Feelings of Insecurities in Indian Minorities: Unveiling Lived Realities, Exploring Perspectives and Challenges Faced

Ms. Ambalika Banerjee

Student, Department of Psychology, School of Psychological Sciences, Bangalore Kengeri Campus CHRIST (Deemed to be University), Bangalore – 560 074

Abstract

This study explores the feelings of insecurities and delves deeper to also explore the nuanced subjective experiences of the Indian religious minority communities in Bangalore, India. By implementing Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), this research explores how individuals belonging to Indian minority communities navigate and interpret their daily encounters with oppression, fear and discrimination within their cultural and social contexts. The study incorporates the Social Dominance Theory and the Minority Stress Theory to effectively understand how historical power imbalances and persistent exposure to prejudice shape feelings of insecurity in Indian minorities. The findings will aid in the addressing of important research gaps regarding the subjective experiences of oppression and discrimination faced by members of the Indian minority communities and help in the development of targeted intervention programmes and policies, thus, promoting social justice, equity and community cohesion. This research is particularly significant given the context of India's documented history of various communal violence and riots which have disproportionately impacted the Indian minority communities. This study will help offer important actionable insights for community leaders, policy makers who are committed to fostering a more inclusive and an equitable society.

Keywords: Religious minorities, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, Minority Stress Theory, Social Dominance Theory, Communal violence, Bangalore, India, Social justice

Chapter 1:
Introduction
1.1 Background

The insecurity vastly experienced by religious minorities in India represents a very multifaceted social phenomenon with significant implications for the individual well-being, national unity and community cohesion. This research explores the Perceptions of insecurity and subjective experiences among Indian religious minority communities in Bangalore, Karnataka with particular attention also given to how these experiences are shaped by various intersecting factors like gender, gender, and socioeconomic status.

Religious minorities in India, particularly Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Jains have historically faced challenges, ranging from subtle discrimination to manifestations of physical displays of violence. The overt intensification of communal violence and tensions during the 1980s and 1990s, which culminated in significant violent events in Gujrat (2002), Orissa (2008) and Muzaffarnagar (2013) has created a hostile

atmosphere where many Indian minority community members live with a despondent and persistent sense of vulnerability and apprehension.

Bangalore, Karmataka is a diverse, metropolitan city with a significant minority population of approximately 20% according to the 2011 census, provides an important urban context and outlook for examining these experiences.

Understanding the subjective experiences of insecurity in Indian minority communities is crucial not only for academic rigour and knowledge but also for paving the way for the development of effective policies and intervention programmes that promotes equity, social justice, protects human rights and fosters am inclusive democratic society, which should be the truth of our nation, India.

India's post-independence history has been regrettably blemished by periodic violence and communal tensions with religious minorities often bearing the brutalities of these conflicts. Although India was founded on secular and democratic principles that guaranteed equal rights and protection to all individuals, regardless of their religious communities, the lived reality for many Indian minoritiesHas often been a divergence from these constitutional guarantees.

In Bangalore, Karnataka, which is often celebrated for its cosmopolitan character and vast technological advancements, the underlying tensions and occasional incidents of communal violence and friction reveals a much more multifaceted and complex intergroup dynamic.

The city is religious demographics includes 80.29% Hindus, 12.97%, Muslims, 5.25% Christians and even a smaller percentages of Jains and Buddhists (Census 2011)

These minority communities coexist within social, economic, and political structures that may either exacerbate or mitigate feelings of insecurity.

1.2 Research Aim

This research aims to examine the lived experiences of religious and ethnic minorities in India, focusing on how these individuals navigate identity formation, belonging, and discrimination in contemporary society. Through qualitative interviews and thematic analysis, you investigate the intersectional dimensions of marginalization—particularly the interplay between gender and religious identity—while analyzing how institutional practices and government policies affect minority security. The study explores how experiences of discrimination vary across different contexts (educational, public, and governmental spaces) and documents the coping and resilience strategies minorities develop in response to these challenges. By capturing minority perspectives and recommendations on potential policy approaches, your research contributes to both theoretical understandings of contextual identity and practical recommendations for fostering greater inclusion and recognition of religious and ethnic minorities in India, ultimately working toward a more equitable and pluralistic society.

1.3 Research Objectives

RO1. To examine the subjective experiences of the participants and examine their feelings of insecurity as members of the Indian minority community.

RO2. To examine the socio-cultural factors that might have an influence in cultivating the feelings of insecurity in Indian minorities.

RO3. To analyze how intersecting identity markers such as gender and socio-economic status influence the experiences and feelings of insecurities among Indian minorities.

RO4. To explore the strategies and practices used by Indian minorities to navigate insecurity, focusing on individual adaptability and resilience and the role of personal, community or social support systems.

RO5. To examine the perceptions of Indian minorities regarding the effectiveness of current societal attitudes and trends in addressing their needs.

1.4 Research Problem

The primary research problem addressed in this study is how members of religious minority communities in Bangalore, Karnataka experience, interpret and navigate their feelings of insecurities in their day-to-day lives. While previous research has documented instances of violence against Indian minority communities and discrimination, less attention has been paid to the psychological and emotional dimensions that may manifest as living as a minority, particularly how individuals make meaning of their subjective experiences and develop coping strategies within specific social and cultural contexts.

The significance of the research problem :

1. The subjective experiences of insecurity can have a profound impact on mental health, social participation, and quality of life, even in the absence of over violence.
2. Understanding the subjective experiences of Indian minorities especially from the perspective Of those affected is essential for developing culturally, responsive and effective interventions.
3. Policy approaches that failed to account for the live experiences of Indian minorities, risk perpetuating, rather than elevating their feelings of insecurity.

1.5 Research Questions

This study addresses the following research questions:

1. How do members belonging to the religious minority communities in Bangalore, Karnataka subjectively experience, and interpret feelings of insecurities in their day-to-day lives?
2. What social, cultural, economic and political factors contribute to or mitigate these feelings of insecurity in the Indian minority community in Bangalore, India?
3. What strategies do individuals employ to navigate and cope with perceived insecurity?
4. How will the subjective experiences inform more effective policies and interventions to promote social inclusion and protect minority rights?

Chapter 2: Review of Literature
2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a thematic review of literature relevant to understanding the experiences of religious minorities in India, with particular focus on perceptions of insecurity in Bangalore. The review synthesizes research across multiple disciplines, including sociology, psychology, anthropology, and political science, to establish a comprehensive foundation for this study. By critically examining existing scholarship, this chapter identifies key debates, methodological approaches, and significant gaps that this research aims to address.

The experience of religious minorities in India has been shaped by complex historical processes dating back to the partition and continuing through various phases of nation-building. Engineer (2005) argues that the founding vision of secular nationalism has been consistently challenged by competing ethno-religious conceptions of Indian identity. Bhargava (2010) suggests that the "crisis of secularism" in India reflects deeper tensions between constitutional guarantees and social realities for religious minorities.

These historical tensions provide essential context for understanding contemporary experiences of minority communities.

Pandey (2006) demonstrates how partition violence created enduring narratives about religious differences that continue to inform communal relations. More recently, Jaffrelot (2021) documents the shift from "passive secularism" toward more explicit forms of religious nationalism in political discourse, arguing this has heightened vulnerability among minority communities. These historical analyses illustrate how contemporary insecurities are rooted in long-standing patterns of intergroup relations rather than isolated incidents.

Constitutional provisions and legal frameworks ostensibly protect minority rights, yet their implementation remains contested. Mahajan (2005) analyzes how legal pluralism in India creates uneven protections across religious communities, while Galanter (2018) examines how judicial interpretations of secularism have evolved with significant implications for minority communities. These legal structures represent what Jayal (2013) calls "citizenship paradoxes," where formal equality coexists with substantive inequality.

Policy interventions specifically targeting religious minorities have been controversial. Thomas (2019) evaluates the impact of the Sachar Committee recommendations for Muslim communities, finding limited implementation of key provisions. Similarly, Robinson (2012) questions whether targeted development programs effectively address structural disadvantages faced by religious minorities or merely reinforce their marginalized status. This literature reveals significant gaps between policy intentions and outcomes that may contribute to perceptions of institutional neglect among minority communities.

Research documents various forms of physical and material insecurity affecting religious minorities. Brass (2003) extensively studied patterns of communal violence, demonstrating how "institutionalized riot systems" operate in specific urban contexts. Wilkinson (2004) establishes correlation between electoral competition and violence against minorities, suggesting political instrumentalization of communal tensions. These macro-level analyses are complemented by Chatterji and Mehta's (2007) ethnographic research documenting displacement and property loss following communal violence.

Beyond acute violence, studies reveal patterns of economic marginalization. The Sachar Committee Report (2006) documented systematic disadvantages facing Muslim communities across employment, education, and access to credit. More recently, Thorat and Attewell (2010) demonstrated discrimination in urban labor markets through experimental methods, while Deshpande (2011) revealed how religious identity intersects with other social categories to produce distinctive patterns of economic vulnerability. These studies suggest that insecurity encompasses not only physical safety but also material well-being and economic opportunity.

Religious minorities also experience forms of cultural and identity-based insecurity. Ahmad (2013) documents how cultural practices of minorities become politicized, creating what she terms "cultural anxiety" among community members. Similarly, Peer (2015) analyzes media representation of religious minorities, finding persistent patterns of stereotyping and othering that contribute to cultural marginalization.

Several scholars examine how religious minorities navigate their cultural identities within potentially hostile environments. Kirmani (2013) explores identity negotiation among Muslim women, finding complex strategies of both assertion and accommodation. Sarkar (2018) documents efforts to preserve cultural traditions while simultaneously demonstrating national belonging—what she terms "performing

citizenship." This literature suggests that preserving cultural identity while seeking social acceptance creates significant psychological burdens for minority individuals.

The psychological impact of minority status has received increasing scholarly attention. Mishra (2018) applies minority stress theory to Indian religious minorities, finding correlations between perceived discrimination and psychological distress. Expanding on this work, Bhatia (2020) documents internalized stigma among religious minority youth and its consequences for identity development and self-esteem.

Qualitative studies provide deeper insights into subjective experiences. Khan (2015) uses narrative analysis to explore how memories of communal violence create "anticipatory anxiety" even among those who have not directly experienced violence. Similarly, Gayer's (2007) ethnographic research in Delhi's Muslim neighborhoods reveals how "everyday fear" shapes routine decisions and social interactions. This literature establishes that insecurity operates not only at material and social levels but also through psychological mechanisms affecting well-being and behavior.

Research increasingly recognizes how gender intersects with religious minority status to create distinctive experiences. Kirmani (2020) demonstrates how Muslim women navigate "double marginalization" based on both gender and religious identity. Mehta (2016) documents specific vulnerabilities facing minority women during communal violence, including targeted sexual violence and subsequent social stigmatization.

Beyond contexts of overt violence, studies reveal everyday negotiations. Jamil (2018) explores how minority women navigate public spaces through modified dress, behavior, and mobility patterns in response to perceived threats. Metcalf's (2009) work on piety movements among Muslim women reveals how religious practice itself becomes a site of both empowerment and vulnerability. This literature suggests that gender significantly modifies experiences of religious minority status in ways that must be explicitly addressed in research design.

Socioeconomic stratification within religious communities creates heterogeneous experiences of minority status. Ahmad (2009) documents class divisions within Muslim communities that shape differential access to resources and coping strategies. For Christian communities, Mosse (2012) demonstrates how caste hierarchies persist despite religious conversion, creating complex internal dynamics.

Research by Gayer and Jaffrelot (2012) on "Muslim localities" in Indian cities reveals how spatial segregation based on both religion and class creates distinctive urban experiences. Similarly, Jodhka and Prakash (2016) demonstrate how market discrimination affects minorities differently based on class position. This literature challenges monolithic understandings of religious minority experience and suggests the need for research approaches sensitive to internal diversity.

The experience of religious minorities varies significantly across India's diverse regions and localities. Varshney's (2002) comparative study of communal violence across cities demonstrates how local civic engagement either prevents or enables violence against minorities. More recently, Susewind (2017) uses spatial analysis to reveal how minority experiences in the same city differ dramatically across neighborhoods based on demographic composition and historical development.

Studies specific to Bangalore offer important context for this research. Nair (2005) documents how Bangalore's development as a technology hub has reshaped intergroup relations in complex ways. Jamil and Sadiq (2020) specifically examine Muslim communities in Bangalore, finding that economic integration through the technology sector provides some insulation from communal tensions experienced elsewhere. However, Gowda (2017) notes persistent patterns of residential segregation suggesting

limitations to cosmopolitan claims. This regional literature highlights the importance of contextualizing minority experiences within specific local conditions rather than generalizing across national contexts.

Meyer's (1995, 2003) minority stress theory, originally developed to understand psychological distress among sexual minorities, has been increasingly applied to religious minorities. The theory posits that chronic stress results from persistent stigmatization, discrimination, and marginalization, creating distinctive health and psychological outcomes for minority group members.

Applications to religious minorities in India include Ahmed's (2018) study documenting correlations between perceived discrimination and psychological distress among Muslims in North India. Bhatia and Priya (2021) adapt the theory to include culturally specific stressors facing religious minorities in South Asian contexts. These adaptations highlight both the utility of the framework and the need for contextual modifications when applying theories developed in Western contexts.

Social Dominance Theory (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999) focuses on how societies maintain group-based hierarchies through institutional discrimination, individual prejudice, and behavioral asymmetry. This framework helps explain persistent patterns of inequality despite formal legal equality.

Application to Indian contexts includes Jodhka's (2021) analysis of how historical power relations between religious communities are maintained through institutional arrangements that appear neutral but reproduce advantage. Similarly, Kumar (2014) employs the theory to explain how stereotypes about religious minorities become embedded in institutional practices. These applications provide valuable frameworks for understanding structural aspects of minority experience while requiring careful attention to India's specific historical context.

Phenomenological approaches prioritize subjective lived experience and meaning-making processes. Smith's (2004) Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) provides a systematic methodology for accessing these dimensions, focusing on how individuals interpret significant life experiences.

Applications to religious minority experiences include Basu's (2015) study of Muslim youth identity formation, which reveals complex processes of meaning-making in response to social stigmatization. Prasad's (2018) phenomenological study of Christian converts demonstrates how religious identity becomes integrated into self-concept despite social pressure. These studies highlight the value of phenomenological approaches for accessing dimensions of experience that might be overlooked in structural or quantitative analyses.

Quantitative studies provide valuable documentation of discrimination patterns and their correlates. Thorat and Attewell's (2010) audit studies demonstrate systematic labor market discrimination, while Sachar Committee (2006) analyses reveal socioeconomic disparities across religious groups. More recently, Trivedi et al. (2016) use survey methods to measure perceived discrimination and its relationship to psychological well-being among religious minorities.

However, scholars increasingly recognize limitations of quantitative approaches for capturing lived experience. Mehta and Chatterji (2019) argue that standard survey instruments often fail to capture culturally specific manifestations of discrimination and distress. Similarly, Ahmad (2013) notes that statistical aggregation can obscure important variations within minority communities. These critics suggest the need for complementary methodological approaches.

Qualitative approaches offer deeper access to subjective dimensions of minority experience. Gayer's (2007) ethnographic work reveals how fear shapes everyday practices in ways that might be missed in survey research. Similarly, Khan's (2015) narrative analysis demonstrates how stories about communal violence shape perceptions even among those without direct experience.

Mixed-methods approaches increasingly integrate these perspectives. Jamil's (2018) study combines survey data on perceived discrimination with in-depth interviews exploring coping strategies. Similarly, Kirmani (2020) uses community mapping alongside qualitative interviews to contextualize personal narratives within spatial dynamics. These methodological innovations suggest promising directions for capturing both patterns and meanings in minority experiences.

Participatory research approaches actively involve community members in research design and implementation. Engineer's (2005) community documentation projects train local residents to record incidents affecting minorities that might otherwise go unreported. More recently, Sharma (2023) employs participatory action research to develop community-based responses to perceived threats.

These approaches address what Spivak (1988) identified as the challenge of representing marginalized groups without reinforcing their marginalization. By centering community voices and priorities, participatory methods potentially produce more ethical and relevant knowledge. However, as Jodhka (2021) notes, such approaches require careful attention to power dynamics within communities themselves.

This review reveals several significant gaps in existing literature that the current study aims to address:

2.2 Research Gap

Methodological gaps

While quantitative studies document patterns of discrimination and qualitative studies explore particular communities, few studies employ Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis to systematically examine subjective dimensions of minority experience. This methodology offers unique potential for understanding how individuals interpret and respond to their social circumstances.

Contextual gaps

Studies of religious minorities in India have focused predominantly on northern states with histories of communal violence. Relatively few studies examine Bangalore specifically, despite its distinctive characteristics as a technology hub with significant minority populations. This study addresses this gap by focusing specifically on the Bangalore context.

Conceptual gaps

While studies document various forms of discrimination and violence, less attention has been paid to "insecurity" as a subjective state that may persist even in the absence of overt discrimination. This study specifically conceptualizes insecurity as a multidimensional experience requiring nuanced investigation.

Intersectional gaps

Most studies focus on specific religious communities in isolation or make comparisons between communities. Fewer studies explicitly examine how religious identity intersects with gender, class, and other factors to create distinctive experiences within communities. This study explicitly addresses intersectionality as central rather than peripheral to understanding minority experiences.

Applied gaps

While studies document challenges facing religious minorities, fewer develop specific, contextually appropriate recommendations for policy and practice. This study aims to generate actionable insights that could inform interventions at community and policy levels.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

Based on this literature review, this study employs a conceptual framework that integrates multiple theore

tical perspectives to understand the subjective experience of insecurity among religious minorities in Bangalore:

1. From Minority Stress Theory (Meyer, 1995, 2003), the study adopts the understanding that minority status creates distinctive stressors through both direct experiences of discrimination and anticipatory anxiety about potential threats.

2. From Social Dominance Theory (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999), the study recognizes how historical power relations become embedded in institutional structures and social representations that maintain group-based hierarchies despite formal equality.

3. From Phenomenological Approaches (Smith, 2004), the study prioritizes subjective meaning-making processes through which individuals interpret their experiences and develop coping strategies.

This integrated framework guides the research questions, methodological choices, and analytical approach, allowing for a nuanced examination of how religious minorities in Bangalore subjectively experience and navigate feelings of insecurity in their everyday lives.

Chapter 3: Methods

3.1 Research Questions

1. How do individuals from Indian minority communities experience and interpret feelings of insecurity?
2. What sociocultural, historical, and political factors contribute to these feelings of insecurity?
3. How do members of Indian minority communities make sense of and navigate their experiences of insecurity?

3.2 Philosophical Foundations

Ontological Position

This research is grounded in a constructivist ontological position, recognizing that reality is socially constructed and subjective. This stance acknowledges that individuals' experiences of insecurity are shaped by their unique cultural contexts, personal narratives, and social surroundings. As noted by Smith et al. (2009), an 'insider's perspective' cannot directly or completely capture this subjective reality, necessitating an interpretive approach.

Individuals' perceptions of insecurity are influenced by their distinct cultural contexts and personal narratives.

Societal factors including cultural norms, community dynamics, and historical backgrounds shape individuals' perceptions of reality and experiences of insecurity. Multiple valid realities exist, each shaped by individuals' viewpoints and subjective interpretations, acknowledging the potential variability in how insecurity is experienced among individuals within minority communities.

Epistemological Position

This research adopted an interpretivist epistemological stance, complemented by hermeneutic and critical realist perspectives. Knowledge about feelings of insecurity was gained through interpreting and understanding subjective experiences of Indian minorities, focusing on the meanings they attribute to their experiences.

Understanding required detailed and holistic analysis of participants' narratives within their broader sociocultural context, allowing the researcher to achieve what Schleiermacher (1998) described as "an understanding of the uttered better than he understands himself." While honoring subjective experiences,

the research also examined the objective circumstances contributing to feelings of insecurity, such as discriminatory policies or structural inequalities.

The researcher acknowledged, following Heidegger (1962), that they could not extract themselves from the research but engaged with participants' narratives in a manner that honored their perspectives while also recognizing the complexities of their interpretations.

This research employed Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as its methodological approach, which is particularly well-suited to exploring the subjective perceptions and interpretations of feelings of insecurity among Indian minorities. IPA's focus on how individuals make sense of their lived experiences (Smith et al., 2004) aligned perfectly with the research questions that sought to understand the subjective nature of insecurity.

The idiographic nature of IPA values detailed, nuanced analyses of individual cases, capturing the complexity and richness of human psychology through specific instances (Frost, 2011). This allowed for an in-depth exploration of the unique sociocultural dynamics and environmental factors that influences experiences of insecurity among Indian minorities.

Furthermore, IPA's double hermeneutic approach, combining empathetic understanding with critical questioning (Smith, 2004), provides the analytical depth required to examine both manifest and latent aspects of insecurity as experienced by participants.

3.3 Participant Selection and Recruitment

Sampling Strategy

This study employed purposive sampling to recruit participants who could provide insight into experiences of insecurity among Indian minorities. This non-probability sampling technique enabled the deliberate selection of participants based on specific inclusion criteria relevant to the research questions.

Sample Size

The sample consisted of 8 participants, falling within the recommended range of 8-15 participants for IPA studies (Smith et al., 2009). This sample size was sufficient to allow for detailed analysis of individual cases while enabling the identification of patterns across cases.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Participants were selected based on the following criteria:

Inclusion criteria:

- Self-identification as a member of an Indian minority community
- Current residence in India, specifically Bangalore
- Age 18 years to 25 (to ensure capacity for informed consent)
- Ability to communicate effectively in English or Hindi
- Willingness to participate voluntarily and engage in in-depth discussion about subjective experiences of insecurity

Exclusion criteria:

- Individuals who do not identify as Indian minorities
- Non-residents of India
- Individuals under 18 years of age
- Those unwilling to participate or engage in discussions about experiences of insecurity

Recruitment Process

Participants were recruited through snowball sampling, advertisements. Initial contact with potential participants included information about the study's purpose, methods, time commitment, and potential benefits and risks. Those expressing interest were provided with detailed information sheets and had opportunities to ask questions before deciding whether to participate.

3.4 Data Collection

In-depth Interviews

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, which provided the flexibility to explore unique and unforeseen issues while ensuring all relevant topics were covered. Each interview lasted approximately one hour, allowing sufficient time for detailed exploration of participants' experiences.

An interview schedule (see Appendix A) was developed to guide the conversations, focusing on key aspects of feelings of insecurity while remaining flexible enough to follow participants' leads. The schedule included open-ended questions and prompts designed to elicit rich, detailed accounts of participants' experiences.

Interviews began with general questions to establish rapport and create a comfortable atmosphere before progressing to more sensitive topics. Throughout the interviews, prompts were used to encourage elaboration and clarification when participants found questions too broad or abstract.

All interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent and transcribed verbatim for analysis. The transcription process preserved linguistic features including pauses, emphasis, and emotional expressions to capture the nuanced nature of participants' accounts.

Field Notes

Complementing the interview data, detailed field notes were maintained during and immediately after each interview. These notes captured non-verbal cues, contextual information, and the researcher's initial reflections on the interview process and content. These field notes provided valuable contextual information that enhanced the interpretation of the interview transcripts during analysis.

3.5 Data Analysis

Data analysis followed the interpretative phenomenological approach outlined by Smith et al. (2009), embracing the hermeneutic circle (Cunff, 2020) that recognizes the interdependence between understanding the whole text and understanding individual segments. This iterative process involved moving between the parts and the whole, between the individual case and the collection of cases, and between description and interpretation.

Data analysis followed by Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase approach:

1. Familiarization with the data: Immersion in the data through repeated reading of transcripts, noting initial ideas and observations.
2. Generating initial codes: Systematic coding of interesting features across the entire dataset, collating data relevant to each code.
4. Searching for themes: Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
5. Reviewing themes: Checking if themes work in relation to the coded extracts and the entire dataset, generating a thematic map.
6. Defining and naming themes: Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.

7. Producing the report: Final analysis and selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, relating the analysis back to the research questions and literature.

The analysis adopted a combination of inductive and deductive approaches, allowing themes to emerge from the data while being informed by existing theoretical understandings of minority experiences and insecurity. Both semantic (explicit) and latent (underlying) levels of meaning were considered, consistent with the study's constructivist foundation.

Quality Assurance Measures

Regular consultations with colleagues specialized in qualitative research methods were conducted throughout the analysis process. These discussions further facilitated the exchange of ideas, interpretations, and preliminary findings, enhancing the rigor and trustworthiness of the analysis.

Preliminary findings were shared with participants, providing them with opportunities to evaluate the interpretations and offer feedback on the accuracy and relevance of the conclusions drawn. This process was crucial for enhancing the credibility of the study and ensuring accurate representation of participants' perspectives.

Throughout the research, the researcher has carefully maintained reflexive awareness throughout the research process, acknowledging and carefully examining their own biases, assumptions, and perspectives. Reflective journals documented how the researcher's background, experiences, and perspectives influenced data collection, analysis, and interpretation.

Multiple data sources were also used to refine the study's dependability, comparing and contrasting insights obtained from interviews, participant observations, and field notes. Furthermore, the analytical process incorporated multiple perspectives by engaging a diverse group of scholars in the interpretation process. The research also actively sought contradictory or disconfirming evidence by examining cases that contradicted initial interpretations and assumptions. This strategy guarded against the undue influence of preconceptions, strengthening the study's robustness.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Informed Consent

Given the sensitive nature of the research topic, particular attention was paid to the informed consent process. Potential participants were provided with detailed information about the study's objectives, procedures, risks, and benefits before deciding whether to participate. This information was presented in clear, accessible language, and participants had opportunities to ask questions before giving consent.

The informed consent process emphasized that participation was entirely voluntary and that participants could withdraw at any time without facing any repercussions. This aspect was particularly important given the sensitivity of discussing experiences of insecurity in minority communities.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

Stringent measures were implemented to protect participants' privacy:

● All identifying information was removed from transcripts and replaced with pseudonyms

● Demographic information was reported in aggregate form to prevent identification of individual participants

● Raw data was stored securely, accessible only to the research team

● Quotes selected for inclusion in research outputs were carefully reviewed to ensure they did not contain identifying information

These measures were particularly important given that the study focused on minority communities in a specific location (Bangalore), which could potentially increase the risk of identification.

Minimizing Harm

Recognizing that discussing experiences of insecurity could potentially trigger distress, several safeguards were implemented:

- Participants were informed about potential emotional risks before consenting
- Interviews were conducted in a sensitive manner, with the researcher attentive to signs of distress
- Participants were reminded they could pause or end the interview at any time
- A list of support resources was provided to all participants, including contacts for mental health services
- Follow-up contact was offered to participants who experienced distress during interviews

Power Dynamics

The researcher remained conscious of potential power imbalances between researcher and participants, particularly given the focus on minority communities who may have experienced marginalization.

Efforts to mitigate these imbalances included:

- Creating a respectful, non-judgmental interview environment
- Valuing participants' expertise regarding their own experiences
- Sharing preliminary findings with participants and incorporating their feedback
- Conducting research in a way that benefits rather than exploits the community

3.7 Researcher Positionality and Reflexivity

Researcher Positionality

As the researcher investigating feelings of insecurity among Indian minorities, I acknowledge my own position in relation to the research topic and participants. Hailing from an upper socio-economic background, and being a female identifying with Hindu religion and belonging to the Eastern part of India along with my previous experiences with my fellowship during the Millennium Fellowship Academic Impact, I have had to work with marginalised communities and cater to the targeted Sustainable Goals, I have considerable experience working with minority communities even on an International platform.

This positioning inevitably shapes my approach to the research, including the questions I ask, the interpretations I make, and the relationships I form with participants. Rather than attempting to eliminate this influence, I have adopted a reflexive stance that acknowledges and examines how my positionality also affects the research process.

Reflexive Practice

Throughout the research process, I have sincerely engaged in systematic reflexive practice by following these practices:

- During the tenure of my research, I had effectively maintained a reflexive journal that documented my thoughts and decisions.
- Engaging in regular discussions with my peers and supervisors about my interpretations and data analysis helped me refine my findings.
- Undergoing a critical examination of how my background and beliefs might impact collection of data and analysis was taken into consideration.
- Thorough openness to having my preconceptions challenged by the data

This reflexive approach aligns with Heidegger's (1962) assertion that researchers cannot extract themsel

ves from the research process but must instead be aware of how their presence and perspective can mould the knowledge that is produced.

3.8 Methodological Limitations

Despite efforts to recruit a diverse sample, the findings could not be generalized to all the Indian minorities. The experiences shared by participants in Bangalore may irrevocably differ from those in other regions of India.

Interviews were conducted in English or Hindi, which further potentially excluded perspectives from individuals who might express themselves more comfortably in other languages.

Despite reflexive practices, the researcher's interpretation of data was inevitably influenced by their own perspective and background.

These limitations do not undermine the value of the research but rather demarcate the boundaries within which the findings should be interpreted and applied.

Chapter 4 : Findings and Discussions
4.1 Introduction

The research explored how participants from various religious backgrounds navigate identity formation, face discrimination, and develop coping strategies. The study employed a phenomenological approach to understand subjective experiences of religious minorities (Smith & Osborn, 2015; Creswell & Poth, 2018).

4.2 Participant Demographics and Context

The study included 8 participants (ID: P1-P8):
● Ages: 19-24 years old
● Gender: 4 males, 4 females
● Religious/Ethnic Backgrounds: 2 Christians, 1 Sikh, 2 Jains, 3 Muslims

The geographical context is in Bangalore, Karnataka, India, thus exploring the experiences of religious minorities within this setting. This further aligns this study with research on religious diversity in urban Indian contexts (Gayer & Jaffrelot, 2012; Robinson, 2013)

Table 4.1 Participant Demographics

Participant ID	Age	Gender	Religious/Ethnic Background
P1	24	Male	Christian
P2	22	Male	Sikh
P3	20	Male	Jain
P4	19	Female	Christian
P5	20	Female	Muslim

P6	20	Female	Muslim
P7	22	Male	Muslim
P8	20	Male	Jain

Table 4.2 Themes and Sub-themes

Theme Abbreviation	Theme	Sub-theme	Definition	Example Quotes
IC	Identity Compartmentalization	Personal vs Cultural Identity	Separation between insecurities related to personal attributes versus cultural identity	P2: "Nothing about my race makes me feel insecure…its more like the way I look…I am too skinny"
II	Identity Integration	Identity coherence	Importance of a strong sense of identity to cope with feelings of insecurity	P2: "Having this strong sense of identity definitely plays a major role…you need to accept who you are"
BFHN	Belonging as Fundamental Human Need	Community belonging	Recognition of the basic human need of belonging to a community ; community as a foundation for authentic self-expression	P8: "That's the basic thing you need…the whole perspective of religion or community is a place where you can feel like you belong..where you can be yourself"
BS	Belonging Strategie	Strategic Adaptation	Security through conflict avoidance and peer support	P2: "I pretty much feel secure…I stay out of trouble..my peers treat me a a brother or a close friend"

CH/VRI	Cultural Hypervisibility/Visible Religious Identity	Visibility Burden	Discomfort about over being stared at or singled out over religious or cultural markers	P2:" I hate people who give me weird looks…they're like, 'oh god, is that a Punjabi'…I hate people pointing fingers' P6: "For the people who wear abayas and hijabs, they're just discriminated even before they speak…and that's something nobody else would understand unless they are the same"
SD/RD	Stereotyping and Discrimination/Religious discrimination	Identity-based discrimination	Experiences of being discriminated or stereotypes against ethnic/religious identity	P2: "I got into a fight with this auto-wala…he called me a Khalistani…" P5: "So Bangalore is very racist to be very frank especially towards my community and my religion.."
MS	Media Stereotyping	Cultural Misrepresentation	Impact of media portrayal of perceptions and stereotypes of minority groups	P2: "The way Bollywood depicts Punjabis… Portrays us as funny people who drink and just have fun…film industry plays a major role"
LBE	Language-Based Exclusion	Linguistic Exclusion	Feeling left out and excluded	P4: "Talking in Kannada…this guy picks up and he's

			based on language differences	talking to me in Kannada and says in english 'only talk Kannada, no English'"
Intersectionality				
GRD	Gendered Religious Discrimination	Gender-religion intersection	Awareness of how different aspects of identity markers interact to create varied subjective experiences	P6: "For women who wear the hijab in Islam…you don't look at a man and straight away understand that he is Muslim, but if a woman is wearing a hijab, you'll understand that way, gender plays a big role…"
IVP	Intersectional Vulnerability in Public	Multiple vulnerabilities	Religious vulnerability in public spaces	P5: "Here specially a Muslim woman walking alone at night, she will be targeted, she will be harassed… even in daytime it is not just safe for a Muslim woman to wear the hijab and abaya"
Government-Minority relations				
IBAM	Institutional Bias Against Minorities	Erosion of Democratic ideals	Recognition of systemic bias and loss of faith in democracy	P7:" The government right now is very inclined towards a certain religion and its Hinduism…a government is

				supposed to be democratic but the rules, everything, it makes us feel otherwise"
GHTM	Government Hostility Towards Minorities	Active opposition to minority communities	Perception of active government hostility rather than just mere neglect	P5: "Not at all…if so, I would say they're neglecting it and they are just going against it and I think they are not even helping in the slightest bit"
DES	Designed Exclusionary Systems	Designed exclusion	Systemic exclusion of minorities and women and vision of India specifically designed for Hindu males	P6: "All the rules and policies which is going on is very inadequate and based on a certain criteria…its all against minorities and women who belong to minorities"
GTCC	Government as Transformer of Cultural Change	Top-down alteration	Recognition of government's role in moulding social attitudes; top-down change model	P1: "The government can change implementations in a way that's for people and not label it on religions…government has such a big influence on every citizen here"
Representation of Minorities				
RS	Respect as Security	Acknowledgement of Culture	Finding respect through others' respectful recognition of	P2: "People ask about my race, culture and they're very respectful and they appreciate the way I tie my turban and

			one's cultural identity and values	they know where to draw the line"
ND	Normalization of Diversity	Cultural literacy	Desire for minorities to be seen as normal rather than unusual	P1: "People should realize that there are people who exist and they've never seen…technically its important that such people are accepted and not be made to feel like an outsider"
CR	Complexity Recognition	Humanity beyond stereotypes	Desire to be seen as normal human beings beyond cultural stereotypes	P2: "People think I'm just a chill guy who drinks a lot and parties a lot…I'm not that, I mean Punjabis are very normal people…we're just as normal as anybody"
Contextual Security				
SDS	Spatial Dimension of Security	Variable security	Security dependent on specific spaces; educational institutions as buffer areas	P6: "Right now its fine because we live in Kengeri which is far from the ity and the college students here are very open, especially in our
Coping and Resilience				
ERCS	Emotional Resilience as Coping Strategy	Pragmatic Coping	Practical management of emotions related to discrimination	P1: "If you can fix it, work on it, if you cannot just accept it, then work on something else and

				ignore as best as you can" P6:"I don't take it to my mind so much…that lasts for probably like a day or two and after that I just shake it off…"
ER	Emotional Regulation	Strategic Vulnerability	Strategies for managing emotions related to experiences of marginalisation and discrimination	P2: "I never let people know what's going inside my head…I try to introspect and reflect upon it myself"
SCPF	Self Confidence as Protective Factor	Individual agency	Emphasis is given upon individual character and strength as solutions to discriminatory practices and feelings of insecurity	P1: "If you have a strong character, nobody can tell you otherwise…" P6: "Building your confidence and generally just believing in your ownself and your morals, if you know you are right then stick to that"
Policy Approaches				
SOPS	Secularization of Public Sphere	Private religion	A vision of having a secular society where religion is one's personal identity and a	P5: 'The fact that they have to accept how religion is just a personal choice…someone's personal belief…you don't need to care

			call to end religious identity politics	about someone's personal beliefs"
UIBP	Universal over Identity-Based politics	Universal policies	A calling for a version of a universal rather than identity-based policies; A secular governance	P8: "Just broadening their rules not to specific religion and like being like, okay, these are general rules for people of India…it has to be for all of us, not based on someone's religion.."

4.3 Summary of Analytical Process

The analytical process implemented the thematic analysis approach which are significantly consistent with established qualitative methods (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Terry et al., 2017) with:

- Organization of data into major themes and sub-themes
- Use of participant quotes as evidence
- Development of theme abbreviations and definitions
- Analysis of intersectional factors (gender, religion, language)
- Examination of both personal and structural dimensions

4.4 Presentation of Themes and Sub-themes

The major themes identified include:

1. Identity Compartmentalization (IC) and Identity Integration (II)
- Personal vs. cultural identity separation
- Identity coherence as a coping mechanism

2. Belonging as Fundamental Human Need (BFHN) and Belonging Strategies (BS)
- Community belonging as foundation for authentic self-expression
- Strategic adaptation for security

3. Cultural Hypervisibility/Visible Religious Identity (CH/VRI)
- Visibility burden, especially for those with visible religious markers

4. Stereotyping, Discrimination, and Religious Discrimination (SD/RD)
- Identity-based discrimination experiences
- Media stereotyping (MS) and cultural misrepresentation
- Language-based exclusion (LBE)

5. Intersectionality
- Gendered religious discrimination (GRD)
- Intersectional vulnerability in public spaces (IVP)

6. Government-Minority Relations
- Institutional bias against minorities (IBAM)

- Government hostility towards minorities (GHTM)
- Designed exclusionary systems (DES)
- Government as transformer of cultural change (GTCC)

7. Representation of Minorities

- Respect as security (RS)
- Normalization of diversity (ND)
- Complexity recognition (CR)

8. Contextual Security

- Spatial dimension of security (SDS)
- Public institutions as discrimination sites (PID)
- Gendered public space harassment (GPSH)

9. Coping and Resilience

- Emotional resilience as coping strategy (ERCS)
- Emotional regulation (ER)
- Self-confidence as protective factor (SCPF)

10. Policy Approaches

- Secularization of public sphere (SOPS)
- Universal over identity-based politics (UIBP)

4.5 Detailed Analysis with Supporting Evidence

Each theme has been supported by participant quotes that demonstrate their lived experiences:

Identity: Participants distinguished between personal and cultural identity insecurities and reflected theories of identity compartmentalization (Roccas & Brewer, 2002; Amiot et al., 2007).

P2: "Nothing about my race makes me feel insecure…it's more like the way I look…I am too skinny"

P2: "Having this strong sense of identity definitely plays a major role…you need to accept who you are"

Belonging: Community has been recognized as foundational to security and authentic expression, thus, aligning with Baumeister and Leary's (1995) belongingness hypothesis and Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1943).

P8: "That's the basic thing you need…the whole perspective of religion or community is a place where you can feel like you belong..where you can be yourself"

P2: "I pretty much feel secure…I stay out of trouble..my peers treat me as a brother or a close friend"

Religious Visibility and Discrimination: Participants reported that they experienced discomfort from being singled out, which is consistent with research on stigma visibility (Goffman, 1963; Herek, 2007).

P2: "I hate people who give me weird looks…they're like, 'oh god, is that a Punjabi'...I hate people pointing fingers"

P6: "For the people who wear abayas and hijabs, they're just discriminated against even before they speak…"

P2: "I got into a fight with this auto-wala…he called me a Khalistani…"

P5: "So Bangalore is very racist to be very frank especially towards my community and my religion.."

Media and Language Factors: Participants also noted that there existed considerable media misrepresentation and linguistic exclusion, which reflected media stereotype research (Dixon, 2000; Mastro, 2009) and linguistic identity formation (Norton, 2013).

P2: "The way Bollywood depicts Punjabis…portrays us as funny people who drink and just have fun…"

P4: "Talking in Kannada…this guy picks up and he's talking to me in Kannada and says in English 'only talk Kannada, no English'"

Intersectionality: It has been observed to be particularly affecting the Muslim women, thus demonstrating classic intersectionality concepts (Crenshaw, 1991; Collins, 2000).

P6: "For women who wear the hijab in Islam…you don't look at a man and straight away understand that he is Muslim, but if a woman is wearing a hijab..."

P5: "Here specially a Muslim woman walking alone at night, she will be targeted, she will be harassed…even in daytime it is not just safe for a Muslim woman to wear the hijab and abaya"

Government Relations: Participants perceived institutional bias, therefore, connecting to theories of structural discrimination (Feagin & Feagin, 1978; Pager & Shepherd, 2008).

P7: "The government right now is very inclined towards a certain religion and it's Hinduism…a government is supposed to be democratic but the rules, everything, it makes us feel otherwise"

P5: "Not at all…if so, I would say they're neglecting it and they are just going against it..."

P6: "All the rules and policies which is going on is very inadequate and based on a certain criteria…it's all against minorities and women who belong to minorities"

Representation Needs: Participants desired respect and normalization, reflecting theories of recognition (Taylor, 1994; Fraser, 2000).

P2: "People ask about my race, culture and they're very respectful and they appreciate the way I tie my turban and they know where to draw the line"

P1: "People should realize that there are people who exist and they've never seen…technically it's important that such people are accepted and not be made to feel like an outsider"

P2: "People think I'm just a chill guy who drinks a lot and parties a lot…I'm not that, I mean Punjabis are very normal people…we're just as normal as anybody"

Contextual Security: Security was observed to vary by location, aligning with research on contextual safety (Davies, 2016; Koskela, 1999).

P6: "Right now it's fine because we live in Kengeri which is far from the its and the college students here are very open, especially in our university but when you go out there is discrimination, yes there is"

P6: "[Story about Dandia night] This man just came out of nowhere and then he started screaming at this woman wearing her hijab…"

Coping Strategies: Participants reported that they had developed emotional resilience, which is consistent with research on minority stress and coping (Meyer, 2003; Ungar, 2008).

P1: "If you can fix it, work on it, if you cannot just accept it, then work on something else and ignore as best as you can"

P6: "I don't take it to my mind so much…that lasts for probably like a day or two and after that I just shake it off…"

P2: "I never let people know what's going inside my head…I try to introspect and reflect upon it myself"

Policy Recommendations: Participants suggested secularization as an actionable insight, reflecting debates on secularism and religious pluralism (Bhargava, 2006; Taylor, 2011).

P5: "The fact that they have to accept how religion is just a personal choice…someone's personal belief…"

P8: "Just broadening their rules not to specific religion and like being like, okay, these are general rules for people of India…it has to be for all of us, not based on someone's religion.."

Figure 1
Relational Model of Religious Minority Experiences in Bangalore
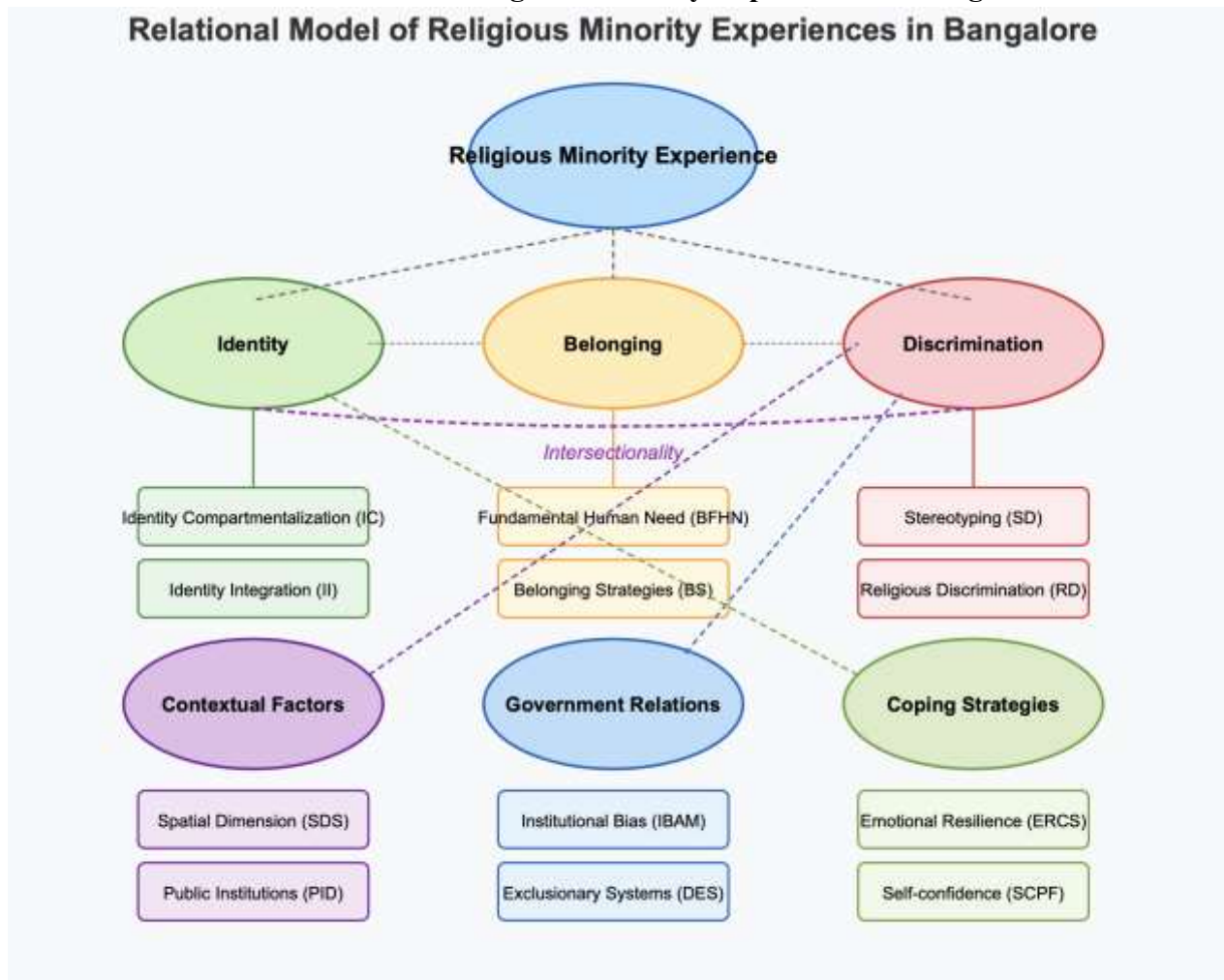
Note. This model maps the interrelations between the key components of religious minority experiences in Bangalore, emphasizing intersectionality across identity, discrimination domains and belonging within broader sociocultural and political contexts

4.6 Discussion of Findings in Relation to Literature

Identity Formation Theory: The findings on identity compartmentalization and integration relate to theories of identity development in minority youth (Phinney, 1990; Berry, 1997; Schwartz et al., 2006). This reflects the process through which minority individuals navigate multiple identity components. The emphasis on belonging connects to literature on psychological well-being and community support systems (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; McMillan & Chavis, 1986). This highlights how community affiliation helps individuals cope with marginalization.

The findings on Muslim women's experiences demonstrate classic intersectionality concepts (Crenshaw, 1991; Collins, 2000; Yuval-Davis, 2006). This shows how multiple dimensions of identity create unique experiences of discrimination. Extensive research on stigma, hypervisibility, and the burden of representation (Goffman, 1963; Frable et al., 1998; Brighenti, 2007) helps explain participants' experiences of being singled out based on visible religious markers.

The government-related themes connect to literature on democratic ideals and minority protections (Kymlicka, 1995; Young, 2000; Modood, 2013), highlighting the tensions between secular governance and religious identity. The contextual security findings relate to literature on how spaces often mould experiences of discrimination (Lefebvre, 1991; Valentine, 2007; Hopkins, 2014), showing the importance of place or one's environment in constructing safety.

All participants' strategies aligned with research on minority resilience and psychological adaptation (Luthar et al., 2000; Meyer, 2003; Ungar, 2008), demonstrating active agency in response to adversity.

4.7 Addressing Contradictory Data

Some participants emphasized individual coping (self-confidence, emotional regulation) while also acknowledging systemic discrimination. This reflects tensions in resilience literature between individual and structural approaches (Garrett, 2016; Hart et al., 2016).

Participants reported feeling both secure and insecure depending on context, suggesting a complex and multifaceted relationship with their environments. This aligned further with research on contextual identity security (Breakwell, 2015; Muldoon et al., 2016).

There is considerable tension between separating personal from cultural identity versus integrating them for psychological coherence, reflecting debates in bicultural identity literature (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005; Schwartz et al., 2010).

Participants wanted religious acceptance while also suggesting religion should be primarily personal, echoing debates about secularism and religious expression (Casanova, 1994; Asad, 2003; Bhargava, 2006).

4.8 Practical Implications

It has been observed that universities appear to provide safer spaces for minorities - their inclusive practices could be studied and replicated, building on higher education diversity research (Hurtado et al., 2012; Chang et al., 2006).

Media organizations could address stereotypical portrayals of religious/ethnic minorities, consistent with media effects research (Ramasubramanian, 2011; Tukachinsky et al., 2015). The government agencies and public services could implement anti-discrimination training, supported by evidence on bias reduction interventions (Paluck & Green, 2009; Devine et al., 2012).

It is crucial to foster minority community networks that provide belonging and support, drawing on social support research (Cohen & Wills, 1985; Haslam et al., 2018). Addressing harassment in public spaces is vital, particularly for visibly identifiable minorities, informed by public space research (Pain, 2001; Koskela, 2014).

4.9 Theoretical Implications

The findings suggest identity security is highly context-dependent rather than static, extending situational identity theories (Turner et al., 1994; Oyserman et al., 2012). The study provides evidence for how multiple identity factors create unique experiences of discrimination, contributing to intersectionality research (McCall, 2005; Bowleg, 2008; Cho et al., 2013). The findings also support theories about how physical spaces structure experiences of belonging/alienation (Soja, 1996; Sibley, 1995; Hopkins & Smith, 2008).

The findings further challenge the more simplistic models of democratic inclusion by highlighting perceived systematic exclusion of minorities, engaging with literature on minority citizenship (Parekh, 2000; Isin & Turner, 2002; Modood, 2013). The study also supports the nuanced understanding of how minorities develop certain adaptive strategies to marginalization while still acknowledging its harmful effects, thus refining resilience frameworks (Masten, 2001; Ungar, 2011; Kirmayer et al., 2011).

Chapter 5. Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Summary of Key Findings

This study explored the experiences of religious and ethnic minorities in India, particularly focusing on issues of identity, belonging, discrimination, and coping strategies. Participants demonstrated complex processes of identity compartmentalization and integration, distinguishing between personal attributes and cultural identity while recognizing the importance of a coherent sense of self for psychological well-being. Community affiliation emerged as essential for participants' security and authentic self-expression, with many developing strategic adaptations to maintain belonging while avoiding conflict. Individuals with visible religious markers (particularly Muslim women wearing hijabs and Sikh men wearing turbans) reported significant discomfort from unwanted attention, stereotyping, and discrimination in public spaces.

The findings revealed how multiple identity dimensions (particularly gender and religion) interact to create unique experiences of discrimination, with Muslim women facing especially severe challenges in public spaces.Participants expressed concerns about institutional bias, perceiving systemic discrimination and erosion of democratic ideals that particularly target religious minorities and women. Safety experiences varied significantly by location, with educational institutions often serving as buffer zones where minorities felt more accepted compared to other public spaces. Participants demonstrated various coping mechanisms, including emotional regulation, pragmatic acceptance, and cultivation of self-confidence as protective factors against discrimination. Participants advocated for secularization of the public sphere and universal rather than identity-based policies that would treat all citizens equally regardless of religious affiliation.

5.2 Contribution to Theory and Practice

The findings extend situational identity theories (Turner et al., 1994; Oyserman et al., 2012) by demonstrating how identity security fluctuates across different social contexts rather than remaining static. This contextual understanding helps explain the seemingly contradictory reports of feeling both secure and insecure from the same participants.

The study provides empirical evidence for intersectionality theory (Crenshaw, 1991; Collins, 2000) in the specific context of religious minorities in India, demonstrating how religious identity combines with gender to create unique patterns of vulnerability, particularly for Muslim women.

The research supports and extends spatial theories of discrimination (Lefebvre, 1991; Valentine, 2007) by mapping how physical spaces structure experiences of belonging and alienation for religious minorities, with important distinctions between educational, public, and institutional spaces.

The study refines resilience frameworks (Masten, 2001; Ungar, 2011) by illustrating how minorities develop adaptive strategies while still acknowledging the harmful effects of discrimination, navigating the tension between individual agency and structural constraints.

The findings engage with and challenge simplistic models of democratic inclusion (Kymlicka, 1995; Young, 2000) by documenting perceived systematic exclusion of minorities from full citizenship, contributing to debates on religious pluralism and secularism in democratic societies.

5.3 Practical Implications

Universities appear to provide relatively safer spaces for minorities. Their inclusive practices could be studied and replicated in other contexts, with particular attention to how they foster intercultural dialogue and normalize diversity.

Media organizations should address stereotypical portrayals of religious and ethnic minorities (e.g., Punjabis as party-oriented, Muslims as threatening) that contribute to public misconceptions and discrimination.

The government agencies and public service providers (particularly those mentioned by participants, such as Aadhar centers) should implement comprehensive anti-discrimination training with specific focus on religious sensitivity and intersectional awareness.

Community organizations should focus on strengthening minority support networks that provide belonging and security, particularly for newcomers and those with visible religious markers who face heightened scrutiny. The local governments should develop targeted programs to address harassment in public spaces, with particular attention to the needs of visibly identifiable religious minorities, especially women.

Organizations should also implement inclusive language policies that acknowledge linguistic diversity and aid in preventing language-based exclusion in groups and communities, which emerged as a significant barrier for many participants. Policymakers should consider participants' calls for more universal rather than identity-based policies that would treat all citizens equally regardless of religious affiliation, moving toward a more secular governance model.

5.4 Limitations of the Study

While the study captured perspectives from individuals with various religious identities (including Punjabi Sikhs and Muslims), the sample size appears limited. A more comprehensive study could include participants from additional religious minorities (Christians, Jains, Buddhists, etc.) to provide a broader understanding of minority experiences. Participant references to Bangalore and specific localities suggest the study focused on urban experiences in this particular city. Experiences might differ substantially in rural areas or other regions of India with different demographic compositions and historical contexts.

Participants recruited through university settings (as suggested by references to "college students" and educational contexts) may represent a more educated segment of minority populations with potentially different experiences than those with less education or economic privilege. While the thematic analysis appears rigorous, more details about the interview process, participant recruitment, and analysis methods would strengthen confidence in the findings.

The study focuses exclusively on minority experiences without including perspectives from majority group members, limiting understanding of intergroup dynamics and majority attitudes that shape minority experiences. The timing of data collection relative to specific political events or policy changes in India is unclear, which could significantly influence participants' perceptions of government-minority relations.

5.5 Suggestions for Future Research

Future research should track how minority experiences evolve over time, particularly in response to policy changes, political events, and media representation shifts. Studies comparing minority experiences across different Indian states and between urban and rural contexts would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how regional factors influence discrimination and belonging. In-depth ethnographic research in public institutions identified as discrimination sites (government offices, public transportation, healthcare facilities) could reveal specific mechanisms of exclusion and potential intervention points.

Systematic analysis of how different religious and ethnic groups are represented in Indian media would complement participant perceptions and identify specific problematic representation patterns. Experimental research testing the effectiveness of various anti-discrimination interventions in educational, workplace, and public settings would help establish evidence-based practices. Studies should also examine conditions under which positive intergroup contact between majority and minority religious groups could inform community-building initiatives and help in making more impactful policies .

Development and validation of contextual identity security measures that would potentially capture the spatial and situational nature of belonging revealed in this study would advance quantitative research in this area. Research evaluating how specific government policies affect minority experiences of belonging and security would provide evidence-based guidance for policy reform. Further refinement of research methods that can effectively capture and analyze intersectional experiences of discrimination would strengthen future studies in this area. Cross-national studies comparing religious minority experiences in India with those in other diverse democracies could identify universal patterns and context-specific factors shaping minority experiences.

References

1. Ahmad, W. I. (2012). 9 'Creating a Society of Sheep'?: British Muslim elite on mosques and imams. In Muslims in Britain (pp. 171-192). Routledge.
2. Alam, S., Khalid, S., Ahmad, F., & Keezhatta, M. S. (2021). Mocking and making: subjugation and suppression of marginalized and the politics of identity. Journal of Education Culture and Society, 12(1), 375-389.
3. Amiot, C. E., De la Sablonniere, R., Terry, D. J., & Smith, J. R. (2007). Integration of social identities in the self: Toward a cognitive-developmental model. Personality and social psychology review, 11(4), 364-388.
4. Asad, T. (2003). Formations of the secular: Christianity, Islam, modernity. Stanford University Press.
5. Basu, L. (2017). Cosmopolitanism and new racial formations in a post-9/11 honors curriculum on diversity. Coleman, Kotinek, and Oda, 135-76.
6. Baumeister, R. F., & Leary, M. R. (2017). The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation. Interpersonal development, 57-89.
7. Benet-Martínez, V., & Haritatos, J. (2005). Bicultural identity integration (BII): Components and psychosocial antecedents. Journal of personality, 73(4), 1015-1050.
8. Berry, J. W., Phinney, J. S., Sam, D. L., & Vedder, P. (2006). Immigrant youth: Acculturation, identity, and adaptation. Applied psychology, 55(3), 303-332.
9. Bhargava, R. (2013). Reimagining secularism: Respect, domination and principled distance. Economic and Political Weekly, 79-92.
10. Bhargava, R. (2010). crisis of secular states?.

11. Bhatia, K. V., & Pathak-Shelat, M. (2020). Reimagining religiously segregated spaces: Building interfaith sites through participatory photography. Journal of Communication Inquiry, 44(4), 321-353.

12. Bhatia, S., & Priya, K. R. (2021). Coloniality and psychology: From silencing to re-centering marginalized voices in postcolonial times. Review of General Psychology, 25(4), 422-436.

13. Bowleg, L. (2008). When Black+ lesbian+ woman≠ Black lesbian woman: The methodological challenges of qualitative and quantitative intersectionality research. Sex roles, 59, 312-325.

14. Brass, P. R. (2010). Forms of collective and state violence in South Asia. Political Violence in South and Southeast Asia: Critical Perspectives, 47-68.

15. Breakwell, G. M. (2021). Mistrust.

16. Brighenti, A. (2007). Visibility: A category for the social sciences. Current sociology, 55(3), 323-342.

17. Casanova, J. (1994). Public religions in the modern world. University of Chicago press.

18. Chang, M. J., Denson, N., Saenz, V., & Misa, K. (2006). The educational benefits of sustaining cross-racial interaction among undergraduates. The Journal of Higher Education, 77(3), 430-455.

19. Chatterji, J., & Washbrook, D. A. (Eds.). (2013). Routledge handbook of the South Asian diaspora. London: Routledge.

20. Cho, S., Crenshaw, K. W., & McCall, L. (2013). Toward a field of intersectionality studies: Theory, applications, and praxis. Signs: Journal of women in culture and society, 38(4), 785-810.

21. Cohen, S. (2014). Stress, social support, and disorder. In The Meaning And Measurement Of Support (pp. 109-124). Taylor & Francis.

22. Collins, P. H., & Bilge, S. (2020). Intersectionality. John Wiley & Sons.

23. Davies, A. (2024). Metacontexts and Cross-Contextual Communication: Stabilizing the Content of Documents Across Contexts. The Philosophical Quarterly, 74(2), 482-503.

24. Deshpande, A. (2011). The grammar of caste: Economic discrimination in contemporary India. Oxford University Press.

25. Devine, P. G., Forscher, P. S., Austin, A. J., & Cox, W. T. (2012). Long-term reduction in implicit race bias: A prejudice habit-breaking intervention. Journal of experimental social psychology, 48(6), 1267-1278.

26. Dixon, T. L. (2019). Media stereotypes: Content, effects, and theory. In Media effects. Taylor & Francis.

27. Engineer, A. A. (2003). Religion and communalism. Institute of Islamic Studies and Centre for Study of Society and Secularism, 16-30.

28. Fazal, T., Vaid, D., & Jodhka, S. S. (2023). Marginalities and Mobilities Among India's Muslims. TAYLOR FRANCIS Limited.

29. Feagin, J. R., & Eckberg, D. L. (1980). Discrimination: Motivation, action, effects, and context. Annual review of sociology, 6, 1-20.

30. Fraser, N. (2008). Social justice in the age of identity politics: Redistribution, recognition, and participation. In Geographic thought (pp. 72-89). Routledge.

31. Michael Garrett, P. (2016). Questioning tales of 'ordinary magic':'Resilience'and neo-liberal reasoning. British Journal of Social Work, 46(7), 1909-1925.

32. Talib, M. (2015). Muslims in Indian Cities: Trajectories of Marginalisation Edited by Lauren Gayer and Christophe Jaffrelot.

33. Williams, S. (2022). Goffman, interactionism, and the management of stigma in everyday life. In Sociological theory and medical sociology (pp. 134-164). Routledge.

34. Gowda, J., Pasha, G. M., Sowmya, H. N., Tiwari, S., & Shivashankara, G. P. (2024). Impact of meteorological parameters on black carbon mass concentrations over Silicon City "Bengaluru, Southern part of India"–A Case Study. MAUSAM, 75(4), 1051-1058.

35. Hart, A., Gagnon, E., Eryigit-Madzwamuse, S., Cameron, J., Aranda, K., Rathbone, A., & Heaver, B. (2016). Uniting resilience research and practice with an inequalities approach. Sage Open, 6(4), 2158244016682477.

36. Haslam, C., Jetten, J., Cruwys, T., Dingle, G., & Haslam, S. A. (2018). The new psychology of health: Unlocking the social cure. Routledge.

37. Herek, G. M., Gillis, J. R., & Cogan, J. C. (2015). Internalized stigma among sexual minority adults: Insights from a social psychological perspective.

38. Hopkins, P. (2019). Social geography I: intersectionality. Progress in human geography, 43(5), 937-947.

39. Hurtado, S., Alvarez, C. L., Guillermo-Wann, C., Cuellar, M., & Arellano, L. (2012). A model for diverse learning environments: The scholarship on creating and assessing conditions for student success. Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research: Volume 27, 41-122.

40. Isin, E. F., & Turner, B. S. (2002). Citizenship studies: An introduction. Handbook of citizenship studies, 1(4), 1-10.

41. Jodhka, S. S. (2024). Sikh Religion and Contentions around Caste. Religions, 15(10), 1219.

42. Kirmani, N. (2016). Questioning the 'Muslim woman': identity and insecurity in an urban Indian locality. Routledge India.

43. Kirmayer, L. J., Dandeneau, S., Marshall, E., Phillips, M. K., & Williamson, K. J. (2011). Rethinking resilience from indigenous perspectives. The Canadian Journal of Psychiatry, 56(2), 84-91.

44. Kumar, T. (2016). " How Do You Know He's Not a Terrorist?": Examining Microaggressions against People of South Asian Descent. Multicultural Education, 24(1), 12.

45. Luthar, S. S., Cicchetti, D., & Becker, B. (2000). Research on resilience: Response to commentaries. Child development, 71(3), 573-575.

46. Mahajan, G. (2007). Multiculturalism in the age of terror: Confronting the challenges. Political Studies Review, 5(3), 317-336.

47. Maslow, A. H. (1943). A theory of human motivation. Psychological review, 50(4), 370.

48. Masten, A. S., & Powell, L. (2003). A Resilience framework for research, policy. Resilience and vulnerability: Adaptation in the context of childhood adversities, 1.

49. Mastro, D. (2009). Racial/ethnic stereotyping and the media. Media processes and effects, 377-391.

50. McCall, L. (2005). The complexity of intersectionality. Signs: Journal of women in culture and society, 30(3), 1771-1800.

51. Mehta, R. (2021). Justice for those without rights: illegal migrants and marginalized citizens in India. In Handbook of Migration and Global Justice (pp. 173-186). Edward Elgar Publishing.

52. Meyer, I. H. (1995). Minority stress and mental health in gay men. Journal of health and social behavior, 38-56.

53. Meyer, I. H. (2015). Resilience in the study of minority stress and health of sexual and gender minorities. Psychology of sexual orientation and gender diversity, 2(3), 209.

54. Kapur, P., Misra, G., & Verma, N. K. (2022). Psychological perspectives on identity, religion and well-being: Empirical findings from India. Springer Nature.

55. Nair, A., Ahlstrom, D., & Filer, L. (2007). Localized advantage in a global economy: The case of Bangalore. Thunderbird International Business Review, 49(5), 591-618.

56. Norton, B., & De Costa, P. I. (2018). Research tasks on identity in language learning and teaching. Language Teaching, 51(1), 90-112.

57. Oyserman, D., Lewis Jr, N. A., Yan, V. X., Fisher, O., O'Donnell, S. C., & Horowitz, E. (2017). An identity-based motivation framework for self-regulation. Psychological Inquiry, 28(2-3), 139-147.

58. Pager, D., & Shepherd, H. (2008). The sociology of discrimination: Racial discrimination in employment, housing, credit, and consumer markets. Annu. Rev. Sociol, 34(1), 181-209.

59. Paluck, E. L., & Green, D. P. (2009). Prejudice reduction: What works? A review and assessment of research and practice. Annual review of psychology, 60(1), 339-367.

60. Pandey, G. (2006). Routine violence: Nations, fragments, histories. Stanford University Press.

61. Robinson, L., Gardee, R., Chaudhry, F., & Collins, H. (2017). Muslim youth in Britain: Acculturation, radicalization, and implications for social work practice/training. Journal of Religion & Spirituality in Social Work: Social Thought, 36(1-2), 266-289.

62. Rahman, A. (2019). Denial and deprivation: Indian Muslims after the Sachar committee and Rangnath Mishra commission reports. Routledge.

63. Schwartz, S. J., Montgomery, M. J., & Briones, E. (2006). The role of identity in acculturation among immigrant people: Theoretical propositions, empirical questions, and applied recommendations. Human development, 49(1), 1-30.

64. Sharma, P., Tranby, B., Kamath, C., Brockman, T., Roche, A., Hammond, C., ... & Patten, C. (2023). A Christian faith-based Facebook intervention for smoking cessation in rural communities (FAITH-CORE): protocol for a community participatory development study. JMIR Research Protocols, 12(1), e52398.

65. Sidanius, J., & Pratto, F. (1999). Social dominance theory. Handbook of theories of social psychology, 2.

66. Smith, J. A. (2004). Reflecting on the development of interpretative phenomenological analysis and its contribution to qualitative research in psychology. Qualitative research in psychology, 1(1), 39-54.

67. Trivedi, P. (2018). Negotiating Order: An Empirical Investigation of Variation in Caste Discrimination in Gujarat, India (Doctoral dissertation).

68. Tukachinsky, R., Mastro, D., & Yarchi, M. (2015). Documenting portrayals of race/ethnicity on primetime television over a 20-year span and their association with national-level racial/ethnic attitudes. Journal of Social Issues, 71(1), 17-38.

69. Young, I. M. (2002). Inclusion and democracy. OUP Oxford.

70. Yuval-Davis, N. (2016). Power, intersectionality and the politics of belonging. In The Palgrave handbook of gender and development: Critical engagements in feminist theory and practice (pp. 367-381). London: Palgrave Macmillan UK.