Brahma, the Hindu creator god, where the various groups first emerged. Hindu religious and social life has been primarily governed by caste for centuries, with each caste maintaining a particular position within this complex hierarchy and seven major religions: Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, and Jains (BBC News, 2019; Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India, 2022). Moreover, there are 22 official languages in India. India is a country with a long history and a large number of scholars. India has produced many scholars, such as Subrahmanyam Chandrasekhar, winner of the Nobel prize in physics, and Dinesh Kumar Mahajan Lal Bhugra, a Psychiatrist and an educator, is an openly gay man born in northern India and published in a variety of journals, including International Journal of Psychiatry, International Review of Psychiatry, and International Journal of Culture and Mental Health. Still, it also has a dark side of discrimination and untouchability. In the religious system, untouchability is the practice in India of treating certain castes as socially and physically untouchable. (Thorat & Joshi, 2020). In India, many issues cause discrimination towards minorities, which include the backward class or LGBTQ people.

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar (1891-1956) was an Indian jurist, economist, politician, and social reformer considered to be the "Father of the Indian Constitution." According to Ambedkar (1936), Indian society was significantly impacted by the old caste system. The caste system created a perception that lower caste people were less pure or untouchable than those from higher castes. They are discriminated against and mistreated because they were born of a lower caste. Discrimination based on religion and belief systems has a long history in India. The caste system in Hinduism has caused significant discrimination against certain groups, particularly Dalits, formerly untouchables. Minorities in India faced severe social and economic discrimination and were considered at the bottom of the caste (Ghurye, 1969). There was a particular danger of transmission of bad luck or evil from lower-class people during certain events, such as performing natural functions, eating, and drinking (Douglas, 1966). The Primitive Man believed the following events could defile birth, initiation, puberty, marriage, cohabitation, and death. At the time, pregnant women were considered impure and a source of heresy to others. The impureness of this woman was passed on to her child. Therefore, people have come to believe that if we touch them, we might be impure if we do (Thapar, 2002). The Indian Constitution guarantees equal rights to all citizens, but discrimination based on religion and belief systems continues to be a problem in the country. Efforts have been made to address discrimination issues through anti-discriminatory practices, laws and policies, but more needs to be done to ensure that everyone is treated equally and with respect (Constitution of India; Ambedkar, 1936).

Among the untouchables, the LGBTQ community was the most affected. LGBTQ community refers to the solidarity and sense of community among individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ). It encompasses a range of initiatives and efforts aimed at promoting understanding, acceptance, and equality for LGBTQ individuals, both within and outside of the community. The LGBTQ community faces lots of discrimination. This term is often used as an umbrella term to refer to all individuals who identify as non-heterosexual and those who do not conform to traditional gender roles. The LGBTQ community is often disproportionately affected by discrimination and marginalization. LGBTQ people have experienced city stress with groups of marginalized groups, including late-life events, prejudice, and expectation of rejection (McConnell, et al, 2018). Discrimination has a disproportionate impact on the LGBTQ community through the lack of legal protections and recognition.

These individuals experienced significant harassment and discrimination due primarily to their gender orientation. They also faced emotional and physical abuse that included social marginalization, Law enforcement, and denial of medical care in healthcare facilities (Sifat and Shafi, 2021). Thus, the

LGBTQ community is not just newly developed; it has existed for centuries, and they have faced discrimination over centuries.

## **1.2 Communities of Indian origin and their food culture**

Food is essential in the lives of the people of India, and its consumption has a long history. The first part of this chapter provides a brief historical account of food and food production in India as a way to gain a deeper understanding of the foods consumed and eaten in modern Indian society. In addition, this brief review will also help to understand the cultural significance of food to Indians throughout history, touching on issues such as migration, food production, colonization, and the caste system. Next, a brief overview of food insecurity in modern India is provided, and arguments are discussed regarding how some people face poverty that prevents access to healthy foods. This chapter will discuss how minorities and vulnerable groups have been marginalized, such as “*LGBTQ (lesbians, gays, bisexuals, or transgender, and queer)*.” The chapter will further discuss the connection between LGBTQ people and food insecurity by evaluating the consequences of food insecurity on the health and well-being of gay men.

## **1.3 History of LGBTQ in India**

Hindu Dharmic scriptures refer to the sacred texts of Hinduism, one of the oldest religions in the world. These texts include the Vedas, Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, Ramayana, and Mahabharata. They contain spiritual teachings and stories that guide living a moral and fulfilling life and discuss the nature of God and the universe. These texts are considered of great spiritual and historical importance to Hindus and are studied and revered by scholars and practitioners of the religion (Tsuria et al., 2021).

India is an excellent land of mythology with 33 Supreme Gods and Goddesses, and the soul is considered more important than the body (Singh & Renu, 2019). Numerous examples from Shikhandi to Shiva show gender mixing and its importance. Homosexuality is portrayed as a natural and joyful experience in several Hindu mythic stories. The carvings of many Hindu temples depict men and women engaged in homosexual acts (Singh & Renu, 2019). According to Indian mythology, there are several stories concerning alternative sexual choices or the transformation of men into women and vice versa. In some scriptures in the Mahabharata, Shri Krishna was attracted by several gopikas and even gods. Gopikas are a group of female cowherds who were attracted to lord Krishna and danced with them during the period of the autumn moon. Lord Krishna is one of the most respected and well-liked Indian gods. He was regarded as the greatest god in his own right and the eighth appearance of the Hindu god Vishnu (Palai and Mishra, 2022).

Lord Shiva bathed in the Yamuna to participate in the Raas-Leela with Krishna and became a Gopikas (Singh & Renu, 2019). According to legend, Lord Shiva, the god of destruction, wanted to participate in the Raas-Leela with Krishna and the Gopikas. To do so, he bathed in the Yamuna River and transformed into a gopika, taking on the form of Mohini, a beautiful woman. In this form, Lord Shiva danced with Krishna and the other gopikas and was said to have been so enraptured by the dance that he forgot his true identity (Pundir, 2019). In my opinion, this story is considered to be a metaphor for the idea that devotion to God can transcend the boundaries of gender, caste, and even one's divinity.

Another instance in Hinduism is when Shiva and Parvati visit Lord Vishnu's home (God of Preservation). Parvathi is the wife of the Hindu Lord Shiva (the God of destruction); she is the renaissance of the first wife of the lord Shiva (Upadhyay, 2022). When Vishnu became a female, he engaged in sex with Lord Shiva, which resulted in the creation of God Maha-Sastha to Eliminate Mahishi and aid her in attaining Moksha (Iyer, 2019). The Moksha is the liberation from the cycle of death and rebirth. It is the crucial goal in the practice of the religion of Hinduism and Buddhism. The conflict between the Moksha and the physical existence is always a confusing practice between these practitioners, which results in the actual success of attaining the Moksha (Chalise, 2022). To encourage love in others, Kamdeva throws arrows, and Kamasutra shows sexual postures. According to the Ramayana, when Hanuman went to Lanka to rescue Sita, He saw female demons sharing passionate kisses. Lord Ayyappa is said to be the child of Shiva and Mohini, a female manifestation of Vishnu (Raj, 2020). Another story recounts the sacrifice of Aravan, the son of Arjuna and Ulupi, to ensure the victory of the Pandavas. Despite his sacrifice, Aravan was married (Raj, 2020). A woman would not want to marry a man about to die the next day. Therefore, Lord Krishna took on the female form of Mohini. She became Aravan's wife, stayed with him at night, and mourned for him the next day as his widow (Singh & Renu, 2019).

The female avatar of Vishnu Mohini is revered throughout Indian culture. In one of the other legends from the Puranas, Shiva persuades Vishnu to assume the form of Mohini so that he can witness the metamorphosis firsthand when he and his wife, Parvati, visit Vishnu at home. Vishnu smiles and manifests himself as the great Mohini. Shiva pursues Mohini out of passion, and Parvati hangs her head in jealousy. Their union became the god Maha-Sastha. Then there is the story of Vishnu, who takes the form of Mohini to protect Shiva from a demon who is chasing him. Shiva was freed from death when Mohini enchanted the demon Bhasmasura and forced him to lay hands on his head (Singh & Renu, 2019). The concept of Hanuman is attributed to the union of Shiva and Mohini in the Shiva Purana. The legendary archer Arjuna visits his father, the deity Indra, in exile in Amravati



during one of the stories in the Mahabharata. He then rejects Urvashi's advances, and she curses him to turn him into a witch in response (Iyer, 2019).

Arjuna's father, the king of tears, changes the curse so that he loses his men only for one year and advises him to carry out the punishment in the 13th year of exile when the Pandavas are supposed to be killed. Arjuna and all the strong Kuru warriors engaged in a struggle on the side of King Virat, and in the end, Arjuna was able to release Virat's cattle and beat the Kuru generals. The Pandavas' thirteenth year of exile came to an end when the five brothers and Draupadi made themselves more powerful and determinedly visible to the world, bringing the Mahabharata's Virata Parva to a close (Tatavarthy et al., 2017). As illustrated in the stories, women often engage in sexual activity with other women (Raj, 2020).

Hijras, being part of LGBTQ in India, were considered a "third gender" and were sometimes acknowledged in Mughal courts and society, although they were also stigmatized and faced discrimination. The Mughals were a Muslim dynasty that ruled a large part of the Indian subcontinent from the early 16th to the mid-19th century. They are known for their cultural, architectural, and political legacy and for unifying much of India under a single rule. Some Mughal rulers, such as Akbar the Great (1556 to 1605), were known to have employed hijras in their courts and respected their status as a distinct group (Singh, 2022). During the Mughals' rule, Transgender had close links with the Mughal palace that helped to attain respect within their families and society. Due to this, they were considered the caretakers and messengers who were trusted and trained entertainers and experts throughout the era of the Mughals (Ahmad, 2022). The transgender community served in various positions during the Mughal Empire (1526-1857), including serving as advisers, administrators, generals, and guardians of harems. Most of them held high positions in Islamic religious institutions and influenced state decisions. These privileges were withdrawn during the British period (Mishra, 2016). Hijras were considered special people with spiritual powers and were respected in Mughal society. Even though transgender people hold a special place in Hindu mythology and have a distinguished history dating back to the Mughal era (1526 to 1857),

According to Agoramoorthy & Hsu (2015), it is believed that the transgender community is descended from the Krishna and Aryan insurgences, which resulted in the emergence of the LGBTQ community. The ancient Hindu gods were involved in homosexual activities throughout the history of India, so there has never been a problem with homosexuality. Nevertheless, there was discrimination started in India and was the leading cause of LGBTQ discrimination in India.

## 1.4 My position in this research

I grew up in Mumbai, India, for a few months; in Mumbai, hijras have a long-standing cultural presence and are often associated with religious and cultural events. In recent years, I observed that hijras in Mumbai had faced discrimination and marginalization, including limited access to employment and health care services. Despite this, they have been engaged in various cultural practices and traditions, including singing and dancing at weddings and other celebrations. I witnessed many incidents where the LGBTQ community was bullied and made fun of in many areas in my childhood days. Throughout my school days, I was the one who made fun of them unintentionally. One day, I was going back to school when I got hit by a car and was left on the street injured. Nobody came to help me at that time. Suddenly, A group of three transgender came and helped me to stand. I got scared of them and said that I did not need their help, to which one of them said, “ We will not harm you.. we are also human beings”. He gave me his phone to call my parents. After this incident, I realized the fact that they are also humans created by God, and my practice of making fun of them was wrong. This prompted me to respect the LGBTQ community. While growing up, I witnessed how the LGBTQ community had to deal with societal discrimination for no apparent reason. According to Gutwin (2002), whenever a person enters a new environment, they have a general idea of the situation and what to look for. After picking up information, the individual can interpret the information in light of existing knowledge to determine the current state of the environment. Raising awareness of the LGBTQ community is a significant factor in reducing hatred of the LGBTQ community. Society discriminated severely against them, resulting in their parents not accepting them as gay or LGBTQ individuals. In India, transgender cannot live with other communities. They tend to live apart from their families. Being away from the community can make accessing food, proper healthcare, and shelter difficult and contribute to health complications. I also observed that Bollywood started parodying LGBTQ representation in its films in an attempt to keep up and adapt to those times. Bollywood, the world's largest film industry, repeatedly fails to capture the spirit of the neighbourhood. Instead of accurately portraying the public, the industry used them as comic relief in the movies. The usage of transgender as an amusing relief factor was very heart-wrenching. I realized that in every aspect of life, transgender only faced humiliation. In addition, Bollywood stars often shy away from questions about their sexuality or culture in general because of the taboo surrounding it. Over time, the hesitation and aloofness surrounding the queer community have gradually worsened. On the other hand, the number of queer-themed films produced is always tiny. That is what intrigued me about this topic.

## 2.0 Literature Review

### 2.1 Background

Human beings arrived on the Indian subcontinent via the sea from East Africa and land from East Asia. It is estimated that Neolithic tools made of stones, such as chisels, knives, and hammers, date back to 5000-4000 BC, several thousand years after the advent of civilizations in Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Persia (Torrey, 2017). Homosexuality<sup>1</sup> existed in Ancient India; hence, it is part of India's history. During the mature Harappan phase in the second half of the third millennium B.C., India and Mesopotamia maintained a close economic relationship (Uesugi, 2019). Mundas are the first known inhabitants of India. They are also known as scheduled tribes. It had been represented in different Hindu temples where one could observe images of same-sex individuals.

In approximately 5000 - 4000 BC, Mundas arrived in the subcontinent from East Africa and East Asia (Torrey, 2017). Munda's species include turmeric, ginger, tamarind, and betel nut. Sesame and mustard seeds may have been included as oilseeds. Using Neolithic tools constructed of stone, this scheduled tribe cultivated rice in the eastern Himalayas and southeast Asia (Uesugi, 2019). Rice, believed to be the main staple, ragi, millet, lentils, pumpkin, eggplant, and lotus plants, along with spices such as turmeric, ginger, tamarind, betel nut, and oils made from sesame and mustard seeds, comprised the Munda's diet. After the Mundas, a group of hunters and anglers called the Dravidians arrived in subcontinent India.

After the Mundas, the Dravidians were the following people to arrive in India (Torrey, 2017). The Dravidian era can be associated with a high-quality food culture, which included nutritious food items. This era observed the development of unique dishes like Malabar Paratha, which became popular in present-day India. Dravidians arrived in India over two millennia before the Aryans, around 1500 BC (Ruzsa, 2013). Dietary staples of Dravidians were rice, which could be boiled or prepared as a sour gruel from barley and lentils. Historical texts and mythology demonstrate that Dravidians also acknowledged homosexuality as it has prevailed since early periods (Ruzsa, 2013).

Later, the Indus Valley civilization was formed by Sumer, Egypt, China, and the Indus Valley in the northwest part of the subcontinent, which India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh now occupy. It was the early civilization (Fairservis, 1983). It is essential to note that food security was evident in society because of the combined efforts of people governing food production and distribution. The region was lush and fertile, enabling surpluses of wheat and barley and allowing for a massive leap in the

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<sup>1</sup> Homosexuality has been present throughout human history, with evidence of same-sex relationships in ancient civilizations such as Greece and China. It has been both accepted and rejected in different cultures and at different times. In the 20th century, the LGBTQ rights movement emerged, leading to greater visibility and acceptance of homosexuality, although discrimination and prejudice still exist in many parts of the world.

development of civilization. Gay men also had equal access to food, indicating that equality prevailed during that time. Sen (2004) states that food production in this civilization is considerable, and there is no possibility of hunger. Both wild plant and wild animal resources were significant, including hunted animals, molluscs, fish, and wild plants for medicines, food, and fodder. It indicates food security among the people because of the presence of resources (Fairservis, 1983). Wild animals were present in the region, which also became the primary source of ending food insecurity and distributing food evenly to the people. The dominance of meat was evident in the Indus Valley civilization, so people preferred eating beef excessively. Fairservis (1983) pointed out that Indus Valley focused on promoting food security by maintaining the food supply chain. Moreover, the Indus civilization developed a variety of technologies through mutual assistance. From 1700 to 1500 BC, the arrival of the Aryans made a significant impact.

## **2.2 Food culture among the Aryans**

The Aryans developed scriptures that allowed them to become civilized, and they focused on developing several distinctive techniques to promote food culture. During centuries of migration, the Aryans also learned many religious customs and deities from the locals and incorporated them into the Hindu belief system (Sen, 2004). Aryans improved their food supply through the use of land. They focused on crop rotation, seasonal sowing, and irrigation techniques (Sen, 2004). Furthermore, crops were rotated between grain and legumes to replenish nitrogen lost through grain-crop cultivation. This indicates that crops were rotated between grains and legumes for protein-containing foods such as peas, grains, pulses, and beans (Roy, 2009). Barley was the first staple food of the Aryans, as it is convenient and the only grain mentioned in the Rig Veda. Two preparation methods were grinding, forming the mixture into cakes, and frying them in butter. Traditionally, parched barley was eaten whole or ground into a meal mixed with yogurt, milk, or water. Appa, which may have been the forerunner of modern Indian sweets, was made by brewing barley flour with water or milk and then frying it in butter and dipping it in honey (Sen, 2004; Kumar et al., 2014). During the Aryan period, homosexuality was evident in society. LGBTQ people were affected only to a certain degree because the community members preferred equal treatment of every person (Kumar et al., 2014). There is limited research available on that period regarding homosexuality; however, there were not any cases of food insecurity among gay individuals.

The Aryans used to eat nutritious and straightforward food. It comprised vegetables, fruits, maize, barley, and wheat. They further consumed milk products and other dairy items. Aryans are further used to consuming honey on a big scale and also consume intoxicating drinks, including sura and soma. A significant contribution of the Aryans was sugar. Sugarcane juice has become a popular

and successful beverage (Sarkar et al., 2015). The Aryans considered food as an element of the “*cosmic cycle*.” Every food has been approximated to positively impact the mind and body. The influence of Aryans on Indian food contributed to the development of spirit, body, and mind. During this era, the Great Hindu Empires strongly emphasized the core elements of food. Further, a proper understanding of its essence and how it led to the development of spirit, body, and mind was also researched. Several other cultures impacted the cuisine following this period (Sarkar et al., 2015). The Aryans focused on ensuring food security and allowing access to every individual residing in the region. Most gay men were not discriminated against based on their sexual orientation (Kumar et al., 2014). Hence, they had equal access to food, which was also a positive point for Aryans. At that time, people accepted the aspect that food should be given to people belonging to any sexual orientation.

Lentils were an essential component of the Aryan diet and the modern Indian diet. A legume that originated in the Middle East, lentils were cultivated in India as early as 1800 B.C. Among the most popular lentils in India were masoor (red dal), moong (green dal), and urad (black dal). Rice and lentils contain complementary nutrients such as proteins, amino acids, vitamins, and trace elements. Thus, when consumed with vegetables, they provide reasonable amounts of nutrients to sustain good health (Sen, 2004). Historically, pulses have played a key role in cropping systems in the Indo-Gangetic Plains. A significant reason for this was their nutritional value. This food is considered one of the most nutrient-rich foods.

Discussing the nutritious value of some food items used by the early communities in India is essential. Raghunathan et al. (2021) explained that nuts, seeds, and pulses are valuable protein sources and are low in sodium, saturated fat, and cholesterol-free. They are quality sources of complex carbohydrates, fibre, minerals, vitamins, phosphorus, and iron. Lentils are a good source of potassium, iron, zinc, and magnesium. However, rice is rich in fibre and focuses on decreasing constipation and improving the digestive system. Aryans further give a lesson regarding how to treat people equally regarding food access. In that period, people were accepted regardless of their sexual orientation. This aspect further motivated Aryans to focus on providing food items to every group of society irrespective of their status and sexual orientation. It is a notable aspect that the LGBTQ community did not face much discrimination.

Another necessary pulse was sprouted peas, often used in cultural festivals. It became a tradition to exchange sprouted peas between women participating. Lentils continue to have an essential place in the Indian culture, which eventually leads to improved mental and physical health (Singh & Singh, 2014). Aryans consumed peas, chickpeas, and kidney beans and used mustard and

linseed oil as cooking media. Vegetables were grown on river banks, near wells, and on the moist beds of lakes to access plenty of water (Sen, 2004).

Sugar was discovered (an English word also named sakkhar in Sanskrit) and is the most significant contribution to India's cuisine. Sugar cane is a giant grass native to the Ganges Delta (Sen, 2004). Aryans discovered an intoxicating or hallucinogenic drink called Soma. Soma refers to a ritual drink composed of a plant that causes an empowering or overwhelming feeling of intoxication. The priests and worshipers offered the Soma to the gods and drank it during religious rituals. It was viewed as a simple, all-powerful cure for all diseases, a bestower of riches in ancient times. The drink was made famous by the gods, even the Supreme Being, giving those who consumed soma confidence, courage, faith, and self-trust. Women collected Soma from the mountains and extracted juice from its stalk.

In the Vedic tradition, Soma is revered as a spiritual principle, a deity, and a cosmic power. Plants are also considered to be part of Soma. Numerous plants represented the original Soma plant. Ancient scholars believed Soma was derived from ephedra, a plant commonly found in Persia and Afghanistan. In India, Soma is obtained from Somalatha (Frawley, 2016).

The literature highlighted the influence of different rituals, cultures, and civilizations on the food culture of India. It is pertinent to mention that Aryans are associated with developing a healthy food culture for people belonging to any sexual orientation. Aryans played a significant role in improving the food culture and treated homosexuals moderately. A nutritious diet further enabled people living in early civilization to maintain good health. It eventually affected their mental and physical health, indicating that food security is essential to ensure a well-functioning society.

### **2.3 The Arrival of Europeans**

After the Aryans, Europeans came to India, including the French, Danish, British, Dutch, and Portuguese. Trading rivalries motivated the Europeans to go to India. Spices had always been popular in Europe, and they traded spices in high quantities. Spices were a great luxury in Europe. In addition to being delicious, they have many medicinal properties, and the European continent has a wide variety of spices (Buettner, 2000). Europeans began trading with India in the 14th century. Arab traders travelled across the Mediterranean to transport spices at that time. In the aftermath of Constantinople's fall to the Turks in 1453, pepper prices increased, so people sailed across the sea and reached Calicut on India's Malabar Coast, known as Kozhikode. Traders from the Middle East and India came to this coast to purchase a variety of species (Sen, 2004). Not any particular incident

related to homosexuals<sup>2</sup> was evident in this phase. Homosexuals did not struggle much in this period related to food security (Sarkar et al., 2015). However, it started changing things when the population of gay men began increasing, and people also started differentiating them based on sexual orientation.

## **2.4 Incorporation of the British East Indian Company**

A British company based in India was established as the East Indian Company in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Initially, the company's primary purpose was to conduct food trade. The company focused on trading commodities, including spices, salt, opium, tea, etc. However, in 1650, when the old guard of British royalist merchants was defeated, the company came under the control of a new type of merchant (Lawson, 2014). British companies established colonialism after this incident. The British Empire was expanded in three ways: through wars and conquests, conquests and subsidiary alliance systems, and annexation through adaptation of doctrines of lapse. Initially, wins were made by military intervention, or parts of the country were annexed. On top of that, political voids caused by the formation of unstable regional groups made it easier for Britishers to establish themselves (Marshall, 1997).

The arrival of the British became a challenging aspect for the LGBTQ community. British caused the divide between communities and further led to discrimination that stopped gay men from getting equal access to different services and necessities. The British may not have directly targeted gay individuals, but instead, they caused the divide based on religion and beliefs. Hence, gay men were also discriminated against by people with solid beliefs as they rejected the idea of homosexuality (Lawson, 2014).

## **2.5 Divulged the people and caused discord**

These three British laws were crucial in creating the British Empire: divide and rule, colonialism, and imperialism. There are some reform measures taken by the British that are commendable. For instance, the British developed a predictable legal system and invested in infrastructure: late nineteenth and mid-twentieth century advancements in development and education. Most colonial policies and reforms were opposed to the wishes and welfare of Indian citizens (Arnold, 2017). The British removed Indian sovereignty. The English educational system was introduced to the region to create an educated and elite upper class.

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<sup>2</sup> Homosexuals are individuals who are attracted to people of the same gender. This is a natural variation of human sexuality and is a protected characteristic in many countries. Despite this, homosexuality is still stigmatized and discriminated against in some parts of the world. The LGBTQ community, of which homosexuals are a part, continues to advocate for equal rights and acceptance.



The interests of the country. Although the British introduced some positive and predictable laws, they also imposed repressive and discriminatory policies. Force may control the natives and prevent anti-British agitation, protests, and violence against the British in India (Rahman et al., 2018).

Gupta (2006) explained that as part of the British rules and regulations, they also introduced Section 377, which identifies homosexuality as a sin and calls for punishment and ex-communication. In 1861, British India passed section 377 of the Indian Penal Code. Macaulay believed that discussing or debating this "*heinous crime*" was insulting to all Christians, and he stated this in the introduction to the proposed legislation; as a result, the British created hatred toward the LGBTQ community in the Indian community (Gupta, 2006). For the first time, it started punishing a particular group by claiming they were sinners and doing unnatural things; as the 20th century progressed, the Supreme Court and NGOs started supporting LGBTQ rights by addressing articles 21 and 14, which addressed equality and the freedom to select ones, sexual partner. These two articles led Supreme Court judges to abolish section 377, which was created in the 18th century by British India.

British invasion also became a significant reason that created discrimination against homosexuals. The implementation of the law further forced LGBTQ to face issues in finding employment and gaining access to quality food and healthcare services. It divided the people based on their sexual orientation, and hence, it was a condemnable act.

## **2.6 Food as a Tool to Divide and Connect People**

In ancient times, ancient Indians believed that humans did not possess equal rights due to a lack of awareness (Aggarwal, 2018). In earlier days in India, the caste system originated. The caste system divides people into four categories: Shudras, Vaishyas, Kshatriyas, and Brahmins. The groups were organized based on lifestyle and profession. This made it easy to divide people into smaller groups. The caste system in India is believed to have originated in various ways. The Hindu belief system holds that Brahma, the creator of the universe, had divided his body into Varnas. Brahman was born from the head, Kshatriya from hands, Vaishya from thighs, and sudra from the feet (HindusatnTimes, 2003). Aryans were historically responsible for establishing the caste system. In contrast to other groups, the Aryans disregard local cultures and push them into the jungles of the country's south (Sharma, 2005). Pruthi (2004) pointed out that food became a significant element that divided people based on the caste system. The food had become indicative of the placement within the hierarchy. Food also divided people based on their sexual orientation. People with strict beliefs even rejected the idea of eating food on the same plate as a homosexual person.



Hinduism relies on the modes of existence that include specific qualities found in human beings. In Hinduism, the three Guans are sattva, tamas, and rajas. These include the qualities or attributes that are located within humans. Aside from wisdom, intelligence, honesty, and goodness, the Sattva is associated with many other positive attributes. Rajas have various features, such as passion, pride, and courage. Tamas includes attributes like being dull, stupid, and lacking in imagination. Individuals with and without creativity choose different occupations according to their abilities (Pruthi, 2004).

Understanding the caste system within Hinduism and its association with food is essential. Brahmin refers to a caste within the Hindu society, and Brahmins are considered a priestly class as they focus on serving as religious teachers or priests. However, Kshatriyas refers to a significant element of Hindu castes in India's northern half (Pruthi, 2004). Warriors are included in the Kshatriyas. Vaishya also refers to a caste, and Vaishyas generally take care of cattle and agriculture.

Homosexuals can be found in different castes within the Hindu community, and unfortunately, they are discriminated against in almost every caste. Shudras or Dalits are the lowest-ranked within the caste system, generally labourers and artisans. The Brahman is said to have inherent Sattva qualities. Kshatriyas and Vaisyas have intrinsic qualities of Rajas, whereas Sudras have inherent attributes of Tamas. Like humans, food also contains different doses of these attributes that impact the intelligence of its consumers. Vegetables, fruits, milk, honey, roots, and vegetables are part of the sattvic diet of Brahmans and Vaisyas. Tamasic qualities are attributed to different types of meat (Sathyamala, 2019). Sudra communities consume different types of meat, excluding beef, further separating this community from others based on food consumption. The notable point is that if someone born within the Sudra community desires to eat beef, it would create food insecurity as the person would have to struggle a lot to gain access to meat (Pruthi, 2004). Attempts were made to unify the Hindus to create a nationalist identity and bring the outcaste untouchables Dalit (Shudras), who consumed beef, into the Hindu fold of caste purity. Hence, contrary to the notion that vegetarianism is superior, the food hierarchy within Hinduism is a function of caste structure since vegetarianism is regarded as an upper-caste identity (Sathyamala, 2019). Homosexuals, even those born in a higher caste, continue to face discrimination because they are not generally accepted.

According to Agarwal (2016), India's two greatest obsessions are food and family. The author considered India a nation of foodies and argued that Indians love different types of dishes. In Indian society, food has the potential to improve social relationships, and food is also a means of connecting people. For many Indians, sitting down with their family for a meal is one of the most meaningful activities of the day. People in India firmly believe that eating together will help build stronger

relationships in the family. If a family rejects a member based on sexual orientation, then the family members do not generally eat at the same table. They do not have meals with homosexual members, which eventually creates a divide in the family (Agarwal, 2016). The caste system comprises hereditary classes of Hindu society, distinguished by relative degrees of ritual or pollution as well as social statuses. A significant drawback of Hindu society is that it divides people based on the caste system. Brahmins belong to the highest order in the hierarchy, while Shudras (Dalits) belong to the lowest order. About 25% of the Indian population belongs to the lower castes. The infant mortality rate for children of lower castes is higher, iron and vitamin supplementation rates are lower, and average heights for their age are shorter. Additionally, they have less access to public health services than children of upper castes (Choudhury et al., 2021). LGBTQ people may belong to any caste. However, consequences can be severe for them if they are born into a low caste, and this further makes society start hating them for no particular reason. Hence, homosexuals tend to be in difficulties whether they are in a high or a low caste (Choudhury et al., 2021). Also, a gay person belonging to a Dalit (Shudra) would not be accepted by society and may face extreme difficulties in gaining access to quality and nutritious food (Singh & Singh, 2014).

## **2.7 Poverty**

Separating people has shown detrimental effects on minorities, such as those from backward classes, the LGBTQ community, and members of a few religious minorities. Shah (2015) pointed out that LGBTQ people can be found in almost every caste within India. This section discusses how poverty affects access to healthy, nutritious food and affects the health and adequate nutrition among LGBTQ Indians. Without economic stability, resources such as food, water, shelter, and clothing cannot be provided. Extending this concept to include access to health care, education, and transportation is also possible. In government agencies, the terms "absolute poverty" and "relative poverty" are used to describe poverty (Heston, 2019). Poverty is primarily caused by external (social) and internal (personal) factors. In general, individuals believe that the Indian government should be responsible for reducing poverty when it is attributed to external factors, such as the inability of society to provide high-quality schools and high-quality food. LGBTQ people living in poverty tend to face extreme difficulties in gaining access to quality food, thereby leading to poor health conditions (Heston, 2019). The lack of equal opportunities for poor people further increases inequality in society. In addition, internal attributions of poverty may reduce people's willingness to help people in need. Internal attributions of poverty are reasons people attribute to their poverty, such as lack of education,

work ethic, motivation, and effort. These attributions reflect individuals' beliefs about the causes of their financial situation and their responsibility for it. (Davidai, 2022).

Sridhar & Jenifer (2019) investigated the experiences and context of stigma discrimination experienced by men who have sex with males in Chennai. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with people involved in community agencies and public sex environments. Based on the research findings, discrimination against gay men was evident, along with violence against these men. The researchers also argued that gay men do not get the desired opportunities for work and earning. The findings further revealed that financial well-being is adversely affected by factors such as discrimination and favouritism. Krijnen et al., (2022). Stated that beliefs about economic uncertainty are associated with how individuals respond to social welfare policies, even when political ideology is controlled. Political ideologies influence wealth and poverty throughout the world. People living in poverty are hard-working; however, they struggle to find equal opportunities compared to people belonging to wealthy families. A similar case is found with LGBTQ people who face discrimination in employment and food access.

A report published by the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) on food insecurity and snap participation in the LGBTQ community mentioned that among LGBTQ individuals, 32% of females and 23% of males reported not possessing sufficient money for food. This aspect indicates the relationship between LGBTQ, poverty, and food insecurity UCLA (2016). Around 32% of LGBTQ individuals aged 19-28 reported they did not have enough funds for food. The report also stated that LGBTQ people are often neglected by their own families, which further makes it difficult for them to survive. Also, they are discriminated against in employment, which eventually pushes them toward poverty. Due to the unavailability of the required money to purchase food, they have to suffer from food insecurity, which negatively affects their mental and physical health UCLA (2016). There is a need to change the mindset of individuals living in society so that gay men and women are acceptable in society and can live a life with freedom.

## **2.8 Barriers to Accessing Nutritious Foods**

An earlier section discussed the reasons for poverty and how it impacts gay men in India. This section will discuss how poverty affects the ability to obtain adequate and healthy nutrition. The World Bank and other international organizations have stated that improving nutrition in poor communities requires increased income (Krijnen et al., 2022). Many parts of the developing world are plagued by malnutrition (Behrman and Deolalikar, 1987). Sharma et al., 2020 compiled national data from an analysis of consumption expenditure collected from 0.102 million households in 7469 villages and 5264 urban blocks in India. Most Indian adults consume less than the recommended daily

intake of 2503 kcal per person, except for the richest (Krijnen et al., 2022). Among Indians, most people consume less than the dietary recommendation of 2,800 calories per day for males and 2,200 calories per day for females, covering all food groups except whole grains, tubers, and starchy vegetables. It indicates that homosexuals face barriers to nutritious food as they do not have enough income to purchase costly food items. Wealthy people generally eat fruit in high quantities; however, poor people, including LGBTQ people, consume fruit rarely. In India, an average of only 40% of the recommended amount of fruit is consumed (Duthie et al., 2018). In addition, there is high consumption of unhealthy fats and oils like palm oil, which is less expensive and is associated with obesity and other chronic diseases (Davidai, 2022). Homosexual people may face more barriers compared to other Indians because of their sexual orientation (Sarkar et al., 2015). They do not get enough employment opportunities, and they are even discriminated against in accessing health services.

Fruits and vegetables contain vitamins, antioxidants, and phytochemicals, which are beneficial for health (Duthie et al., 2018). For 12 weeks, 19 women and 26 men (aged 39-58) whose intake of fruits, vegetables, and juices was insufficient (3 portions daily) were randomly assigned to consume 480 grams of fruits and vegetables or 300 millilitres of fresh fruit juice each day or to continue eating their usual diets. Genomic stability, antioxidant capacity, and nutritional biomarkers (vitamin C, carotenoids, and B vitamins) were assessed. In addition to post-intervention measurements of glucose, homocysteine, lipids, blood pressure, weight, and arterial stiffness, samples were also collected after a washout period of six weeks to identify barriers to healthy eating and to reassess the consumption of fruit, fruit juice, and vegetables 12 months after the study was completed (Duthie et al., 2018). The intervention group consumed 8.4 portions per day more than the control group after 12 weeks, compared to 5.6 portions per day in the control group. The intervention group showed significant improvements in plasma levels of vitamin C (35%), folate (15%), carotenoids, and lutein/zeaxanthin (Sathyamala, 2019). A 12-month follow-up study found that the three main barriers to meeting recommended fruit and vegetable intakes cost more than their income.

A reduced income is intimately associated with poverty and food insecurity because of the factors discussed thus far. Where a person lives in India has a significant impact on the level of acceptance that they get for the LGBTQ community throughout the last many decades. During the period of the colonies, the discrimination that was associated with sexual orientation and gender identity hindered many people from participating in public life and finding jobs. Lesbians and gays in India, a hostile environment subject to unethical workplace bullying, were presented with a variety of worries, observations, and questions regarding their sexual orientation and identity. India is a

country with a large population of LGBTQ people. There are several difficulties that gay men experience in the workplace, and it is also very difficult to maintain secure employment due to their sexual orientation, which results in poverty.

## **2.9 India's Attitude to The LGBTQ Population**

An LGBTQ person is a person who identifies as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender. Members of this group are often referred to as homosexuals. Nowadays, gender equality is a commonly recognized issue worldwide (Duthie et al., 2018). Consequently, before the Civil Rights in India movement, homosexuals were viewed as unequal and denied civil rights. As a result of their sexual orientation, these individuals are also subject to harassment, discrimination, and violence. Due to family disapproval and harassment at school, the youth suffered mental health problems, left school, and became homeless. Among other things, discrimination affects the main determinants of the social well-being of LGBTQ people, including their education, employment, health care, and housing (Agarwal, 2021). Indians are guaranteed freedom of expression, equality, an equal position and opportunity, and fraternity - a brotherly feeling of brotherhood amongst Indians with respect for dignity. According to the Supreme Court of India, this is one of the most fundamental principles of the Constitution. Specifically, articles 14 and 21 pertain to equality of opportunity. In Article 14, it is stated that no state shall rob any person of justice or equal standing before the law within India. While Article 21 includes the right to life and several aspects of life, it covers the right to opportunity (Shukla, 2014).

## **2.10 LGBTQ employees are discriminated against at work.**

This section will discuss the discrimination faced by gay men at work in India. In the previous section, we discussed poverty and discrimination impacting gay men and their food culture. The recruitment and internal promotion processes can lead to discriminatory behaviour by colleagues, superiors, and various company policies against lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transgender individuals. However, despite the Supreme Court of India overriding Section 377, there are still many incidents that can be observed in Indian workplaces. Companies like Apple and Burger King have started supporting LGBTQ communities (Bagdi et al., 2021). According to Kar et al. (2021), suicides were reported among LGBTQ group members as a result of abuse at workplaces. In the context of private employment or work fields that are not government positions, no law prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation. Several people have been dismissed because of their sexual orientation (Shah, 2015). Aside from that, there are no strict regulations to prevent sexual harassment of LGBTQ individuals in the workplace, such as the rules protecting women (Fewster, 2018).

### **2.11 Stigma and Exclusion as Forces for Impacting Gay Men's Mental Health**

In India, parents' acceptance of their gay child is one of the most challenging issues. This is due to public opinion that homosexuality is illegal and that being gay is not a natural state. Parents are unwilling to accept their children as homosexuals. As a result, they only try to suppress their children's sexual identity or push them away from home to make them homeless (Tripathi & Talwar, 2022). According to data submitted to the Supreme Court of India, about 2.5 million homosexuals live in India (Bora, 2019). Access to health care is limited to gay men (Choudhury et al., 2021). Most gay men are not interested in visiting clinics due to fear of discrimination toward doctors (Ahmad, 2022). In addition, there are challenges associated with the cost of hospitalization due to poverty. Due to heterosexual peer pressure and unsupportive parents, many gay men suffer from mental illnesses such as anxiety and depression (Fewster, 2018). The fear of society prevents parents from allowing their children to be homosexual. Most parents fail to comprehend their children's feelings (Joy et al., 2021). Many gay men, especially in some parts of India, attempt to conceal their sexuality, and some commit suicide as a result (Rosario et al., 2002).

There is still widespread discrimination and stigma directed toward homosexual men and bisexual people. These beliefs endanger not only their physical and mental well-being but also their relationships with other men and society (Krijnen et al., 2022). These unfavourable points of view and practices have the potential to put at risk both the availability and the quality of medical care for gay men, bisexual men, and other men who have sexual relations with other men. Society must address the many impediments to health that are present on all levels if it is to achieve the goal of ensuring the long-term well-being of gay and bisexual males. People who are identified as lesbian, gay, or bisexual are required to have a complete grasp of the risks associated with mental illness, as well as how stress may be avoided and how mental health can be strengthened (Davidai, 2022).

The mental health of those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGB) has lately been the subject of renewed concern among researchers (Sathyamala, 2019). The results of this research suggest that gay males and lesbians are more likely than their straight counterparts to struggle with mental health difficulties such as drug abuse, affective disorders, and even suicidal thoughts and behaviours. Minority members who are subjected to discrimination and stigma are at an increased risk of developing mental health problems as a direct result of the stressful social environment in which they live. Researchers believe that this is the most likely reason for the greater frequency of mental health issues among those who identify as homosexual, gay, bisexual, or transgender (Davidai, 2022).

## **2.12 Summary of the chapter**

The literature review has focused on the historical background and factors affecting the LGBTQ community. The literature shows that homosexuality is still stigmatized in India, and the LGBTQ community often faces discrimination and limited acceptance. Food discrimination against the LGBTQ community can take various forms, including denying them service at restaurants or bars or subjecting them to harassing comments or behaviour from staff or other customers. This type of discrimination is unacceptable and goes against the principles of equality and non-discrimination. Such incidents can have a significant impact on the mental health and well-being of the individuals affected and can also contribute to a hostile or unwelcoming environment for the LGBTQ community. There have been efforts to promote LGBTQ rights and support the community, such as the annual pride parade in cities across India. However, significant progress still needs to be made regarding legal protections and social acceptance. The study's research question is “How does the food culture impact gay men in India?” The research aims to explore food culture among gay men in India.



### **3. Research Methodology**

A phenomenological approach to qualitative research methodology examines the lived experiences of food insecurity among gay men from India because of their financial stability. This methodology aim was selected to explore and capture real-life experiences of gay Indian men who are experiencing food insecurity due to discrimination. In the following sections, I provide a detailed description of methodological procedures.

An overview of the rationale behind qualitative research is presented in section 3.2 of this chapter. In section 3.4, I will describe the phenomenological approach that will help the researcher describe an existing phenomenon of the universal principle. It is also helpful to include a phenomenological approach in qualitative studies to examine the perceived experiences of humans. For this purpose, the researcher will look at the lived experiences of food insecurity among gay men from India. In section 3.5, we will discuss participants' selection criteria, such as the size of the sample and recruitment methods. The 3.6 section of this report briefly describes the data collection process. A description of the data analysis procedures is provided in section 3.9. A summary is presented at the end of the chapter as a description of the researcher's lens.

#### **3.1 Research Design**

It is the design of the research that determines the structure of the methodological approach the researcher will employ. Research designs describe how the researcher will conduct the research based on sequential methodological patterns. Research design is usually selected based on qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods (Sileyew, 2019). Using a qualitative approach, the researcher will analyze the problems related to food security that are partially rooted in discrimination faced by gay Indian men in the present study. To improve the examination of the current research findings, a qualitative design is selected to collect information from the participants, in this study it is information about the experiences of Indian gay men and food security issues. This research design aims to provide answers to the research questions by interpreting the information from the participants

#### **3.2 Research rationale for qualitative methods**

Before this study, little information had been available about the difficulties faced by Indian gay men regarding food security, so qualitative research was recommended. The discrimination imposed on Indian gay men at work leads to financial instability and food insecurity (Tree et al., 2022; Mallory et al., 2017). Notably, Indian gay men are particularly vulnerable to homelessness and



discrimination at school and work (Fraser et al., 2019), leading to food insecurity. An overview of the problems faced by Indian gay men is presented in section 3 of the Literature review.

Furthermore, increased qualitative research will assist in identifying ways to raise awareness about food insecurity among Indian gay men. Moreover, this study aims to examine the lived experiences of individuals within the world through phenomenology, referred to as a qualitative research methodology. This method aims to help researchers understand the lived experience of the individuals and ensure the alignment of the specific research questions (Neubauer et al., 2019). “Phenomenological research follows a human science approach, emphasizing discovery, description, and meaning in the texts and attitudes of the individual” (Guillen et al., 2019, p. 220). In-depth interviews and retrospective reflections on the experience are integral to phenomenology (Beharry & Crozier, 2008). Participants will be invited to share their experiences and respond accordingly, emphasizing the importance of participants. Data from qualitative studies are managed and streamlined using methods that preserve their complexity and context (Atieno, 2009). To address issues related to food insecurity in gay men, it is essential to understand their lived experiences.

### **3.3 Research Philosophy**

Philosophy refers to the researcher's beliefs and experiences based on assumptions aimed at solving the research problem. The research's structured outlook is determined by selecting the research philosophy. Research methodological choices are guided by interpretivism, positivism, and pragmatism (Ryan, 2018). Using interpretivism as a methodological approach to solving research problems can be described as the methodological approach focusing on social scientific studies. Interpretivism philosophy explores the cultural differences and food insecurities faced by Indian gay men in the present study. The interpretivism approach provides the researcher with existing research details by ensuring the flexibility to use literature-based information. It improves their knowledge by giving the existing work details of the research. Interpretivism philosophy has the considerable advantage of providing details of critical discussion and highlighting the key relationships regarding the topic (Pham, 2018). Interpretivism is a significant representation of a methodological approach to social scientific study. This is informed by certain philosophies referred to as phenomenology and hermeneutics that focus on the ability of humans to make the meaning of their worlds (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2020). Notably, phenomenology can be explained as the science of conscious experience focusing on the meaning of phenomena. It is, therefore, appropriate to select the interpretivism philosophy for the qualitative data analysis as it provides detailed information about the

discrimination faced by Indian gay men. Furthermore, it provides information regarding the cultural discrimination experienced by gay men and its impact on their daily lives.

### **3.4 Phenomenological Research Approach**

By looking at the lived experiences of individuals, the phenomenological analysis aims to identify and define phenomena by looking at their lived experiences. Max van Manen (1990) stated, "The essence of a phenomenon is universal, which can be described through a study of the structure that governs the instances or particular manifestation of the essence of that phenomenon. A universal or essence may only be intuited or grasped through a study of the particulars or instances encountered in lived experiences"(p.10).

This suggests that phenomenology studies associations with the phenomena manifested in the experiences of the individuals, in addition to their perceptions and understanding of meaning in the subjective experience.

Jonathan et al. (2007) sought to understand how participants make sense of their personal and social worlds using interpretative phenomenological analysis. The interpretive phenomenological analysis approach has been chosen considering the focus of the study on the difficulties Indian gay men face in accessing adequate nutritious food. Based on the literature chapter, this research question seeks to understand why social discrimination affects education, employment, and financial opportunities, resulting in poverty and difficulty accessing adequate nutrition. A further objective of phenomenology is to represent the essence of lived experience in the form of textual evidence (Gill, 2014).

Participants' experiences can be interpreted insightfully through Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) research, going beyond surface-level descriptions of results (Rose et al., 2019). A robust evidence base supports IPA studies (Mjøsund et al., 2017). The result may be enlightening interpretations backed by robust evidence supporting the data. A phenomenological perspective is used to illuminate the way individuals perceive their lives from a phenomenological perspective. Researchers can explore prominent healthcare issues by constructing insightful interpretive accounts of healthcare experiences using this method of qualitative inquiry (Peat et al., 2019). Moreover, this method allows researchers to showcase the daily difficulties faced by the participants and raise awareness among the Indian community. Researchers learn more effectively from the experiences of others, as stated by Neubauer et al. (2019). We can develop new meanings and appreciations from a subjective perspective to enhance or reorient our understanding of experiences.

### **3.5. Research Approach**

Research approaches provide the methodology's lens and procedures the researcher adopts during the research process. A research approach facilitates the systematic collection of data through a consistent collection method. Inductive and deductive approaches are two broad methods of reasoning that aid in the comprehensive analysis of the qualitative data through either a top-bottom or bottom-top approach to test an existing theory or develop a new one to validate the research findings (Benitez-Correa et al., 2019). The deductive approach is intended to test existing theories to solve the research problem, while the inductive approach is designed to develop a new theory based on specific observations (Soiferman, 2010). The inductive approach has the advantage that it enables the discussion of participant experiences without enforcing the previous assumptions (Bingham & Witkowsky, 2022)."

The research used the inductive approach to collect information for the current study based on existing information. This study's methodology employed an inductive approach to generate theoretical information from selected data. Inductive research allows the researcher to observe in-depth considerations regarding food insecurity and cultural differences that Indian gay men face due to discrimination. An inductive qualitative research approach provides information about the foundational theories and related concepts to ensure the validity of information (Azungah, 2018). Using this kind of approach allows for the collection of information from existing findings and the accumulation of valid results according to the research questions.

### **3.6 Data collection approach**

The data collection method through primary or secondary sources highlights how the information will be collected to execute the research. This critical stage details the research instruments and tools to collect the data. A primary data collection method is interviews, surveys, and online questionnaires (Nayak et al., 2019). Conversely, secondary data refers to the systematic investigation to examine the existing findings (Sileyew, 2019). The researcher gathers data by conducting interviews, surveys and online questionnaires.

The data was collected directly from the participants using interviews. Thus, this study used primary data collection to analyze the experiences of gay Indian men who experience food insecurity. To collect data on food security considering gay men's daily experience, interviews are an effective method of gathering information.

As a result of primary data collection, the researcher can present the experiences of Indian gay men experiencing food insecurity. Primary data collection improves the reliability of the research, as it is close to the source or participant (Mwita, 2022). Since this data collection approach provides

accurate information regarding the participants, it is the most appropriate method for analyzing the experiences of Indian gay men. Additionally, IPA research can contribute to existing theories by providing information and a detailed examination of the lived experiences of Indian gay men. Discrimination has adversely affected Indian gay men's quality of life and caused them to suffer from food insecurity. By collecting primary data, researchers can ensure their research findings are valid and comprehensive (Mazhar et al., 2021).

### **3.7 Participants selection and recruiting criteria**

According to Sharma (2017), sample strategies refer to the methods, tools, and processes used to collect a sample of respondents from the general population. Snowball sampling is used as a sampling technique to collect the data for this study. This technique involves enlisting new participants as sample members from a small number of existing contacts or seeds (Park et al., 2019). As a result, the researcher of this study has focused mainly on LGBTQ groups since that was the purpose of the study. It is important to note here that the entire LGBTQ community group is quite diverse (Humsafar.org, 2022). Hence, the researcher has only considered gay men residing in India. The key reason for only opting for gay people from India is that it is essential to increase awareness of dietetic practices among gay men (Joy et al., 2021). Hence, acquiring information from Indian gay people will be relevant. In addition, the participants selected for this research were approached through an organization in India that empowers the movement of the LGBTQ community. The researcher contacts the NGO Humsafar Trust in India for the present study. The primary justification for selecting this organization is that it is one of the oldest organizations encouraging the LGBTQ community, which Ashok Row Kavi established in April 1994 (Humsafar.org, 2022). This trust started its operations by encouraging homosexual men and lesbians to attend its courses at its drop-in center, making it the first openly gay community-based organization in Mumbai to be given space in a municipal building (Humsafar.org, 2022).

NGO Humsafar Trust provides their communities with legal assistance, crisis management, mental health, and nutrition counselling. It also supports groups such as Yaariyan for young LGBTQ individuals and Umang for young LGBTQ individuals. These groups are vital in spreading awareness and empowerment for the LGBTQ community through different modes. These groups cater to these people's employment and education issues and rectify them. As a result, participants in this organization were contacted for interviews by the researcher. Apart from the organization, the researcher has connected with the respondents through social media like Facebook and meetups. It is important to note that all the participants were able to communicate in English, a requirement set due to the multilingual landscape of India and the researcher's limited knowledge of the myriad local

languages. A recruitment advertisement in Appendix A indicates that the recruitment targeted individuals over the age of 20. As a key aspect of IPA utilized in this study, this age criterion was developed on the premise that individuals beyond this age would possess a more mature and varied experience of food insecurity, which would be crucial to gathering depth and nuance in narratives.

### **3.8. Research instrument**

The primary data collection instrument is semi-structured interviews. The semi-structured interviews included four sections in which seven parts of the question are used to collect data. All of these parts contain different types of questions regarding the determination and its main reasons and reasons for promoting well-being among gay men. The interview question guide is given in Appendix C., and the timeline of data collection, data analysis, findings and conclusion is provided in Appendix E

### **3.9. Data analysis technique**

The researcher used IPA techniques in the current study to analyze and organize responses collected from Indian gay men. Following collecting information from the primary sources, the researcher analyzed the information using a data analysis technique. Managing the information in a structured manner using IPA (interpretive phenomenological analysis) is possible.

#### **3.9.1. Analysis of Data using IPA**

IPA is based on utilizing a multi-step investigation of the processes contributing to the steering of the analyst and the analysis based on the transitioning from the collected raw data to the identification of interpretative themes (Engward & Goldspink, 2020). The performance of IPA analysis is based on six steps.

#### **1. Reading and Re-Reading**

This is the initial step that involves reading and re-reading the transcripts for the gathering of increased data.

#### **2. Initial Noting**

These steps will involve noting initial notes for the systematic capturing of observations.

#### **3. Developing Emergent Themes**

This step will involve the development of emerging and prototype themes for each item and attending to reflexive reverberations.

#### **4. Searching for connections across emergent themes**

This step will allow the researchers to search for associations across experiential statements associated with the identified elements of the study.

## **5. Moving to the following cases**

This step involves the transitioning of the researcher to the next element.

## **6. Looking for patterns across issues**

This step requires the researcher to identify patterns across cases or elements involved in the study.

### **3.10. Reflexivity and Positionality**

A researcher's reflexivity refers to examining one's beliefs and practices during the research process (Olmos-Vegaa et al., 2022). The involvement of reflexivity in this project will assist the researchers in examining their judgments, practices, and systems of belief during the process associated with gathering data. Moreover, it will also help the researchers in identifying any personal beliefs that can potentially affect the research. In contrast, positionality refers to how one applies knowledge to the research. *Positionality* can be defined as using socio-historical information to influence the researcher's decision to solve a research problem in qualitative research (Holmes, 2020). In this project's context, positionality can directly impact the research performance and the determination of the overall outcomes and results represented in the final reports or decisions. According to Greener (2018), constraints refer to the elements of the study process that influence the interpretation of results. As limitations, situations, and flaws can arise during research, the researcher has no control over these factors. Reflexivity and positionality have been recognized as enormously significant for this project. This is because it will contribute to the development and communication of the rigorous qualitative research applied in this study and will also affect the researcher's performance in achieving effective results and outcomes.

### **3.11. Ethical considerations**

Ethical specifications are essential to protect the participants of the research from harm. As part of the present study, the researcher adopts specific ethical considerations to analyze the experiences of gay men regarding food insecurity in India. Among its responsibilities are the protection of participants and the confidentiality of their experiences. To accomplish this, the researcher keeps participants' responses and data confidential during interviews. The researcher collected information related to the life experiences of gay men during the interviews and approve a consent form from the participants if they desire to participate. Following the ethical considerations enhanced the validity of research findings and broaden the scope of the study. The consent forms, which contain the information to make research subjects aware of the research aims, scope, and purpose to help them decide whether or not to participate in a research study, are given to the participants, as shown in Appendix B.

### **3.12. Chapter Summary**

In this chapter, information is provided regarding how to research and analyze the experiences of Indian gay men experiencing food insecurity due to discrimination. The researcher used the methodological structure of the qualitative research design and the inductive approach. Indian gay men share information regarding discrimination and food insecurity using IPA data analysis techniques. Using the interview approach as the method for data collection provides evidence of the effectiveness of the data collection method. Furthermore, the chapter discussed the ethical concerns and limitations encountered during the research.

## 4.0 Chapter: Results

### 4.1: Participants' Demographics

Gay men in India who participated in this study on food insecurity and their experiences with health and well-being come from various backgrounds regarding their age, occupations, and places of residence. The group's members ranged in age from their early 30s to their late 40s, and their occupations included working in Canada, owning a textile business in Bombay, doing journalism in Pune, and teaching in Goa. There are a variety of educational and geographic backgrounds, with history and experiences from cities like Mysore, Bangalore, Hyderabad, and Pune. Many participants have fascinating life stories, such as Blue Sorpotel's transition from religious studies to intellectual endeavours and Naveen's juxtaposition of his Bengali origin and current residency in Pune.

Participant (Pseudonym)	Age	Gender	Location	Income
Nar, Adam	32 years	Gay	Canada	Did not wish to disclose
Nickel	49 years	Cisgender Male (Gay)	Bombay	Did not wish to disclose
Naveen	Did not mention	Cisgender Gay Man	Pune, Maharashtra	8 to 9,00,000 PA per annual backyard
Kishore	36 years	Gay Male	Pune	Did not disclose
Blue sorpotel	43 years	Gay or Queer Male	Goa	Did not disclose. However, he mentioned that he is from a middle-class family.



Participant (Pseudonyms)	Other information
<b>Nar, Adam</b>	He previously lived in India.
<b>Nickel</b>	Runs own handloom textile firm.
<b>Naveen</b>	The participant is a Journalist and a native Bengali speaker raised in West Bengal.
<b>Kishore</b>	Kishore works in investment banking as a management consultant. His schooling up to the 12th grade was completed at Mysore, Karnataka, where he was born and raised. He eventually relocated to Bangalore to complete his undergraduate studies, worked for a while, and continued his education. He is currently living and working in Pune. His parents are based in Mysore, although he lives independently there in Pune.
<b>Blue sorpotel</b>	Currently, he teaches communication as an adjunct professor. He was born in Kuwait, but his family left during Saddam Hussein's invasion in 1990 and returned to India. He lived with his mother for a while, but because of issues in their relationship, she is now living there alone. Notably, Blue spent 11 years in the church training for the priesthood before deciding to quit. He criticizes the organization and stresses the significance of fighting for queer rights. In addition, he pursued his master's degree in English literature at Hyderabad's English and Foreign Languages University, where he spent around 12 years. He even produced a research paper about his church experiences while studying.

#### 4.2: Results

This section discusses four themes that analyze the complex relationship between food insecurity, identity, and societal dynamics in India: (1) participant understanding/knowledge of food insecurity; (2) experiences and the consequences (mental/physical/emotional) of food insecurity; (3) how experiences as gay men (discrimination, families, religion, coming out) impact their food insecurity (social determinants of health); and (4) thoughts about community advocacy – how to make things better.

Themes	Main Content
Participant understanding/knowledge of food insecurity;	Challenges of nutritious food accessibility in India
Experiences and the consequences (mental/physical/emotional) of food insecurity	Adverse health effects of poor diet; financial struggles and food choices; mental health consequences; lack of social support and vulnerability
How experiences as gay men (discrimination, families, religion, coming out) impact their food insecurity (social determinants of health)	The intersection of sexuality and food insecurity; family role in helping gay men and the consequences of lack of support; personal struggles and family dynamics; religious guilt and church influence; leaving the church and embracing identity; and mental health toll of discrimination
Thoughts about community advocacy – how to make things better	Collective struggle with food access among the gay community; the need for a more robust social support structure for gay men

#### 4.2.1: Theme 1: Participant understanding/knowledge of food insecurity

Participants view food insecurity as a complex issue with many underlying causes, such as low individual income. The researcher's comprehension of this issue is deepened by the emerging central aspect: challenges of nutritious food accessibility in India. All participants defined food insecurity as not having access to healthy food. Participants frequently mentioned how challenging it is to get wholesome food in India. As Nar, Adam explained:

*"I think one meaning I have in my head about food insecurity would be accessibility to nutritious food and the inaccessibility to nutritious food that leads to malnutrition in the population. I think these would be the two slightly different distinctions of food insecurity in my head."*

Nar, Adam's definition of food insecurity encompasses two key aspects. First, it involves the challenge of accessing nutritious food, and second, it relates to the consequences of this inaccessibility, which can lead to malnutrition among the population. According to Nar Adam, food insecurity has both an access and a health dimension. For Nickel, food insecurity meant,

*"Food insecurity means people who are struggling to eat food, like have four courses of four meals a day, basically and in India, there is, I come from India, which is a third-world country, and we have this struggle with food, with poverty and I understand this concern."*

Nickel defined food insecurity as the struggle to access adequate food, particularly the four meals daily. He acknowledges that in India, as a third-world country, this struggle is intertwined with issues of poverty and is a significant concern. In a similar essence, Naveen defined food insecurity as,

*"So, food insecurity... In my opinion, food security would be a lack of the material resources to access food, be the lack of mental and psychological well-being to access food."*

Naveen defined food insecurity as not only a lack of material resources to access food but also a lack of mental and psychological well-being to access food. This definition highlights the multidimensional nature of food insecurity, which encompasses the physical ability to obtain food and the mental state required. Naveen further shared knowledge regarding the suffering and struggles of poor people concerning accessibility to food as,

*"It makes me feel when I see other people struggling for food, you know, when I see a lot of poverty, and I live in a city like Bombay, which is which has extreme poverty again. And you see people trying very hard to make ends meet. You know this day on the streets and slums on the road. And there's this struggle, this pain. I see that pain is also sometimes you live in denial. You try not to let it bother you because if it starts bothering you, then your peace of mind goes away, and you know you can't do*

*much about it at times. And so you choose your battles; you choose who you want to help and who you don't want to because you can't help everybody. Yeah”*

Similarly, regarding the challenges and barriers to food accessibility, Kishore said, “Other expenses will sometimes limit the daily food plan, and we need to adjust.” Kishore highlighted that financial constraints can often limit daily food plans, leading to the need for adjustments. Blue Sorpotel shared another perspective on food insecurity and quoted,

*It is not about the insecurity of not knowing where your food is going to come from, where, how your next meal is going to be paid for, or how you have to be responsible for every little thing like, you know, that gets wasted... especially during my Ph.D. days or whatever, that was when I had to be very, very mindful of like everything.*

Kishore further shared his own understanding of the interrelation between homophobia and food insecurity. Kishore mentioned:

*Yeah, I think all these are interrelated, like ohh you will get, then you came out, then you face these problems*

Kishore further emphasized that education can serve as a key to the intersection of food insecurity and homophobia,

*I think it is a very simple thing they should not. I mean, like a, it should like work on educating people.....*

Besides this, Blue Sorpotel shared a personal perspective, linking sexuality with class uncertainly, *And I know that there are so many different kinds of gay men, you know, and sometimes people whose stories we don't hear very much. So I don't know whether some of these things have to do with sexuality as much as with class or it's kind of even intersection in what ways, but It's tough to make a generalization for me because I can only think of some people who have it difficult, like in a very difficult way. So, Making that distinction only for gay men versus others is, I'm not very sure how it is. Walks. Really. I'm not sure I have an answer to that. Because these are intersecting, sexuality is something that comes along with your class. Maybe not. Sometimes because of your class.*

Blue Sorpotel further shared the experience of food insecurity, highlighting the anxiety of not knowing where the next meal will come from and the need to be highly cautious about food wastage, particularly during their PhD studies. Furthermore, based on interviews, it was observed that participants had their fair share of battles regarding access to food. The following narrative by Nar, Adam depicts the perspective:

*“...right now, I am in Canada, so it is much easier, but I think when I was living in India, I used to... do my weekly groceries but sometimes used to get some cheap food or something because of my income and so on. I have cut my food supply, especially not nutritious food.”*

In this quote, the participant has been sharing his experience when he used to live in India and that in India, there were so many problems that he had to face. The participant used to do weekly groceries at a low price because of the lower income. The participant had to cut off his food supply of exceptionally nutritious food. This implies that while residing in India, the participant frequently had to choose less nutrient-dense but more cost-effective food selections, lowering the diet quality. However, relocation to Canada helped to lessen some of these difficulties, highlighting the significant disparities in food security between the two nations.

In a similar vein, Blue Sorpotel narrated his experience with food insecurity and managing resources and quoted that,

*“So we would have bottles of alcohol in our house, and the thing goes, some bottles of alcohol like would like a vodka bottle was there for years because I do not fancy it...So, and that is what I am saying, like, you know, when you come to think of it, you can buy such healthy food from, and that can suffice if you manage your resources as well.”*

In contrast to unutilized luxury things in their home, the participant discusses their individual experience with food security. The reference to the vodka bottle that "was there for years" highlights the dichotomy of their living situation. Although they could purchase some luxuries, they still had trouble getting enough to eat. They acknowledged using food as an area to save costs, focusing on "filling the stomach" rather than assuring nutritious value. However, the participant also brought up an optimistic viewpoint near the end, saying that with wise resource management, it was possible to get healthier meals even with a limited budget. The complexity of food security, where the availability of resources does not necessarily translate into the best nutritional options, is reflected in this conflicting sentiment. Blue Sorpotel added:

*“... Before my mother came, I used to survive on bad food literally”.*

This implies that gay men in India had their fair share of struggles accessing food due to economic and social restraints.

#### **4.2.2: Theme 2: Participants’ experiences and the consequences (mental/physical/emotional) of food insecurity**

Another observed theme was the adverse health effects of a poor diet. Consider the following quote:

*“I think obesity was one of them [consequence of not being able to afford healthy foods]. I put, I put much weight during that time. So obesity was one of them and a major out of that. Yeah.”*

In this quote, the participant has been sharing the effects of not being able to afford healthy foods, and because of that, he believed that his weight gain was a result. As a consequence of not being able to afford more beneficial types of food, the participant gained much weight. On the other hand, when asked about the impact of poor food choices because of his inability to purchase healthy foods, Blue Sorpotel described the following:

*"I used to, like, literally survive on bad food. Like you know, by that dish, I think I. I think that also brought about my hair graying quite early because of not eating healthy food for two years."*

The participant emphasizes how their food decisions, which were impacted by their circumstances, had a severe impact. He recalls a time when most of his diet was "bad food," which could reference unhealthful or nutritionally inadequate eating choices. He believed their continued use of such cuisine had a visible impact on their health, particularly the early onset of greying hair. The participants emphasized the significant and occasionally unanticipated effects of sustained dietary neglect as they believed the link between premature hair greying and poor nutrition.

The response by Naveen provides further details on how food insecurity has negatively affected his health. He quoted,

*"....You have got your protein, you have got your carbohydrate, and you have got your fat. So the cheapest food that you get is your carbohydrate. That would be rice or wheat."*

These participant quotes offer insightful glimpses into the knowledge and experience regarding food decisions and their effects on one's health. The first quote highlights the economic considerations that frequently influence food decisions by breaking down the components of a diet into proteins, carbs, and fats. Proteins, such as those found in eggs, chicken, or other meats, are typically more expensive, whereas carbohydrates, such as rice or wheat, are frequently the most affordable and widely available. The participant observes that while a few grams of fat do not cause any issues, finding affordable and convenient sources of high-quality protein does. Naveen further quoted,

*".... You are not getting the vitamins. You are not getting my essential minerals. You are not getting anything. Your food is unhealthy, and what happens? Your food starts affecting your physical and mental health. What you eat is effective in all ways, so if you were eating a carb-heavy diet or fast food kind of diet back in those days, the Indian burger was just like ₹5 and with a salary of, say, ₹50 a day, that at that was at most you could spend."*

A clear picture of the effects of such food restrictions is painted in the above quote. The participant highlights how a diet predominantly influenced by financial constraints lacks critical elements, such as vitamins and minerals. A poor diet, particularly one high in cheap fast food or carbohydrates, has effects beyond only one's physical health. The comparison between a \$5 hamburger and a daily salary

of \$50 highlights the difficult decisions that people with modest incomes must make. Staying satisfied is essential, but so is avoiding the nutritional void that such meal choices cause. The quotes clearly show the adverse effects of bad food decisions on health over time. Furthermore, the reference to "mental health issues" suggests that the consequences go beyond only physical illnesses and that nutrition may significantly affect psychological health. Naveen also mentioned the negative feelings associated with having food insecurity while being gay,

*It is like, you know, you feel responsible for all the negative things that are happening to your life....*

Besides this, the primary focus of most participants was on the significant influence that financial constraints have on their food security and dietary choices. Nickel responded,

*"Protein comes costly: the OR eggs, chicken, mutton, or any other meat and fact you use. Minimal fact is never a problem. If my money runs out, it is always the Protein sacrificed because it is the costliest. So you would even eat rice with some cheap vegetables or maybe an achar[pickle]? That is the kind of an Indian condiment, or maybe with some chutney. That is it."*

The results indicate that economic challenges exert a notable impact on the dietary patterns of gay males. During periods of financial constraint, participants often consume cost-effective, carbohydrate-dense meal options, compromising their intake of essential proteins and other vital elements necessary for maintaining good health. In contrast to the first theme, which focuses on gay men in India, this one looks at the problem of food poverty among gay men. In addition, the theme explained how homophobic attitudes might negatively affect a gay man's mental health. The response above correlates with the broader issue of food insecurity and its impact on the overall well-being of gay men.

Nickel further added that the mental consequence of food insecurity included feeling ashamed of oneself, as Nickel mentioned

*I'm ashamed at times about who I am, I'm afraid. Yeah.*

However, Nickel also mentioned some positive and resilient perspectives,

*I'm not ashamed of myself anymore. There was a time when I was because I didn't know anything else.....But I'm comfortable with two. I don't go to Tombing about my sexual orientation, but I don't hide. I don't pretend I don't sleep. I don't want to get married to a woman so that people think I'm normal because I don't think I'm abnormal. I don't think any gay person is abnormal for being gay....*

This theme further explores the effects of food insecurity on the emotional and physical well-being of LGBTQ men. Several respondents emphasized the significant emotional impact that experiencing

food insecurity may have on an individual's mental well-being. During the interview, Nar emphasized this:

*"Food adds to your nutrition. It is the fuel which kick-starts your engine and makes you grow. Now, if you are talking about food, some people can afford food. However, what do they eat? Happy is also something we have to look at on a higher scale. We might talk about nutrition, deficiency or nutrition, but basic food is carbohydrates. Some so many people are not able to afford that."*

The quote's reference to happiness raises an essential point about the food poverty that gay men face: in addition to health issues, not being able to pay for basic food can lead to severe emotional distress, which sheds light on the complex relationship between financial hardship and mental health in this particular group of people. Beyond just physical nutrition, the deprivation intensifies, increasing the psychological impact of food insecurity on these people's happiness and general mental health. These results underscore the need to implement specific treatments to safeguard the mental well-being of those particularly vulnerable to food insecurity. Moreover, this theme is also connected to the more extensive inquiry into the effects of hunger on the emotional and physical health of gay men. A participant emphasized this during the interview:

*"We do not have any social support network. These questions would have been relevant if we had a support network, but no social support network addresses this."*

Nar Adam mentioned at one place the emotional consequence, considering death to be a better option than living as a gay,

*I can completely understand why they think that it is better to die than live as gay because I have partial or borderline. I was in that phase when I was in high school. Like, why the hell am I living?*

#### **4.2.3: Theme 3: Experiences as gay men (discrimination, families, religion, coming out) that impact their food insecurity (social determinants of health)**

This theme explores the participants' experiences within Indian society, touching on issues of discrimination, families, religion, and coming out. Through their experiences, this theme highlights the intersections between their sexuality and food security. There is the intersection of sexuality and food insecurity. The responses from the interviews revealed that the sexual orientation of a person was linked to being food insecure due to the perceived societal notions regarding gender. Consider the following response by Nar, Adam:

*"I think accessing food for gay men and was so mostly this was also indirectly related to the education level and the socioeconomic status because of the money and the job and everything around that. So yeah, that was one of the major things that might be the biggest limitation accessing game and food"*



*insecurity, and at least those who I knew are closeted gay in India, they all had this problem because they were not much educated. I at least had some degree to go out and work and get some money, but I know some of my friends were getting low paid also, and the pay was not at all good, but they still kept that job because, you know, they could not find any other job to do and to come up with something so."*

Nar, Adam further mentioned the lack of training of teachers to provide for gay students as they only focused on education and did not address discrimination and bullying that this marginalized community student may experience,

*They were not even paying attention to my problem, partly because they were not even trained in understanding the gay issue or the gay students or anything. They were just more focused on, you know you are not doing, you are not performing in this test. You are not doing well here. You're not doing well there, but they never came and supported me in any way. I think that would be one of the biggest regrets I will ever have in my life that some of the teachers who were supposed to be there in the classroom never supported me in that situation. They didn't provide me any help or support because even because of the bullying and everything in high school, my academic performance decreased quite a lot.*

Nar Adam further emphasized the negligence and strong discriminatory opinion of people about gay people, seeing them as people that may spread disease and should die.

*I think the one significant factor is negligence because we people are just neglected. We people have believed that these people are, you know, going to spread some disease to everybody. These people should be just killed. I have heard from my straight friends, for whom we have been friends for more than ten years. They say why this gay person, even existing in the world, should be just killed.*

Nar Adam mentioned the caution needed due to the discrimination received from the people that impacts mental health,

*I have to be very cautious. I have to be very alert. I have to whenever I see my grinder profile. Let's say I'm not putting my photos there because I don't want to, and you know, I don't want people to identify me or anything like that. So yeah, it does affect your mental health. I can't label that as a disease or specific disease, but it does impact overall mental health.*

Nar Adam shared a discriminatory experience even from parents who disowned their child for being gay, and to cover daily needs like food, they have to adopt unsuitable professions,

*Whose parents spit on their faces when they came to know that the child was gay and disowned them. And they had no option but to sell their bodies and become a prostitute.*

Moreover, in this quote, the participant has been exploring food insecurities as an Indian gay man. According to the interviews, there is significant food insecurity among gay men in India due to a lack of education and subsequent financial restraints. In this context, Kishore highlighted how financial constraints lead to food insecurity,

*"If you have enough money, then you would go for delicious food... if the money is very little, then we will go for cheaper food like roadside food."*

Kishore continued to speak about his experience of food security, saying:

*"By the end of every month, I would have reduced my intake because of the financial condition... Sometimes, there would be a shortage of funds for the normal food requirement."*

The first quotation expresses clearly how access to money affects food quality and choice. It implies that those with enough money are more likely to spend money on higher-quality food, which is frequently thought to be healthier or more nutritious. Contrarily, when money is tight, people are forced to choose less expensive options, which could be offered by hawkers or stalls by the side of the road. These might not always satisfy nutritional requirements, suggesting that when money is tight, one is frequently forced to sacrifice the standard and healthfulness of their food.

The second quotation illustrates the occasional financial stress that some people go through. As the month concludes and money runs out, reducing food consumption is necessary for economic reasons. Kishore's experience emphasizes a depressing reality in which a person's financial position affects the quantity and quality of food they eat. This sporadic food insecurity, caused by financial difficulties, may eventually negatively affect one's health. In addition to economic aspects, the social alienation faced by the gay community also sabotaged their access to healthy food. In this context, Naveen had witnessed the situation of a woman who underwent sex reassignment in a remote area in Maharashtra. He quoted,

*"So, there were five of them, and she was the last. So, she was undernourished; she did not get a full meal and was not given vegetables. She did not get proteins that were kept away from her."*

*"Because she was [gay], which comes from the family itself."*

The above quotes highlight that social and cultural exclusions gay people experience are connected with this lack of access, which is not only a result of their financial situation but also from family discrimination.

Moreover, participants reveal that families are essential in determining how gay men in India view their lives. In this context, when asked about unacceptance from family and its impact on gay men, Nar, Adam quoted:

*“They [gay men] were pushed into poverty. They were not given much support from their family members. Anybody, Nobody. Nobody gave me, Yeah, nobody gave me. I know I remember.”*

Nar Adam, in the above quote, mentioned how nobody, including his family, supported him. Like inborn characteristics like eye colour, being gay should be embraced without condition. In addition to hurting LGBTQ people's mental health, a lack of family support exacerbates issues like food insecurity. Based on interviews, consider the following quote from Naveen:

*“Gay men have not done any wrong. You do not get into the whole Bollywood drama of saying that if this is some saying you have done and this is some kind of that you have done and everything, be supportive of that choice as something you were born with. It is like having it is like having Gray eyes and blue eyes, so it is as natural as that. So if they are supportive, the question of food security would never rise.”*

In this quote, Naveen wants to draw attention to the family's role in supporting gay men in India. In India, the gay community lacks support from their family and friends. People, friends, and family do not support them, and they hesitate to support the gay community. This factor makes the gay community disheartened and hopeless, and they fall prey to anxiety, depression, and frustration.

In addition, the interviews highlight the grave consequences of lack of assistance, where gay people frequently feel alone and shunned. Without the support or cushion of their families, the community is forced to endure societal stereotypes and bullying. These feelings of alienation and rejection can progress into severe mental health problems. Consider the following response from Naveen:

*“He did not have support from his parents. His parents thought that there was something very wrong with him. They took him to all kinds of faith healers and miracle workers. Nothing happened, and he was bullied, and no one stood up for him.”*

In this quote, the participant shares the experience of his friend regarding the impact of lack of support in supporting gay men in India. The gay community does not have the support of their friends and family, and they tackle every condition solely. When people bully the gay community, no one stands by them and supports them. When the gay community feels that no one can support them in this condition, they wait for any miracle that saves them from bullying.

Nickel further shared discriminatory experiences at work and the helplessness that accompanies these experiences.

*If somebody makes a comment or mocks you, especially at work, you often just have to let go because you might lose your job. You might not get your promotions. I also couldn't kind of hide my orientation because I'm very effeminate, you know? So everybody knew. Everybody gets it, even if I don't tell them.*

Nickel also mentioned a student experience where they were bullied and mocked at college. As a result, they stop continuing their education,

*I know somebody who has come to me. You know he's 21, and he identifies, or rather, they identify themselves as a trans woman, and they were going to college, and everybody was bullying them, mocking them for dressing up as a woman and therefore stopped going to college, started failing.*

Nickel further shared personal experience of discrimination when a person stabbed Nickel in a public place, showing the level of discrimination toward gay people.

*You know, I have had another kind of an experience where I was in Delhi, which is the capital of this country, but it was also very, you know, very toxic, masculine, macho, and I was in the public garden, and I was stabbed at four in the evening,*

Nickel also mentioned a deadly experience of someone familiar that ended really badly,

*They could say, you know. And because you know you are not very macho and you are not fighting type and you know I have a friend who was very badly beaten up by three guys. Who do you know? And they had put a track like a trap. As two guys went to his house, they chained him with a chair. Eventually, he died of depression because it scared him so badly.*

This shows the level of discrimination that this community has to experience, which may even cause death. Naveen also added the isolation gay people face from society and the struggle they have to fulfil their needs

*.....And those of us who have decided to live, you know, true to the orientation, an extremely lonely extremely.....I feel sad for the transgender community, especially the people in the hijra community who really struggle. They have to beg. They have to do prostitution. And you know, it's not easy for them. They live in slums. I don't know how they manage, but no, I personally don't, but I, yeah and then, you know, I'll tell you another thing.....it's not just about the food, it's how many experiences you know, bullying.*

Nickel further mentioned personal stigmatization and bullying experiences at school by being called a girl and the associated suffering from it.

*I remember when my birthday, you know, we used to always have this notice board and on the notice board they used to, you know, celebrate the person's birthday. And with me, they used to do some of the most nasty things. They put women's pictures and treat me like shit. There was a hymn that they used to sing, you know, and one of the lines that his him had was God bless her brother. And during my birthday, everybody sang. God bless her sister, and you know, I like it. I like why I was like, I wish they didn't know it was my birthday.*

Furthermore, this theme also relates to the research question: “How does food insecurity construct the experiences of health and well-being for gay men in India?”. Religious beliefs and practices exert a significant impact on the social and cultural norms prevailing in India, hence shaping perceptions of those who identify as LGBTQ. The religious and cultural context inside a nation can exert a substantial influence on the experiences of gay men, exacerbating their susceptibility to various forms of prejudice, physical harm, and even food insecurity. The health and well-being of individuals may have adverse effects when they choose to disclose their sexual orientation or discontinue their affiliation with a religious institution due to pressures stemming from religious or societal factors. A thorough analysis of the challenges encountered by the LGBTQ community in India necessitates a consideration of the intricate dynamics, including religion, personal encounters, and their impact on many aspects of LGBTQ individuals' lives, including their experiences with food insecurity. Most individuals discussed their encounters with disclosing their sexual orientation or gender identity and the challenges encountered while navigating intricate familial dynamics, all within the context of their religious convictions. An interviewee shared a heartbreaking story,

*"I have made a deliberate decision to choose a lifestyle that eschews marriage and instead prioritizes my involvement in religious institutions. There appears to be a lack of those inclined to challenge or scrutinize my statements or actions. However, I said if she says she does not want to get married, it is almost like making herself vulnerable to the world."*

The current research findings indicate that individuals often have significant internal problems while navigating their sexual orientation within religious standards. The theme underscores the need to acknowledge the challenges faced by LGBTQ individuals and the necessity for more support and comprehension within religious communities. In summary, the initial subtheme explores the internal struggles and intergenerational interactions experienced by those identifying as LGBTQ about their religious affiliations. The importance of comprehending and supporting individuals grappling with these intricate identities is underscored by their difficulties, which align with broader research on the interconnections between sexual orientation and religion.

Notably, one factor is religion. The third theme also explores the impact of people's life circumstances and religious beliefs on their choices to disengage from or reengage with the church. The majority of participants indicated experiencing religious guilt and acknowledged the substantial impact of the church on their personal identity and decision-making processes. An interviewee said,

*"I thought about how religion often gives us guilt. Especially Christianity gives us much guilt rather than celebration for who we are as people."*

The research reveals that many individuals within the LGBTQ community have profound guilt, which can be attributed to the influence of their religious upbringing. Numerous individuals encounter difficulties fully embracing their selves due to the influence of religious beliefs, which contribute to the cultivation of adverse emotions. Additionally, the broader topic of inquiry encompasses the intersection of personal experiences and religious affiliation, specifically about the processes of coming out and disengaging from organized religious institutions. Theme 3 also pertains to this more significant subject matter. The prevailing portion of participants engaged in discussions about their encounters with disclosing their sexual orientation as gay or lesbian after they departed from religious institutions. One interviewee said,

*"I said to myself, I cannot live this life in the church, and that is how I left."*

Disengaging from religious institutions seems to be a significant milestone for several individuals within the LGBTQ community as they navigate the path toward self-acceptance and an authentic existence. This opportunity allowed them to liberate themselves from the confines of their conservative religious upbringing and embrace a more inclusive and accepting lifestyle.

Moreover, the lack of acknowledgment of homosexuality and alternative sexualities contributes to a pervasive identity crisis, As Naveen mentioned.

*You don't talk about homosexuality at all. You don't talk about alternate sexuality. You don't talk about anything, so that is the main thing; the whole identity crisis they go through is because of this. We have got very we have got a very Abrahamic concept of sexuality.*

The quote emphasizes those who are struggling with their sexual identity may feel alone and confused if there isn't an open conversation about these topics. Moreover, LGBTQ people also struggle with dating apps, where revealing one's lower caste background can result in rejection and exclusion from society. As Naveen mentioned,

*So when they struggle, the first thing is that if they're on a dating app and then someone comes to know that they're from a lower cost, there would be many people who would cancel on them. So it's like you get ostracized from your community itself.*

The third theme explores the potential transformative impact of departing from religious beliefs and attaining societal acceptance of one's LGBTQ identity. This phenomenon is commonly observed among individuals who have struggled to combine their religious convictions with their sexual orientation. This emphasizes the need to provide individuals with support and empathy as they navigate the complex journey of self-exploration.

Particularly, religious institutions have a propensity for being opportunistic, feeding off of people until they are so exploited that their life force is sapped.

When interacting with religious institutions, it is crucial to exercise caution and critical awareness due to the dark side of these establishments. As Blue Sorpotel mentioned,

*Especially religious institutions are like they will scavenge you. They will pray on you till you know they can suck the life out of you.*

The allegory of "sucking the life out" emphasizes the potential harm that some religious structures can cause and the importance of approaching spiritual engagement with discernment. Moreover, in India, being a gay man means fighting discrimination and dealing with actual prejudices that harm one's mental health. The following interview response by Kishore highlights this aspect:

*"It is, yeah, if like if there is discrimination based on your sexuality, then there are to like to impact your mental ability, mental health, then you would know as a student you would not perform an I mean like you would not perform equal to other students in your class or your age group you would stay. I mean, you would be left behind for whatever reasons, then. Yeah, you will be left out. That would force you and make you incompetent in the available opportunities in the market. So they will be like lack of job, or you might get a job."*

In this quote, the participant described the impact of discrimination on the mental health condition of gay men. Other people have not treated them equally and well since their childhood. Even in school, they bear other students' misbehaviour and feel alone in their classroom. Due to the combined consequences of discrimination and its aftereffects on performance and mental health, the person feels they are "incompetent" and have fewer options in the job market. In essence, the remark illustrates the domino effect: prejudice against gay people because of their sexual orientation can set off a series of unfavourable events in their lives.

#### **4.2.4: Theme 4: Thoughts about Community Advocacy-how to make things better**

The issue of food insecurity affects the entire gay community in addition to individual gay people. Even when the government offers assistance, it is sometimes insufficient, requiring the community to make do with lower-quality supplies. These difficulties are made worse by the pervasive systemic disparities, which also limit their access to nutrient-dense foods. Based on interviews, Kishore quoted,

*"Food insecurity, like yeah, like I right now when I was a kid, I would say I have said we had this issue where it is not a good standard. We used them [low-quality food] because there was no other option. Usually, they are the lower middle class and the like—the below poverty line. Earlier, the government used to give rice and other Dal and other items which were of not that good quality, but since there were no other options, sometimes we, I mean, Even in the available whatever is good, we were forced to use them. Yeah, I remember. When I was a kid, we used to do this."*



In this quote, the participant has been exploring the challenges of another gay member as a kid in terms of food insecurity, particularly for people from below the poverty line. Overall, the gay community faces several problems and challenges while getting food. The government takes care of the people, which also include the gay community and provides them with basic food such as rice and lentil, which is of low quality but it was acceptable to meet the food requirement.

Moreover, participants emphasized the pressing need for societal support on a larger scale. The greater society, including institutions and community groups, must take proactive steps to assure the safety and acceptance of LGBTQ people while acknowledging the fundamental role that the family plays. Feelings of neglect and exclusion are only exacerbated by the absence of such networks, as depicted by the following response,

*“We do not have any social support network for this. If we had a support network, these questions would have been relevant, but no social support network addresses this at all.”*

In this quote, the participant feels disheartened and conveys the facts about social support's role in supporting gay men in India. The gay community neither has family nor societal support because people do not want to accept their presence in society. No one supports the gay community, and no one addresses the issue of the gay community.

Naveen shared a similar response as the above quote, mentioning that although the government provides shelter homes, not exclusively for gay people, there is a dearth of facilities dedicated to this community,

*We don't have any social support network for gay men, and to address this, to begin with..... Now, we have night shelters run by municipal corporations and given to state governments. But it's not exclusively for. Gay men it is, there is no.*

*So there are some NGO'S working on this, but as far as I know, if you look into it, we don't have any dedicated ones. It's like just a drop in the it's not even a drop in the ocean.*

Naveen further highlighted the need for the government to provide a support network,

*So I mean, as a journalist, I don't have opinions, but my suggestion would be that you know, we should have a support system for people who need it. And this is not just an urban phenomenon. I mean, the government had told me that it's an urban phenomenon. It's not an urban phenomenon. It's a very natural thing, and we have never, ever addressed this kind of thing anywhere in our education system, in our support system, or in our social health system.*

According to Naveen's statement, comprehensive support systems are not only essential for urban areas but also for the rural population. This highlights a significant gap in the current approach to social health and education systems, which do not adequately address the needs of diverse



communities, including those living outside of urban areas. His suggestion emphasizes the necessity of inclusive and broad-based support structures that are available to all individuals, regardless of their geographic location.

#### **4.3 Conclusion**

The themes derived through interpretative phenomenological essay (IPA) focus on the subjective experiences of individuals who self-identify as LGBTQ. It offers valuable insights into the challenges faced by the LGBTQ population by examining the impact of food insecurity on the psychological and physiological well-being of gay men. Additionally, it explores the intricate relationship between religion and personal experiences in coming out and disengaging from religious institutions. As elucidated by the initial subject matter, there is a pressing need for targeted treatments to mitigate economic disparities and enhance nutritional welfare. This underscores the stark actuality of financial difficulties and dietary decision-making. The second primary concept explores the necessity of offering specific mental health assistance to those who are susceptible to experiencing food insecurity. The third topic underscores the susceptibility and seclusion encountered by LGBTQ individuals facing food hardship and advocates for creating and sustaining social support systems.

## 5.0: Discussion

Millions of people from all social classes in India struggle with widespread food insecurity. The discussion below examines how participants view food insecurity, focusing on the difficulties in getting food, the misery resulting from insufficient access to food, and the detrimental effects of an imbalanced diet on one's well-being. This part will explore these themes, leveraging the preceding literature study to highlight the complexity of food insecurity in India.

India's food insecurity is a complicated problem with serious repercussions. Participants' experiences and knowledge of food insecurity reveal several essential factors. Access to food is a fundamental human right, but there are still problems in India. McKay et al. (2023), in their systematic review of current evidence, measured food insecurity in India and mentioned that it is projected that 200 million people in India suffer from malnutrition. This problem occurs for various reasons, like inadequate infrastructure, poverty, and unequal distribution of resources. This problem leads to hunger, food insecurity, and malnutrition. Those living in urban and rural areas face limited access to nutritious and affordable food options. Furthermore, Saxena (2018) points out a notable trend in consumer behavior: while overall consumption spending has increased over time in these areas, the proportion of income spent on food has not risen correspondingly. This indicates a shift in expenditure patterns, with a lesser relative increase in food spending compared to other goods (Saxena, 2018). Such trends highlight the complexities and challenges inherent in addressing food insecurity in India, and the necessity for a multifaceted and informed approach to the development of policy and intervention.

The participants' perceptions of food insecurity make up the first theme of this research. They see it as complex, with several causes, including poverty, and they stress how difficult it is to get food that is high in nutrients in India. Food insecurity, participants believe, entails a lack of ready access to nutritionally sound foods. According to Nar Adam, the problem is twofold: a lack of access to nutritional food and the subsequent prevalence of malnutrition. Nickel focuses on the struggle to purchase basic meals, relating it to the greater background of poverty in India. Naveen expands the concept to encompass physical and mental obstacles to obtaining enough nutrition. Kishore and Blue Sorpotel tell stories from their own lives that illustrate the stress and worry that comes from constantly worrying about money and where you will acquire your next meal. These stories highlight the multifaceted nature of food insecurity, including material and psychological obstacles.

The caste system greatly influences these difficulties because one's social standing frequently determines one's ability to obtain food. According to the literature, people from lower castes, like Dalits, have a difficult time getting access to wholesome food (Kaushik, 2018). Caste-based

discrimination may reduce their economic options, which in response may make it more difficult for them to purchase food. While providing the background of Dalits, Sreekumar (2023) mentioned that Dalits make up about 16.6 percent of the population in India; the majority of them work in low-paying jobs in the agriculture industry or in other sectors of the economy, and they own relatively few assets in comparison to other Indian social groups. Furthermore, Das (2016) mentioned in his study many people in India endure lives that are profoundly embedded with a sense of pain as a result of having insufficient access to food.

No matter their caste, prejudice directed towards LGBTQ people can make food insecurity worse. The rejection from society that homosexuals experience might result in familial disapproval and seclusion. A study finding revealed that the majority of young people who became homeless did so as a result of protracted family breakdown processes, in which homosexual disclosure contributed to the escalation of family disputes and the unpredictability of housing for these young people (Castellanos, 2016). Despite focusing on the Latino LGBTQ population in New York, the study sheds light on a broader issue: young gay men and other LGBTQ people are particularly susceptible to economic vulnerability when familial support is lacking, exacerbating their struggle to secure sufficient food.

Additionally, the literature emphasizes how India's unique social and political structure, based on caste hierarchy, is interconnected by dietary practices (Kikon, 2022). Dietary practices are sometimes used as a marker of social status in caste-based civilizations. Caste-based dietary limitations are rooted in religious and cultural norms, whereas economic inequalities shape the availability and diversity of food. The social and economic stratification of these cultures is reflected in the close connection between cuisine and caste. This sense of dominance can lead to prejudice and unfair access to nutritious foods, which worsens the misery endured by marginalized people. Moreover, restricted access to food is only one aspect of food insecurity; it also includes nutrition quality and proportion. Hinduism's caste-based dietary structure can result in imbalanced diets and, as a result, harmful health repercussions.

While some caste groups, like Brahmans and Vaisyas, predominately consume vegetarian meals like fruits, vegetables, and milk, some groups of castes ingest more tamasic meals. As per mentioned by Saundarya (2023) and NV and Mishra (2019), in Ayurvedic cultures, "tamasic meals" are foods that are thought to make you tired, negative, and mentally dull. Often, these are things that have been highly processed are old, and heavy, which include different kinds of meats, eggs, onion, garlic, alcohol, processed food, frozen food, etc. Health problems may arise from the nutritional imbalances brought on by these dietary variations, particularly in people who lack the opportunity to

consume a balanced diet. Studies highlighted that people from lower castes frequently experience higher rates of premature death and development stunting and have less access to public medical facilities (Ghodajkar and Choudhury, 2022; Chada and Pulla, 2014). This shows the connection between unhealthy eating differences based on caste and poor health consequences. Overall, there are several cultural, social, and economic elements that contribute to food insecurity in India. The difficulties in obtaining food, the misery that results from having insufficient means of getting food, and the detrimental effects of an unbalanced diet on one's health are all closely related, underscoring the dire need for all-encompassing remedies. In addition to economic measures, caste-based prejudice must be eliminated in order to combat food poverty in India. Equal availability of nourishing food must also be ensured for all people. It is essential to recognize how these issues are interrelated for efficient strategies and efforts to reduce food insecurity in this varied and complicated society.

In order to address issues of food insecurity, economic inequality, and prejudice within this community, it is crucial to comprehend the real-life circumstances and difficulties faced by Indian gay men. This underscores the urgent requirement for initiatives to address economic disparities to enhance the nutritional health of gay men. This topic elucidates the intricate relationship between the economic difficulties faced by gay men and their dietary preferences, underscoring the obstacles these individuals encounter in their efforts to fulfil their nutritional requirements within the constraints of limited financial resources. The findings presented in this study contribute to the expanding corpus of information that highlights the detrimental impacts of food insecurity on the psychological and physiological well-being of individuals within the LGBTQ population. These results underscore the urgency of implementing coordinated initiatives to mitigate economic disparities and enhance nutritional welfare.

The second theme investigates experiences and the consequences of food insecurity among gay men in India. Jabson Tree et al. (2022) mentioned in their study that LGBTQ individuals face challenges in obtaining and retaining employment, earning fair and sustainable wages, and gaining access to resources that could alleviate food insecurity due to social exclusion and stigma. Due to having less money, gay men face several problems such as hunger, health problems, and much more. A study by Jabson Tree et al. (2022) provides important insights into food insecurity among the same-sex community, even though it is not specifically focused on India. The results underline the importance of tackling this issue on a global scale and the necessity of inclusive methods for comprehending and resolving issues about food security based on sexual orientation. Furthermore, it is essential to address the financial challenges of the gay community regarding food insecurity. Arikawa et al. (2021) mentioned that people who identify as LGBTQ are more likely to experience stress,

homelessness, and poverty. Considering the established link between the poverty/income ratio and insufficient accessibility to affordable and nutrient-dense meals, it is plausible that LGBTQ people experience a higher incidence of food insecurity (Arikawa et al., 2021). Poverty within the LGBTQ community in India and elsewhere is primarily a result of prejudice and exclusion from society based on one's sexuality (Badgett, 2014). Their access to worthwhile career prospects and financial resources is restricted due to this discrimination. As a result, a large number of gay men in India live in poverty (Badgett, 2014).

The economic difficulties this group experiences are made worse by the stigma associated with homosexuality. The literature backs up this assertion by emphasizing that marginalized communities (based on sexual orientation) frequently face inequities regarding nutrient access, which can harm their health (Lumens, 2022). Moreover, the findings of Badgett (2014) addressed the wage pay gap (11%) for gay and bisexual men in different countries. These financial difficulties may make it difficult for gay men in India to buy nourishing meals. These findings are supported by the literature, which shows that LGBTQ people are more likely to encounter financial hardship, which can result in food insecurity (Wilson et al., 2020). The difficulties this group has accessing food reflect the more general debate of how poverty, prejudice, and inequality interact to produce vulnerabilities. The study by Wilson et al. (2020) on the LGBTQ population facing food insecurity is consistent with current findings and earlier studies that highlight the overall effects of inequalities and prejudice. The findings of Jabson Tree et al. (2022) emphasize that nationally representative federal food security measures must take sexual orientation into account to solve systemic concerns, which support current findings. The difficulties experienced by gay men must be overcome with the help of social support systems and governmental modifications that favour inclusivity and economic justice (Badgett, 2014). Although there is no specific data on Indian gay men, the interconnection of these issues (mentioned in the aforementioned studies) emphasizes how crucial it is to address the underlying factors that contribute to food insecurity in the Indian LGBTQ population.

In the final analysis, the core themes found in this study are supported by the results of the literature review. Food insecurity among gay men in India is considerably exacerbated by discrimination, a lack of resources, and structural injustices. One of the participants (Naveen) mentioned being stabbed in a public place as an act of discrimination and Nickel being bullied at school and called a girl. The participants recognized that LGBTQ people are not all the same, and some groups experience even more discrimination against them - such as the hijras and those of lower castes. These findings highlight the significance of comprehensive efforts to enhance the food security and general well-being of this marginalized group. These initiatives are grounded in both social and legislative changes.

For all LGBTQ people to live in a more just and inclusive society, it is essential to recognize the interconnectedness of these concerns.

Gay men who experience food insecurity experience serious and broad repercussions that compromise not just their physical well-being but also their mental wellness. The complicated connections between food insecurity and its effects on the psychological and physical facets of gay men's lives are highlighted in the second theme. Gay men's financial limitations have a significant impact on their eating decisions, which in turn affects their general health. Participants in the survey consistently mentioned how having financial difficulties made them sacrifice the foods they chose. Whenever confronted with a tight budget, people usually choose meals that are inexpensive and high in carbohydrates, often at the price of the critical nutrients and proteins needed to maintain their health. These results are in line with previous studies on food insecurity. For instance, the research by Nishinakagawa et al. (2023) shows that people who are struggling financially often have unhealthy eating habits, such as skipping breakfast and eating healthy food infrequently. The theme highlights the pressing need for efforts that strive to reduce economic inequalities in order to improve gay men's nutritional wellness.

In order to take on food insecurity and the general well-being of gay men in the Indian setting, the third theme, "Experiences as gay men (discrimination, families, religion, coming out) that impact their food insecurity (social determinants of health)" explores the complex ways that family factors and religion play critical roles. Family support is frequently seen as the bedrock of healthy living, and this is especially true for gay men who are experiencing food hardship. As one of the participants mentioned, having a very supportive mother made a lot of things much easier. In a culture where adhering to customary norms and beliefs can result in familial rejection, the importance of family support is more apparent. Chakrapani et al. (2022) conducted a study in which they examined that the family's role plays a significant role in supporting the Indian transmasculine people (those who identify as men or masculine but were given the female sex at birth). Chakrapani et al. (2022) found that if families understand, accept, and support this community, this would have a positive impact on their mental health. Moreover, according to Stuhlsatz et al. (2022), the LGBTQ community does not have enough support from their parents or family members like other people have; it is an important thing, and they should be treated equally. Literature demonstrated that a person's mental health and level of life happiness can be significantly impacted by their family's support (Thomas et al., 2017). It is crucial to understand that family serves a crucial role in the overall picture of food poverty, both as an instrument of assistance and, in some instances, a possible obstacle. Although several Indian gay men might receive help and support from their families through difficult times, others might face

alienation or prejudice from their families as a result of their sexual orientation. Lee et al. (2017) The risk factors for depression and suicidality among gay men were discussed, which includes the embracing of their sexual identities by their families. These factors lead to low self-esteem, disturbance in health, and anxiety. Furthermore, the lack of support also creates challenges in the gay community in order to navigate limited access to resources, discrimination, and societal pressure.

According to research, family rejection can cause LGBTQ people (particularly the young ones) to become homeless, which may worsen their food insecurity and general well-being (Easton et al., 2022). Therefore, reducing food insecurity among gay men requires building understanding and acceptance throughout families. In order to address food insecurity among gay men, several obstacles and difficulties entrenched in societal norms and biases must be overcome. Accessibility to essential resources, such as food, can be hampered by discrimination and stereotypes against LGBTQ people. The difficulties and challenges of the gay community start from their childhood. Tran et al. (2022) found that when compared to heterosexual adults, sexual minority individuals (including gay people) were more likely to have been exposed to all forms of adverse childhood experiences. These experiences included sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and mental illness in the home. Dorji and Taank (2022) mentioned in their work that the LGBTQ community also does not get any respectable job in society. Even though studies by Tran et al. (2022) and Dorji and Taank (2022) were not carried out in Indian sexual minority groups, they are relevant as they highlight the difficulties that members of sexual minorities encounter, including limited career opportunities and increased vulnerability to adverse childhood experiences.

Moreover, gay men face considerable barriers, including discrimination at work, which reduces their economic options and makes them more susceptible to hunger. Moreover, these difficulties are made worse by the fact that in many areas of India, there are no laws against discrimination based on sexual preference. Gay employees have experienced bullying and harassment at work, which has hurt their mental health (Hoel et al., 2014). Wandrekar and Nigudkar (2020) conducted a study in which they examined that being a member of the LGBTQ is very difficult in society; they face many hurdles and obstacles in their lives and face mental health issues in their lives. They do not get the same acceptance and equality as other people or citizens. These factors lead to depression, anxiety, and mental trauma in the gay community.

The fourth theme discusses that, social support networks are essential for reducing food poverty among LGBTQ men. Although family support is crucial, social networks and neighbourhood organizations also substantially contribute to solving this problem. According to research, social support has a beneficial impact on LGBTQ people's mental health and overall wellness (McConnell



et al., 2015). Moreover, gay men can obtain services, such as food programmes, in a safe environment by contacting community-based organizations and LGBTQ support groups. Additionally, research indicates that measures to include LGBTQ individuals in social support programs can end bigotry and strengthen and increase food security (Jabson Tree et al., 2022). In summary, gaining a grasp of participants' experiences concerning helping gay men who are food insecure exposes the intricate interplay between familial factors, social constraints, and supportive social networks. In order to solve food insecurity among gay men, familial embrace and encouragement are essential, but problems stemming from prejudice and a lack of constitutional protections continue. Community organizations and social support systems provide essential tools to reduce food insecurity and advance general health. Progress must be made to promote acceptance, combat unfair treatment, and improve social support networks in order to build a society that can be more diverse and equal for Indian homosexual men.

In addition, a study by Lumens (2022) examined the barriers LGBTQ individuals confront in acquiring nourishing meals. They discovered that because of a number of reasons, notably sociocultural environment and economic inequities, LGBTQ people are more likely to suffer food insecurity. The wider research on the difficulties the LGBTQ community faces with access to food and good nutrition provides additional support for the economic hardships described in the theme. Gay men's mental health suffers as a result of food insecurity, as multiple survey participants emphasized. Participants in the current study expressed sentiments of shame, guilt, and incompetence as a result of their food insecurity, which surfaced as a recurrent theme. The difficulties these people experienced with their emotional health were made worse by their inability to acquire enough food. The widely recognized data connecting food insecurity to poor mental health consequences and these psychological disturbances are consistent. A recent study by Pourmotabbed et al. (2020) discovered a high correlation between food insecurity and elevated anxiety and depression. The significance of targeted mental health interventions within the LGBTQ community is underscored by the unique challenges posed by food insecurity. Their research highlights the emotional consequences of food insecurity, with a focus on underprivileged groups like LGBTQ people. Additionally, the study by Sharareh et al. (2023) examined the food insecurity inequalities encountered by those who identify as sexual minorities. In their study, they addressed that most of the bills passed for sexual minority groups are biased toward transgender. This receptive political environment for sexual and gender minorities has had an impact on the mental health of other sexual minority groups. Their results are consistent with the second theme's focus on the emotional and psychological consequences of food insecurity on homosexual males. This emphasizes the significance of specific measures for mental



health in the LGBTQ population, taking into account the particular difficulties brought on by food insecurity. Addressing how food insecurity affects gay men's physical and mental well-being depends on the sub-theme of the absence of support from others. Many interviewees noted a lack of a solid support system and expressed isolation from society and despair. They were more vulnerable to both the mental and physical consequences of food insecurity because they lacked social support. Although there are no specific studies, the current findings align with a more general study by Wang et al. (2020), which emphasizes the value of social support in reducing the harmful effects of food poverty. Although no specific studies are cited, the transcript is consistent with more extensive research by Wang et al. (2020), highlighting the significance of social support in reducing the adverse outcomes of food insecurity. Existing research has demonstrated that those with strong social networks do better mentally and physically when faced with the problems of food insecurity. When people experience food insecurity, solid social connections have been demonstrated to safeguard their mental and physical health. Additionally, research by McDonald (2018) and McConnell et al. (2015) has thoroughly shown the impact of social support in protecting against the negative consequences of LGBTQ people's mental health. These studies highlight the need to develop and support social support networks that are particularly created to help gay men manage food insecurity. These ties are essential for reducing the psychological and physical repercussions of food scarcity, especially for people who do not have enough social support. Overall, there are many different factors at play and serious repercussions when it comes to how food insecurity affects both the physical and mental well-being of gay men. Their eating choices are substantially influenced by financial difficulties, which compromise their nutrition. Furthermore, food insecurity has serious negative effects on mental health, including emotional anguish and psychological difficulties. The absence of support from society further exacerbates their receptivity to these impacts. To protect the well-being of gay men experiencing food insecurity, dealing with these challenges demands a holistic strategy that takes into account economic inequities, offers mental health care, and fortifies social networks.

Another experience explores the intricate interactions between individual experiences, belief systems, and the journey of coming out to the public as LGBTQ people. The theme emphasizes the intense psychological problems LGBTQ people have in religious settings. The interviews made clear the mental struggles that people experience while attempting to balance their sexual preferences with their religious beliefs. The psychological anguish and interpersonal difficulties that LGBTQ people may have while seeking ways to combine their sexuality with their faith are highlighted in previous studies, including the study carried out by Ali et al. (2023), which is in line with current findings.

Their findings support the difficulties mentioned in the theme, highlighting how crucial it is to comprehend and assist people who are negotiating the overlap between sexuality and religion. The theme further explores the tremendous effects of religious remorse and the church's power over people's life decisions. Participants talked about feeling guilty about their religion, primarily because of how they were raised. The research conducted by Beagan and Hattie (2015) on the emotional and psychological impact of religious guilt on LGBTQ people is consistent with this theme. It emphasizes the internalized shame that LGBTQ people frequently go through while on their self-discovery path. Anderson and Koc (2020) emphasized in their study that many gay men who were raised in religious households feel that their sexual orientation contradicts their religious beliefs, and they find it difficult to make sense of it all. These findings affirm how critical it is to acknowledge and accept these difficulties in the context of religion. The third sub-theme addresses the encounters of LGBTQ people who have chosen to leave religious organizations. This change frequently represents a significant turning point in their quest for self-acceptance and honest life. The results of this theme are consistent with previous research, especially the study by Palkki and Caldwell (2018), which highlights the significance of developing a safe space where LGBTQ people can freely express their opinions and emotions. This emphasizes the need to establish secure environments where individuals can freely articulate their thoughts and opinions without apprehension of being evaluated or criticized. The study by Strozyk (2023) also explores the causes of LGBTQ people quitting religious communities. It draws attention to the frictions and disagreements that develop when someone's sexual preference or sex identity clashes with the doctrines of religion. This conflict frequently prompts people to quit their prior religious affiliations in search of groups that are more welcoming and supportive of their LGBTQ identity. Conclusively, there are many facets to this complex and psychologically loaded question of how religion and individual experiences affect coming out and quitting the church. When they explore their sexuality within the context of religion, LGBTQ people frequently experience internal conflicts, familial difficulties, and feelings of guilt. It can be a freeing experience to leave the religion, allowing one to accept their LGBTQ orientation unconditionally. These results highlight the need for more understanding, assistance, and inclusion among religious communities for those navigating the problematic relationship between their sexuality and belief.

## 6.0 Conclusion

### 6.1 Summary of Key Findings:

This study presents a comprehensive analysis of food insecurity among gay men in India within the context of the nation's socio-cultural and historical development. This study examines the historical progression from ancient civilizations through the Aryan period, European colonization, and British rule, as well as how these periods have affected contemporary attitudes toward same-sex relationships and food culture. A thorough understanding of the LGBTQ community's history is essential to understanding the current challenges they face.

A key finding of the study is the impact of societal stigma and discrimination against gay men in India, which significantly affects their health, nutrition, and overall well-being. The study highlights how the caste system and religious beliefs exacerbate these challenges, contributing to the marginalization and discrimination of the LGBTQ community. Research has also revealed the compounding effect of discrimination on food insecurity among gay men, linking it to economic hardship, limited employment opportunities, and social exclusion, all of which are barriers to accessing nutritious food.

This research study employs a qualitative, phenomenological research method known as interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) to capture gay men's lived experiences of food insecurity in India. The approach sheds light on their psychological, emotional, and physical challenges.

In the study, it was found that gay men in India experience stark economic disparities, resulting in significant nutritional challenges. Having limited financial resources makes it difficult for individuals to access healthy food, resulting in a diet deficient in essential nutrients and aggravating health issues. A key finding of the study is the critical role that social support plays in mitigating such challenges. Due to the lack of familial support and societal discrimination, many members of the LGBTQ community are vulnerable and isolated, intensifying their food insecurity and mental health problems.

The study advocates for comprehensive solutions that address the economic, social, and health aspects of food insecurity among gay men in India. Among other things, it emphasizes the need for societal changes, such as reducing stigma, creating economic opportunities, and establishing supportive networks.

Also, the study highlights the negative impact that food insecurity has on the mental health of gay men, as they struggle with economic hardship, societal exclusion, and a lack of support, leading to heightened stress, anxiety, and other mental health problems.

In addition, the complex relationship between religion, family dynamics, and LGBTQ identity is discussed. Specifically, this study examines how religious beliefs and practices influence societal attitudes toward gay men and their personal lives, particularly in regard to food security.

## **6.2 Limitations of the Study:**

Several limitations to the study influenced interpretation of its findings; participants were challenging to recruit, primarily due to the hidden nature of many gay men in India. It was difficult to engage participants openly because of concerns about identity exposure and the risks of blackmail and social stigma. The remote nature of the interview process introduced additional challenges, particularly technical problems which may have compromised the quality and depth of the data gathered.

A second significant limitation was the lack of research specifically addressing food insecurity among gay men in India. It was challenging to gather secondary data due to the lack of prior studies, making it difficult to compare and validate findings against existing literature. The lack of research in this area highlights the need for more focused studies to develop a comprehensive understanding of the unique challenges faced by this population.

## **6.3 Reflection on Positionality:**

My childhood profoundly influenced my understanding and approach to life. A transformative incident of kindness by a transgender individual coupled with the marginalization and cultural presence of the hijra community re-shaped my views, fostering respect and empathy for the LGBTQ community. For a deeper understanding of complex societal issues, exploring diverse lived experiences is critical.

While conducting this research, I carried these insights with me. I brought an expanded sense of empathy and a commitment to highlighting marginalized perspectives to the study. In addition to academic pursuits, I was also interested in contributing to a more inclusive and understanding society. I examined food insecurity among gay men in India. During my research journey, I gained a more comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted challenges faced by the LGBTQ community. This was especially true regarding societal acceptance and basic needs such as food security.

A phenomenological approach was emphasized to capture the nuanced realities of the participants in light of the intersectionality of my background and experiences. Based on my past observations of

discrimination within society and the misrepresentation of LGBTQ individuals in media such as Bollywood, where they are often used as comic relief or ignored, I believe that LGBTQ individuals deserve to be represented seriously, empathetically, and respectfully. As a result of these experiences, we were able to frame the research questions and interpret the data with a lens sensitive to the complexities of identity, discrimination, and resilience.

This journey has been both a personal and academic endeavour. Throughout the program, I have developed my sensitivity and awareness of identity and societal dynamics nuances. My engagement with the participants and listening to their experiences of food insecurity as gay men in India confirmed my commitment to promoting inclusion and respect for all marginalized groups.

Throughout this research, I have experienced both personal growth and academic inquiry. Studies of marginalized communities should take an empathetic, holistic approach and emphasize the importance of considering diverse perspectives when understanding and addressing social problems. Considering the insights gained from this study, the findings contribute to the larger discourse regarding LGBTQ rights and well-being. They advocate for a society that embraces diversity and equality.

#### **6.4 Future Research:**

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It is anticipated that future research in the context of food insecurity among the LGBTQ community in India will have a great deal of social and academic impact. The unique challenges that this community faces require more extensive and diverse studies. Such research could reduce societal barriers and stigmas by raising public awareness. The in-depth study of these issues will pave the way for increased social acceptance and understanding, resulting in better support systems and policies tailored to LGBTQ individuals' needs in India. This may contribute to a more inclusive and equitable society, where everyone, regardless of their sexual orientation, has access to essential human rights such as food security and healthcare.

## **6.5 Concluding Thoughts:**

In conclusion, unity and collaboration become paramount in addressing the needs of marginalized communities like the LGBTQ community in India. The benefits of embracing diversity and cultivating an environment of support and inclusion do not only benefit a specific group but have far-reaching effects on national development as well. Every individual plays an important role in a country's growth and development. Based on my personal experience, my professor, Dr. Joy, who identifies as a gay man in Canada. Dr. Joy has made significant contributions to the field through numerous studies and articles, and he holds a PhD in Masters in Applied Human Nutrition. His work has been instrumental in advancing research that supports the development of the country. He has been an important pillar of support for this study. Hence, Supporting the LGBTQ community and acting as allies can contribute to a more rapid and comprehensive development of the country. In order for a society to thrive and progress, every member, regardless of background, must receive support and opportunities. Based on the findings of this study, it is evident that it is necessary to take collective action to ensure social acceptance and to leverage the unique contributions of every individual in order to advance the nation.

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## MOUNT SAINT VINCENT UNIVERSITY

### SEEKING PARTICIPANTS FOR IMPORTANT RESEARCH ON FOOD INSECURITY

**WE ARE INVITING PARTICIPANTS FOR A SIGNIFICANT RESEARCH STUDY EXPLORING FOOD INSECURITY IN INDIAN GAY MEN OVER THE AGE OF 20. YOUR CONTRIBUTION CAN HELP US GAIN CRUCIAL INSIGHTS INTO THIS PRESSING ISSUE.**

Who can participate?

- Indian gay men aged 20 and above.
- Can speak English

#### Benefits of Participating

All participants will receive a \$20 CAD Amazon Gift Card as a token of appreciation.

Your participation can make a difference. We're committed to maintaining your confidentiality and ensuring a respectful and inclusive environment.

How will the study be conducted?

The study will be conducted virtually via Microsoft Teams.

For more information, please contact:  
Sainath Yeminedi  
Email:  
[Sainath.yeminedi@msvu.ca](mailto:Sainath.yeminedi@msvu.ca)

## Appendix A

## Appendix B

### Consent of participant

**Project Title:** Exploring the cultural meanings of food and eating for gay Indian men using qualitative methodologies

**Principal Investigator:** Sainath yeminedi

MSc Student

Department of Applied Human Nutrition

Mount Saint Vincent University (MSVU)

Email: [Sainath.yeminedi@msvu.ca](mailto:Sainath.yeminedi@msvu.ca)

**Supervisor:** Dr. Phillip Joy

Associate professor

Department of Applied Human Nutrition

Mount saint Vincent university

Email: [phillip.joy@msvu.ca](mailto:phillip.joy@msvu.ca)

### Introduction

This is a research study in which you are invited to participate. In the information below, you will learn about what the research entails, what you will have to do, and what the benefits and risks are. It is entirely up to you whether or not to participate in this study. Do not hesitate to contact any of the above information if you have any questions.

Why are we doing the study?

This study examines how food insecurity influences gay men's health and well-being experiences.

In this study, we are interested in answering the following research questions:

1. How does food insecurity construct the experiences of health and well-being for gay men in India?

**Who Can take part in the study?**

Eligibility for the study requires that study participants self-identify as a Gay. with less than 10,000 INR per month (170 cads) and live in India. Participants will need to speak, read and understand English. A participant should be interested in discussing their financial situation and their experiences.

**In what way will you be asked to assist?**

You will likely be asked to participate in semi-structured interviews conducted by a Microsoft team. Your experiences with accessing nutritious food will be analysed in detail for the project. As part of the process, you will be asked to attend the following introductory meetings: 1) An introductory meeting to learn how semi-structured interviews work and how informed consent is obtained.

**Is participating beneficial or risky?**

You may feel a sense of accomplishment from participating in the project. We will learn things from participating in the study that might not directly benefit us but will help others in the future. As a thank you for your time and effort, you may also receive some gift cards.

You may experience social implications and discrimination if you participate in the study, and your personal information may be disclosed to the researcher. In India, many gay men may be concerned by this.

There may be emotional discomfort associated with disclosing your sexual identity. You will receive resources and support if this occurs.

**What security measures will be in place to protect my information?**

Anonymizing the data will help minimize these risks. If you wish, you may use a fake name. You can sign the consent form using a phony name and participate in all aspects of the project. All publications and reports will use the name you choose. On the signature page, you can indicate the name you would like to use.

We will do our best to keep the recorded interview you provided confidential. All your identity information and consent forms will be securely stored in a Secure server at Mount Saint Vincent University. Data from your original study will be accessible only to the research team. The results of

our research will be described and shared in public presentations, journal articles, and other publications.

We will keep all electronic records on a password-protected computer for research purposes. Once the project is completed, the recording will be destroyed 5-7 years later.

### **In the interview, what will happen?**

Interviews are conducted to assist you in navigating through the interview process and to discuss discrimination. During the interview, we will take notes and record parts, especially if you share your experiences. As soon as we begin recording, we will let you know. There will be no public release of the recording. Reports and academic papers will summarize the findings based on the transcription of the recording.

In addition to completing the project, each interview will take between 60 and 90 minutes. It is estimated that the interview will take between two and six hours, depending on the participant.

### **What will happen to my data?**

Participants' data will be maintained through research knowledge translation for five years. If participants show their data research project, they should refer to it.

### **Compensation/ reimbursement**

All participants will receive a small honorarium. For each interview completed as part of the project, this honorarium will consist of a 20-cad transfer. Electronic distribution of the money will take place through the research account at \_\_\_\_\_. To facilitate the distribution of your transfer, \_\_\_\_\_ will have a record of your email address. Your email address may be stored outside of Canada for receipts of gift cards.

### **If I decide to cease participation, what should I do?**

You may withdraw from the study if you do not wish to continue participating. The data you submitted up to the time of your withdrawal will likely still be used (unless you communicate by email). We will need more time to remove your work once it has been released to audiences or published in the study.

After the final interview, you will have a two-week grace period to withdraw your data (including videos). After this period, data will be analyzed, and data will be posted online and cannot be removed.

**I want to obtain results. How do I do this?**

You can obtain a brief report of the findings by providing your email on the signature page.

**Please tell me what to do if I have questions or concerns.**

Should you have any questions or concerns regarding your participation in this study, we are happy to answer them. In addition, we will let you know if there is any new information that may affect your decision to participate. Research ethics at Mount Saint Vincent University can be contacted at (902) 357-6850 (Canada) if you have ethical concerns about participating in the research.

Student researcher: Sainath yeminedi

Email: Sainath.yeminedi@msvu.ca

Phone: 782-6408955

Supervisor: Dr. Phillip Joy

Email: phillip.joy@msvu.ca

**Your Rights as a Participant**

You have the right to all information that could help you make a decision about participating in this project. You also have the right to ask questions about this project and your rights as a participant and to have them answered to your satisfaction before you make any decision. If you would like to discuss this project further, please contact project coordinator/student, Sainath yeminedi.

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant or ethical concerns about this project, please contact Brenda Gagné at (902) 457-6788 or ethics@msvu.ca.

In the next part, you will be asked if you agree (consent) to join this study. If the answer is “yes,” please sign the form.

## APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW GUIDES AND WORKSHOP AGENDA

### Semi-Structured Interview Guide with Questions and Prompts

#### **Questions about the participant (demographics)**

Please tell me a little bit about yourself and your background.

- Age
- Gender
- Sexual orientation
- Income level – I may have some questions to share with you here.
- Occupation
- Other demographic stuff?

#### **Questions about food insecurity**

- In your opinion, what does food insecurity mean?
- How do you typically access food daily?
- Do you face any challenges or barriers when accessing food?
- *Prompt:* How did those experiences make you feel?
- Would you be able to share any experiences where you or other household members were worried that food would run out before you could purchase more? In what ways did this affect you?
- *Prompt-* Do you remember a time when you or someone in your household was concerned that there would not be enough food before the next purchase? Is there anything you would like to share about how you handled this situation?
- I would like to know more about how you and the other members of your household have dealt with food insecurity. ?
- *Prompt* Specifically, have you ever had a situation where the food you purchased did not last, and there was not enough money to purchase more?
- Would you be able to describe how your financial situation has affected your diet?
- *Prompt:* Have you experienced any negative health effects as a result of not being able to afford balanced meals?
- Do you recall any instances in the past year where you or other adults in your household were forced to reduce the size of your meals or skip meals due to a lack of funds for food?

- *Prompt* - Is there anything you would like to add about how these experiences made you feel and how you coped with them?
- Have you experienced any situations in the past 12 months where you felt hungry but were unable to eat enough due to a lack of money to buy food?
- *Prompt* - In what way did this situation affect you, and how did you deal with it?
- Did you or any other adult in your household ever go without eating for a whole day because there was not enough money to purchase food in the past 12 months? Was there ever a time when you had to reduce the size of a child's meal due to a lack of funds?
- *Prompt question*- Would it be possible for you to describe any experiences you have had with these situations and how they have affected you and your family?

**Questions on the underlying factors affecting food insecurity:**

- Have you noticed any differences in how food insecurity affects gay men compared to other members of India? If so, can you describe those differences?
- *Prompt*: Have you observed any unique challenges gay men face in accessing food compared to other population members?
- How do you think food insecurity impacts your mental health and well-being,
- *Prompt* - Have you noticed any changes in your mood or mental well-being when experiencing food insecurity?
- *Prompt*: What strategies do you use, or have you used, to cope or help with these impacts on your mental health and well-being?
- How do you think social support networks play a role in addressing food insecurity among gay men in India?
- *Prompt* - In your opinion, what role can family and friends play in addressing food insecurity among gay men in India?
- Can you describe any cultural or social factors that contribute to food insecurity among gay men in India?
- *Prompt* - Have you personally experienced any cultural or social factors contributing to your food insecurity as a gay man in India?
- *Prompt*: Do you see a role in television, social media, Bollywood, or other media?
- *Prompt*: Do you see a role relating to the caste system?
- *Prompt*: Do you see a role relating to religion?
- *Prompt*: Do you see a role relating to your sexuality?



- *Prompt:* Do you see a role relating to your gender?
- What steps can the government take to help gay men struggling with food insecurity in India?
- *Prompt.* What kind of support should the government provide for gay men facing food insecurity in India?
- *Prompt.* What other resources or support systems are necessary to address food insecurity among gay men in India?

The rationale of the above question is that these questions can provide insight into what gay men believe, perceive, feel, think, and believe regarding their well-being and how they are treated by society. This is because they help to gain insight into their beliefs, perceptions, opinions, feelings, and thoughts. In addition, this type of questioning can uncover potential sources of discrimination or hatred by gay men. In light of this information, it may be possible to identify the causes of the well-being of gay men and how they have been discriminated against and hated by society. This question has identified the access to the necessities of gay men in food, balanced diet, healthcare, and education. This interview aims to identify food insecurity and employment and the risk of unemployment among Indian gay men in their community. These questions provide an overview of the respondents' recommendations about food security and unemployment and give suggestions for specific programs that can benefit the population.

## Appendix D

### Signature Page

**Project Title: Exploring the cultural meanings of food and eating for gay Indian men using qualitative methodologies**

#### Who is conducting this study?

Mr. Sainath yeminedi, Department of applied human nutrition, Mount Saint Vincent university, 166 Bedford Highway, NS B3M 2J6, 782-640-8955; [Sainath.yeminedi@msvu.ca](mailto:Sainath.yeminedi@msvu.ca)

It has been my pleasure to read the explanation of this study. I have had the opportunity to discuss it with you, and my questions have been satisfactorily answered. I understand that I will be asked to participate in several components of interviews that will be recorded and analyzed. In my understanding, direct quotations may be used. I am aware that other people may be able to identify me if I take videos of myself. During the study, I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time, but once it is completed and the data has been released, it will become public information.

#### Commitment of Researchers

The participant has been informed of the conditions of participation in the research project. The questions have been answered to the best of our knowledge, and the participant's understanding has been ensured. I agree to abide by the information and consent form that the research team has agreed upon.

How will I be Identified?

If I appear in any project reports, publications, or websites, I would like to be identified by the following fake name.

By signing below, I agree to take part in the study:

Participant's Name (Printed): \_\_\_\_\_

Participant's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Research's Name (Printed): \_\_\_\_\_

Research's signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

I wish to receive a copy of an aggregate summary of study results( no individual results will be available):

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Clearance	<input type="checkbox"/> Secondary Data Clearance	<input type="checkbox"/> Renewal	<input type="checkbox"/> Modification	<input type="checkbox"/> Change to Study Personnel
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Effective Date	June 5, 2023	Expiry Date	June 4, 2024
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File #:	<b>2022-276</b>
Title of project:	Exploring Food Insecurity among gay men in india: an interpretative phenomenological study
Researcher(s):	Sainath Yeminedi
Supervisor (if applicable):	Phillip Joy
Co-Investigators:	Linda Mann; Deborah Norris
Version :	1

The University Research Ethics Board (UREB) has reviewed the above-named research proposal and confirms that it respects the *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* and Mount Saint Vincent University's policies, procedures and guidelines regarding the ethics of research involving human participants. This certificate of research ethics clearance is valid for a period of **one year** from the date of issue.

<b>Researchers are reminded of the following requirements:</b>			
<b>Modification to Protocol</b>	Any changes to the approved protocol must be reviewed <u>and</u> approved by the UREB <b>prior</b> to their implementation. <b>Form: REB.FORM.002</b> <b>Info: REB.SOP.404</b> <b>Policy: REB.POL.003</b>		
<b>Changes to Research Personnel</b>	Any changes to approved persons with access to research data must be reported to the UREB immediately. <b>Form: REB.FORM.002</b> <b>Info: REB.SOP.404</b> <b>Policy: REB.POL.003</b>		
<b>Annual Renewal</b>	Annual renewals are contingent upon an annual report submitted to the UREB <b>prior</b> to the expiry date as listed above. You may renew up to four times, at which point the file must be closed and a new application submitted for review. <b>Form: REB.FORM.003</b> <b>Info: REB.SOP.405</b> <b>Policy:</b> <b>REB.POL.003</b>		
<b>Final Report</b>	A final report is due on or before the expiry date. <b>Form: REB.FORM.004</b> <b>Info: REB.SOP.406</b> <b>Policy:</b> <b>REB.POL.003</b>		
<b>Privacy Breach</b>	Researchers must inform the UREB immediately and submit the Privacy Breach form. The breach will be investigated by the REB and the FOIPOP Officer. <b>Form: REB.FORM.015</b>		
<b>Unanticipated Research Event</b>	Researchers must inform the UREB immediately and submit a report to the UREB within seven (7) working days of the event. <b>Form: REB.FORM.008</b> <b>Info: REB.SOP.404</b> <b>Policy:</b> <b>REB.POL.003</b>		
<b>Adverse Research Event</b>	Researchers must inform the UREB immediately and submit a report to the UREB within two (2) working days of the event. <b>Form: REB.FORM.007</b> <b>Info: REB.SOP.404</b> <b>Policy:</b> <b>REB.POL.003</b>		

\*For more information: <http://www.msvu.ca/ethics>

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Brenda Gagné".

**Brenda Gagné, Research Ethics Coordinator**  
**University Research Ethics Board**

Halifax Nova Scotia B3M 2J6 Canada Tel 902 457 6350 •  
[msvu.ca/ethics](http://msvu.ca/ethics)

