

A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF FOOD PRACTICES AMONG FAMILIES IN KOCHI CITY



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**A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF FOOD PRACTICES
AMONG FAMILIES IN KOCHI CITY**

Thesis submitted to St. Teresas College (Autonomous), Ernakulam in fulfilment of the
requirements for the award of the degree of Masters of Arts in Sociology

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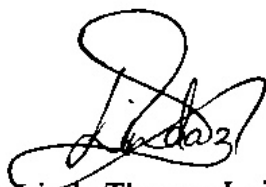
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CERTIFICATE

I certify that the thesis entitled **"A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF FOOD PRACTICES AMONG FAMILIES IN KOCHI CITY"** is a record of bonafide research work carried out by RASHA ZAHEER under my guidance and supervision. The thesis is worth submitting in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Arts in Sociology.



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DECLARATION

I, RASHA ZAHEER, hereby declare that the thesis entitled "A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF FOOD PRACTICES AMONG FAMILIES IN KOCHI CITY" is a bonafide record of independent research work carried out by me under the supervision and guidance of Dr. Linda Therese Luiz. I further declare that this thesis has not been previously submitted for the award of any degree, diploma, associateship or other similar title.

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RASHA ZAHEER

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Food is a fundamental aspect of human sustenance. In the past, anything that can be digested to produce energy is considered as food and people used to eat only when they were hungry. As human history continues to advance and evolve, there has been a drastic changes in food preparation and consumption patterns which was influenced by external factors such as religious, cultural, geographical and socioeconomic differences. Today, food is not just a basic human need, it goes beyond the basic human nutrition. It represents the identity of people all over the world through a variety of customs and practices. It is an essential component of communication, social interaction and cultural expression. It also serves as powerful symbols of cultural heritage and identity. Examining eating habits can reveal important information about the structures, norms and values that define a community. Families' food preparation, consumption, practices and thought processes can provide an understanding about a variety of social dynamics, economic factors and cultural practices.

Food habits are a necessary part of human existence and is deeply rooted in sociocultural and economic contexts. It tells so much about the family dynamics and cultural identity as it serves as an insight into the customs, values and interactions of society. These customs address not only what individuals eat but also how, when and why they have certain food habits and preferences. Food can be used as a lens through which we can observe the complexities of social life and cultural identity.

The food customs of every region are greatly influenced by geographical variables including climate which has an impact on crop viability, trade routes which provide new ingredients and cultural exchanges which blend culinary traditions and shape the food practices of each region.

The Asian food culture is diverse as it can be further divided into regions as East Asia, South Asia, South East Asia. Each of these regions have different food habits. Noodles, rice and soy products are the staple food of East Asia. Korea is well known for it's Kimchi and barbecue, China for its wide variety of ethnic cuisines and Japan for its Sushi and Sashimi. When it comes to South Asia, common foods include rice, lentils and flatbreads like roti and naan. India is well known for its curry meals and spices, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka have their own distinctive spice mixes. Noodles and rice are basic food in Southeast Asia. Thai food balances flavours that are sweet, sour, salty and spicy. Indonesia has *Satay* and *nasi goreng* whereas Vietnam is known for its Pho and fresh herbs.(Roberston, 2019)

European food habits are entirely different from that of Asian food culture. Staple food in Western Europe include meats, Cheese and bread. Germany is known for its beer and sausages, Italy for its Pasta and Pizza and France for its exquisite cuisine. Hearty meals which include meats, potatoes and cabbage are typical in Eastern Europe. Poland is well known for its pierogi, Hungary for its goulash and Russia for its borscht and vodka. Fresh vegetables, grains, fish and olive oil are the main ingredients in Mediterranean. Spain is recognised for its paella and tapas, Italy for its Mediterranean cuisine, Greece for its salads and cheese. (Wood, 2024).

African dietary habits are unique as the staples in North Africa include *tagines*, couscous and flavourful spices. Tunisia is known for its hot harissa, Egypt for its *ful medames* and Morocco for its tagine meals. Yams, millet and cassava are common in Sub Saharan Africa while East Africa is recognised for its stews and injera. West African cuisine includes *jollof* rice and fufu. The immigration has made North America more diverse. While Canada is well known for its poutine and maple syrup, the United States boasts regional specialties like New England clam chowder and Southern Barbecue. In Central and South America, staple food include rice, beans and corn. Brazil is well known for its *feijoada*, Peru for *ceviche*, Mexico for tacos and mole. (Saveur, 2016).

In Middle Eastern countries, common foods include grains, legumes and lamb. Shawarma, falafel, hummus are popular around the world with its significant use of spices like coriander and cumin. (Roden, 2000)

Each region has its own unique food practices which resemble their traditional, historical, geographical and cultural heritage in many different ways. The nature and history of each place lead to the development of distinctive culinary customs which contribute to the great diversity of flavours and ingredients found around the world.

Food has always been a major factor in defining cultural boundaries and creating a sense of belonging to a community. The traditional dishes and dietary habits are passed down through generations preserving the unique flavours, ingredients and cooking methods which shapes a community's lifestyle. The famous Sushi making process in Japan, the communal Injera-eating tradition in Ethiopia, the joyous Tamale-making tradition in Mexico are all examples of ways that culture shapes identity and tradition.

Religion is another major factor defining and shaping food habits and food culture in most societies. Religious vary from culture to culture and so as the food custom of each religion. It plays a significant role in religious beliefs and the dietary habits are different in each religion. Particular food items are not allowed in some religions as it might be against their beliefs and principles. The kosher laws of Judaism, halal requirements in Islam, the emphasis on vegetarianism in Buddhism and Hinduism, and the christian fasting practices are examples of how religious ideologies affect eating habits. Islam is against eating pork as it's unclean, Hinduism refrain it's believers from killing and consuming cows as it's considered sacred and godlike, while Buddhism completely forbids consuming any kind of meat because it's cruel to kill animals. Some religions doesn't have any restrictions or rules on food. These restrictions sustain religious identity and serve to bring followers together by reflecting spiritual concepts. Those who are firm believers of a particular religion will definitely follow it's rules and setup their food practices accordingly. (Albala,2011)

Additionally, there is a close connection between food practices and ceremonies that celebrate important occasions and communal gatherings. Religious celebrations frequently involve festive meals and dietary restrictions that highlight religious beliefs and a shared identity. These culinary practices provide people a sense of community connecting individuals to their cultural roots and to each other. Festivities like Diwali, Christmas and Ramadan involve specific dishes which have symbolic meanings representing religious teachings and rituals.

Understanding religious and cultural identities reflected in eating habits provide insight into the complexities of social interactions and cultural continuity. It shows the ways in which food serves as a symbol of culture, means for identity and an agent of customs. The study of food practices is crucial in understanding the connection of human culture and lasting value of culinary heritage as the society continues to evolve and blend in.

Background of the study

Food transcends mere nourishment; it is an essential aspect of human life. The culinary practices of a society reveal its values, beliefs, and norms, intricately woven into its cultural, social, and economic frameworks. The family, as a fundamental social institution, plays a crucial role in shaping and transmitting dietary habits across generations.

Furthermore, the cultural and religious importance of food offers valuable insights into the social diversity of dietary patterns and consumption. This can lead to a sociological examination of the eating habits of families in Kochi city.

Kochi, commonly known as the Queen of the Arabian Sea, has played a crucial role in the international spice trade for centuries. Located on the southwestern coast of Kerala, it offers a distinctive combination of diverse cultural and traditional elements, rendering it a fascinating topic for sociological research on dietary habits. The city provides an outstanding setting for exploring family dining practices. Its population is diverse, representing a broad spectrum of ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds, and the cultural environment is marked by a seamless integration of traditional and modern influences. (Ernakulam District . n.d)

The examination of diverse culinary practices and their impact on family and societal structures is enhanced by the rich cultural heritage and varied population of Kochi. As a historically important port city, Kochi acts as a cultural crossroads, reflecting a multitude of eating traditions influenced by different communities, such as Konkani, Arab, Malayali, Anglo-Indian, and Gujarati groups. Gaining insight into these culinary traditions can shed light on the city's multicultural identity. This study intends to concentrate on families in Kochi, uncovering the cultural and religious elements that shape their food practices, thus emphasizing the broader social dynamics, rich diversity, and deeply ingrained traditions that characterize the region.

Need and Significance of the study

While food is essential in shaping cultural and religious identities, there is a notable deficiency in research regarding the cultural and religious factors that influence the dietary preferences of families in Kochi city. This city, characterized by a rich tapestry of Hindu, Christian, Muslim, and other communities, boasts unique culinary traditions and practices. Gaining insight into how cultural and religious elements impact dietary choices is vital, as these choices can significantly influence health outcomes and inform public health initiatives. This study seeks

to fill existing research gaps and respond to pertinent questions by performing a sociological analysis of food practices among families in Kochi. There is a pressing need for comprehensive studies that explore the sociological dimensions of food practices, given the limited research on this topic in Kochi. Additionally, the cultural and religious influences on family food practices, the gender dynamics affecting eating habits which have not received adequate attention—and the intergenerational shifts in dietary habits remain poorly understood.

It is essential to examine the impact of gender roles on food preparation and consumption within families, as the differences in eating habits between genders are often overlooked. Understanding women's roles in dietary practices can inform strategies aimed at achieving gender equality and empowering women. Gender roles significantly influence nutrition outcomes, particularly for women and children, highlighting the importance of promoting healthy food choices and addressing the social factors that affect these choices.

Additionally, it is vital to investigate the evolution of food habits over time, as the transmission of culinary knowledge across generations is a complex process. Insights into how eating habits transform over generations can guide efforts to promote cultural diversity and preserve culinary heritage. Given the increasing prevalence of diet-related diseases, these intergenerational changes in eating habits can profoundly affect health outcomes.

This study will advocate for cultural diversity by underscoring the importance of maintaining traditional eating practices and culinary traditions. It will also emphasize the need to promote healthy eating habits alongside the preservation of customary food practices. The findings regarding gender roles in eating habits will contribute to advancing gender equality and empowering women.

An examination of food practices through a sociological lens can offer valuable insights into the social dynamics that shape eating behaviors and preferences. By exploring the sociological dimensions of dietary habits among families in Kochi city, this research aims to enhance the interdisciplinary domain of food studies. Furthermore, the study will enrich Sociological Theory by analyzing the intricate connections between food, culture, and society within the specific context of Kerala.

Objectives

Primary objective of this study is to explore and analyse the sociological aspects of food practices among families in Kochi investigating how food choices, practices and consumption reflect and shape social dynamics and cultural identity.

Specific objectives:

- 1) To understand cultural and religious influences on food choices.
 - Explore the role of festivals, rituals and traditions in shaping dietary habits.
- 2) To explore the role of gender in food practices.
 - Analyse the gender roles related to food preparation and consumption within families.
- 3) To analyse inter generational changes in food habits.
 - Examine the changes and transmission of culinary knowledge from older to younger members of the family.

Research Questions

- How cultural and religious practices influence food choices and meal preparations in Kochi?
- How food related tasks are divided among family members and the implications of these roles?
- How do family roles and structures impact food related decision making and practices?
- How food preferences and practices have evolved across generations within families?

How the culinary knowledge is transmitted from older to younger members of the family?

CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Food is more than just a basic necessity; it is a cultural artefact that reflects the values, beliefs, and identities of societies. The study of food practices offers unique insights into the ways cultural, religious, economic, and social dynamics shape everyday life. In the context of families in Kochi, a city known for its cultural and religious diversity, examining food practices sociologically provides an opportunity to explore how tradition, modernity, and globalisation intersect in shaping daily habits and collective identities. This literature review critically examines significant works in the sociology of food, exploring themes such as food and identity, cultural heritage, social stratification, and globalisation. It also identifies gaps in the existing research to provide a framework for analysing food practices among families in Kochi. By drawing on diverse perspectives, the review aims to establish the relevance of these sociological themes and their applicability to understanding the unique context of Kochi's multicultural food practices.

Sibal, (2018) studied the relationship between food, cultural identity and religious practices as "*Food: Identity of Culture and Religion*," which explores the ways in which food reflects religious beliefs and cultural heritage highlighting the significance of food in forming both personal and societal identities. Food choices are associated with a person's cultural identity and can be influenced by religion, tradition and regional background. It can reflect the cultural heritage and identity. Food preparation, consumption and sharing practices can convey cultural values and beliefs. It can also be used as a tool for cultural expression and communication. It shape the food habits and preferences. The article provides information on the symbolic meanings of food in various cultural contexts. But the article failed to focus on how social inequalities and power relations influence food choices. It has lack of investigation on how cultural interaction and globalisation affect eating habits.

Kumaran (2023) argues that food plays a crucial role in forming social identities and maintaining social hierarchies in his book, "*Sociology of Food: Resource Book*". Caste, class, and ethnicity are just a few examples of the social structures that are reflected and reinforced by food preferences and practices. It also emphasises how important food is in forming cultural values and customs. Food serves as a symbol of cultural heritage and identity in addition to being a source of nourishment. It investigates the connections between society, the economy, and food. Globalisation and neoliberalism are two examples of current economic structures that are reflected in and reinforced by food systems.

Mennell, Murcott, and Van Otterloo, (1992) established a book, "*The Sociology of Food: Eating, Diet and Culture*" examining the complex connections between food, culture, and society. The writers look at how eating habits are socially formed and impacted by class, gender, and ethnicity, as well as how food choices reflect and shape both individual and collective identities. They examine how social injustices and power dynamics impact food systems using a historical and qualitative research methodology. In addition to stressing the necessity of food policy and planning to take into account the social and cultural aspects of food systems, the book stresses the significance of comprehending food culture in its social and historical context. In the end, the writers show that food is more than just a physical Necessity.

Nagla, (2020) in his book "*Sociology of Food*" explores the social dimensions of food and eating patterns, with a particular emphasis on India. It examines the complex connections of food, culture, and society . Food habits are shaped by Social and Cultural factors. Social and cultural elements including caste, religion, and class influence eating patterns. Food customs are ingrained in societal structures and power relations and are not merely a question of personal taste. According to Nagla, food can be used as a social control mechanism to enforce preexisting social injustices and hierarchies. Nagla's work also highlights the significance of food in shaping individual and collective identities. Food practices can be a means of expressing cultural heritage, community belonging, and social status (Nagla, 2020). However, especially in diverse backgrounds, food may also be a cause of tension and conflict. highlights the importance it is to take into consideration the social and cultural circumstances in which eating practices are formed. Food practices are affected by political, economic, and historical factors and are not permanent.

Counihan, Van Esterik, and Julier, (2018) in their work "*Food and Culture: A Reader*" in Fourth Edition argues that food reflects and shapes both individual and collective experiences, making it a fundamental part of cultural identity. The book presents a number of case studies that illustrate how cultural customs, values, and beliefs are embedded in eating habits. For example, the chapter on "Food and Identity in the Caribbean" emphasises how food serve as a symbol of cultural heritage and resistance to colonialism (Counihan et al., 2018). The book also examines how social relationships and power dynamics are entwined with food. food can serve as a social control mechanism, upholding preexisting hierarchies and disparities. The chapter on "Food and Gender" demonstrates how eating habits are frequently gendered,

reflecting and perpetuating patriarchal norms and power structures. The book also explores how globalisation has affected food cultures, emphasising the intricate relationships between cultural appropriation and exchange. Traditional food-ways and cultural identities are in danger due to the homogenisation of food cultures brought about by globalisation. Nonetheless, the book also presents examples of innovation and cross-cultural interaction, highlighting the flexibility and passion of culinary cultures (Counihan et al., 2018).

Graf, (2020) through her work, *"Food & Families in the Making: Knowledge Reproduction & Political Economy of Cooking in Morocco"* investigates the cultural, social, and financial importance of cooking in Moroccan households through an ethnographic lens. Graf highlights the complex relationship between tradition, modernity, and globalisation by examining the ways in which cooking techniques and knowledge are passed down through the generations. She also examines the political economy of cooking, showing how migration, gender, and class influence how food is prepared. Graf clarifies how food and family are intertwined and how cooking practices reflect and shape social relationships, identities, and cultural values by placing cooking within the larger framework of Moroccan society and the Moroccan economy.

McWilliams (2017) provides an in-depth exploration of the cultural significance of food globally in her book *"Food Around the World: A Cultural Perspective."* This work adopts a nuanced approach to understanding the intricate connections between food, culture, and society, investigating how dietary choices and practices both reflect and shape identity, community, and tradition. McWilliams delves into the diverse cuisines of different regions and cultures, emphasizing the importance of food in daily life as well as in rituals and celebrations. By employing a cultural lens, the book illustrates the social, emotional, and symbolic meanings of food, which vary according to different societies and environments. Overall, *"Food Around the World"* serves as an essential resource, offering a thorough and engaging analysis of the cultural importance of food.

Hauck-Lawson (2004) underscores the importance of the term "food voice" in the study of food cultures. This concept refers to the ways in which individuals and communities utilize food to express their cultural identities and values, as highlighted by Hauck-Lawson (2004, p. 24). In her introduction to the special issue dedicated to food voice, she stresses the importance of recognizing the social and cultural contexts that shape the production, consumption, and

experience of food. By examining food voice, researchers can gain deeper insights into the complex relationships among food, culture, and identity.

Devika, (2018) claims that developing social change in Kerala requires the agency of women through “*Women’s Agency and Social Change in Kerala*”. The author provides a context in which women have fought for their rights and defied patriarchal norms, especially in relation to family, work, and education. She investigates the connection between women's agency and social change in Kerala under the heading of "Social Change and Feminist Politics." She argues that feminist politics, especially in relation to women's rights and empowerment, has significantly influenced social change in the state. (Devika, 2018). She also emphasises how crucial intersectionality is to understanding the women's experiences in Kerala. The author looks at multiple factors influencing women's experiences.

Srinivas, (2013) claims that global food chains and multinational corporations have changed how food is produced, marketed, and consumed in South Asia through his work “*Curried Cultures: Globalisation, Food, and South Asia*”. Globalisation has resulted in the homogenisation of food cultures. But Srinivas also emphasises how regional culinary traditions have adapted and resisted these globalising influences, resulting in new and hybridised culinary expressions. The complex connections between South Asian cuisine, identity, and culture are examined by the author. He argues that food serves as a symbol of cultural heritage, identity, and community in addition to being a source of nourishment. Srinivas investigates how social identity is constructed and performed through food, especially in diasporic communities.

The chosen literature highlights the complex relationship between food, culture, and society and provides insightful information for a sociological study of Kochi families' eating habits. The article by Vatika Sibal emphasises how food shapes identities and has cultural and religious significance. Its limited attention to social injustice and globalisation, however, leaves space for more research in these fields.

The Sociology of Food by Stephen Mennell, Anne Murcott, and Anneke H. van Otterloo and The Sociology of Food by Madhu Nagla explore the social constructions of food and how it relates to gender, class, and cultural identity. Particularly relevant to Kochi's multicultural environment, these works highlight the importance of understanding eating customs within their larger socio-historical and regional contexts.

The anthology *Food and Culture: A Reader* edited by Counihan, Van Esterik, and Julier, broadens the scope by examining globalization, food politics, and social justice. Katharina Graf's study of Moroccan cooking practices and Margaret McWilliams' exploration of global food cultures further highlight the connections between food, identity, and social structures, providing critical perspectives for analyzing how cultural and economic factors influence food practices.

When combined, these publications offer a strong starting point for researching the sociological aspects of food in Kochi. They emphasize the significance of taking local customs and regional influences into account while highlighting issues like cultural identity, social stratification, and globalization. To address the unique characteristics of Kochi's diverse sociocultural and economic environment, including the ways in which regional cuisines, family dynamics, and globalization interact to shape eating habits, more research is still required.

There are significant gaps in the literature's application to particular regional and cultural contexts, like Kochi, despite the fact that it offers a rich understanding of the sociological aspects of food. The majority of studies, like those by Margaret McWilliams and Vatika Sibal, concentrate on the wider cultural and religious significance of food, but they don't go into detail about how these dynamics work in historically significant, diverse, and urban cities like Kochi.

Additionally, although articles such as *The Sociology of Food* and *Food and Culture: A Reader* discuss globalization, social inequality, and power dynamics, they don't examine how these elements affect family eating habits in areas that are undergoing fast socioeconomic and cultural change. In Kochi, where diverse cultural and religious communities coexist, little research has also been done on how globalization and cultural exchanges alter traditional eating customs within families.

Furthermore, not much attention has been paid to how family dynamics, generational shifts, and regional influences intertwine to shape eating habits. There is a knowledge gap regarding the ways in which micro-level elements, like daily routines and family traditions, influence eating habits and choices because the majority of current research concentrates on larger cultural and societal trends.

By investigating the sociological aspects of food habits among Kochi families and concentrating on the interaction of tradition, modernity, globalization, and local diversity, this project seeks to close these gaps.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Research methodology is a way to systematically solve the research problem. It may be understood as a science of studying how research is done scientifically. Researchers not only need to know how to develop certain indices or tests, how to calculate the mean, the mode, the median or the standard deviation or chi-square, how to apply particular research techniques but they also need to know which of these methods or techniques, are relevant and which are not, and what would they mean and indicate and why. Researchers also need to understand the assumptions underlying various techniques and they need to know the criteria by which they can decide that certain techniques and procedures will be applicable to certain problems and others will not. All this means that it is necessary for the researcher to design his methodology for his problem as the same may differ from problem to problem. research methodology we not only talk of the research methods but also consider the logic behind the methods we use in the context of our research study and explain why we are using a particular method or technique and why we are not using others so that research results are capable of being evaluated either by the researcher himself or by others (Kothari, 2004).

Research Design

A research design is the arrangement of conditions for collection and analysis of data in a manner that aims to combine relevance to the research purpose with economy in procedure. The research design is the conceptual structure within which research is conducted; it constitutes the blueprint for the collection, measurement and analysis of data (Kothari, 2004).

The present study used a qualitative approach for an in-depth examination of food practices within Kochi's distinct cultural and social context is provided through the use of a Qualitative approach. This method enabled a thorough investigation of the customs, beliefs, and outside factors that affect family eating patterns.

The researcher had found the research problem from a personal thought which made them curious about the diversity in food based on various factors. Religion was one of the factor as the researcher had experienced the difference. Then the researcher was interested to know more about the problem hence they started the study. The researcher discussed it with the guide and decided to study the food practices among families in Kochi city as the city has a diverse cultural and religious background.

The needs and significance of the Sociological analysis on food practices among families in Kochi city was marked out. The researcher then explored more about the problem through reading and relying on previous researches. Hence the researcher found out some literature reviews. Since the study is based on food practices among families of Kochi, the researcher had chosen to select sample from the locality. Sample included the members of Families of Kochi. Why the researchers chose the sample because Kochi is a cultural hub with considerable Muslim, Christian, and Hindu populations and also a number of diverse communities.

A thorough comparative analysis of dietary practices influenced by culture, religion, and tradition is made possible by this diversity. Kochi is an interesting example of how modernisation and globalisation affect traditional eating customs because it is a rapidly urbanising city. The emergence of supermarkets, restaurant culture, and fast food chains led to decline in home-cooked meals. Food has a strong connection to community and family life. It is possible to investigate gender roles in cooking, intergenerational food customs, and the effects of nuclear versus joint family structures by researching Kochi families. So choosing families of Kochi city is a good idea for a better understanding of diversity in food practices as the researcher can explore deep into the multicultural and social context of Kochi.

The researcher adopted a Qualitative research method to collect data from the sample. Qualitative research is an in-depth understanding of social phenomena in their natural environment which is pursued through naturalistic interviews. It depends on human experiences as the primary source of meaning in daily life and concentrates on the "why" of social phenomena rather than the "what." Instead of using logical or statistical methods, qualitative researchers employ a variety of inquiry systems, such as phenomenology, case studies, historical analysis, grounded theory, and biography, to examine human phenomena. Most people assume that knowledge in qualitative research is subjective rather than that the researcher gains insight into the participants' lives from them. While conducting the research, the researcher tries to remain impartial in order to guarantee validity and reliability. Due to the subjective nature of qualitative research, the researcher believed qualitative research is apt for the study as it explain how each sample perceives the relationship between food practices and society.

The researcher employed the interview method of qualitative research to gather data. To gather information from each sample, the researcher used semi-structured interviews since they can

be less rigid and extract more information. The data was collected from members of 18 families from different religious and cultural backgrounds in Kochi city. The researcher created interview questions and asked the samples in a face-to-face interview, in which the interviewer and interviewee interacted with each other directly. The data was then subjected to thematic coding in order to identify any commonalities between the information gathered by each sample.

Data Collection Methods

The data collection method utilized in this study was the interview technique, which is characteristic of qualitative research. The target population for this study comprises families residing in Kochi city. A purposive sampling strategy was implemented, allowing the researcher to select samples that align with specific research objectives, particularly focusing on families in Kochi city. Semi-structured interviews were carried out to collect primary data, which will subsequently be analyzed using thematic analysis.

The semi-structured interview is a qualitative research technique that combines a formal interviewing process with a predetermined set of open-ended questions (questions that stimulate discussion) and gives the interviewer the chance to delve deeper into specific themes or responses. The interview structure is flexible, allowing the researcher to ask the interviewee to elaborate or to follow a different line of inquiry. Thematic analysis is a method for analysing qualitative data that involves reading through a set of data and looking for patterns in the meaning of the data to find themes. It is an active process of reflexivity in which the researcher's subjective experience was at the center of making sense of data (Kothari, 1990).

The term "population" encompasses all items included in an inquiry. In this study, the population consists of family members residing in Kochi City. To achieve a diverse representation of families from various cultural and religious backgrounds, the researcher employed purposive sampling, a method that selects samples according to the specific objectives or intentions of the researcher.

Interview Schedule

The research was conducted on families from different cultural and religious backgrounds including Hindu, Christian, Muslim, Konkani, Gujarati, Anglo Indian. The semi-structured

interview lasted approximately 20 - 30 minutes with each participant. Finding out the participant's sociocultural information was the goal of the first interview phase. After building rapport with the participant, questions were asked during the interview to find out how they perceive the relationship between food and society. The order of the interview questions was arranged according to the objectives such as Cultural and religious influence, intergenerational changes, gender roles in food preparation and consumption.

Data Analysis

The data analysis technique that the researcher planned to use was thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a method for analysing qualitative data that involves reading through a set of data and looking for patterns in the meaning of the data to find themes. It is an active process of reflexivity in which the researcher's subjective experience was at the center of making sense of data. Since the researcher had planned to use a qualitative research method for collecting data, thematic analysis is the best way to analyse the data collected from the sample as it could clearly bring out the exact points given by the interviewees (Kothari, 1990).

Procedure

The consent of each of the 18 family was obtained before any data was collected. A schedule was created for the data collection process. The researcher made the participants feel at ease and built a rapport with them before starting the study. The researcher gave a brief introduction before the participant gave their own introduction and gave their consent to participate in the study. No participants who were unwilling to take part in the study were included by the researcher. The interview was conducted by the researcher mostly in houses and also at workplaces. The researcher then guided semi-structured questions to explore the research topic. At the end of the qualitative data collection process, the researcher expressed gratitude to the participants for their active involvement.

Ethical Considerations

1. The researcher recorded the interview sessions with the participants' informed consent and used semi-structured interviews to gather data for this study.
2. The study was carried out following accepted professional guidelines. The participants gave their informed consent and were made aware that they could end the interview and withdraw from the session at any time if they felt uncomfortable.

3. The participants' self-determination, privacy, and confidentiality were preserved throughout the study.
4. Factors like socioeconomic status, race, religion, nationality, gender, identity, language, culture, ethnicity, disability, and socioeconomic status were all taken into account and respected.
5. Following the analysis and the writing of the project report, the data were anonymised.

Scope and Limitations

The study focuses on families within the urban and suburban areas of Kochi. While the findings will provide valuable insights into regional food practices, they may not be generalisable to all the families in Kochi or other regions. Even in Kochi, there are different ethnic communities and castes among the religious communities. So it was hard to incorporate all the sub groups from each communities.

Members of the Latin Catholics was the respondents from Christian community. So the findings cannot be generalised to the whole Christian community. The interview with the Muslim community only involved particular families from the areas of Mattancherry. So the findings about Muslim community may not be generalised. The findings about food practices of Hindu community may not also be generalised as it have different sub castes. Konkani and many Gujaratis also belong to Hindu community but their cultural and ethnic backgrounds lend a unique identity to their food practices. The Jain community in Kochi are Gujaratis but some of their food practices are very different from the Gujarati Hindus.

This methodology aims to provide a comprehensive sociological analysis of food practices in Kochi, offering insights into how tradition, culture, religion, modernity, and globalisation shape the food practices in daily life.

Definition of the Concepts:

THEORETICAL DEFINITION	OPERATIONAL DEFINITION
<p>Food practices</p> <p>It refer to the habitual, culturally embedded behaviors, choices, and routines associated</p>	<p>This research identifies food practices through comprehensive interviews,</p>

<p>with the production, preparation, consumption, and sharing of food within a social context. These practices are shaped by a variety of factors including tradition, religion, socioeconomic status, environmental conditions, and individual or collective identities (De Solier, 2013; Fischler, 1988).</p>	<p>emphasizing the methods by which families in Kochi choose, prepare, consume, and ascribe significance to food. This encompasses traditional recipes, mealtime customs, food preparations for festivals, dietary restrictions, and variations in food habits across generations.</p>
<p>Culture</p> <p>It can be defined as the shared system of meanings, values, beliefs, customs, and practices that guide the behavior and social interactions of individuals within a particular group or society. It encompasses both material aspects (such as food, clothing, and tools) and non-material aspects (such as language, religion, and norms), transmitted across generations through socialization (Geertz, 1973; Keesing, 1974).</p>	<p>The study investigates culture by exploring community-specific cuisines, food-related rituals (such as <i>Sadhya</i>, <i>Appam-Stew</i>, and <i>Pathiri</i>), and the symbolic significance of food during festivals and life-cycle events among diverse communities in Kochi.</p>
<p>Religion</p> <p>It is a system of beliefs, practices, symbols, and moral values centered around the understanding of the sacred or divine, which provides a framework for interpreting existence and guiding individual and collective behavior (Durkheim, 1915/2008; Glock & Stark, 1965).</p>	<p>Religion is examined by assessing how individuals from Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Jain, and other faiths adhere to or adapt dietary regulations (such as Halal, Prasadam, fasting during Ramadan or <i>Ekadashi</i>, and restrictions on meat or root vegetables) in accordance with their religious doctrines.</p>

<p>Tradition</p> <p>It refers to the transmission of customs, beliefs, practices, and cultural expressions from one generation to the next, often serving as a stabilising force in society and shaping collective identity (Handler & Linnekin, 1984; Shils, 1981).</p>	<p>Tradition is analysed by looking into the preparation of ancestral recipes, the oral transmission of culinary knowledge, seasonal eating patterns, and the influence of older family members on the food preferences of younger generations.</p>
<p>Modernisation</p> <p>It refers to the complex and multidimensional process through which traditional societies transform into modern ones, typically marked by industrialization, urbanization, increased literacy, technological advancement, and changes in social, economic, and cultural institutions (Inglehart & Baker, 2000; Lerner, 1958).</p>	<p>The study observes modernisation through the participants' embrace of fast food, utilisation of food delivery services, dependence on pre-packaged batter, the decline of traditional cooking implements (such as <i>ammikkallu</i>), and the evolving dietary habits of younger family members.</p>
<p>Taboos</p> <p>They are culturally or socially prohibited actions, behaviors, or practices, often considered sacred, impure, or offensive within a particular community or belief system (Freud, 1913/2001; Douglas, 1966).</p>	<p>Taboos are examined by investigating participants' avoidance of certain ingredients (such as pork, beef, onion, garlic, and alcohol) and their justifications—whether rooted in religious beliefs (like Halal and Ahimsa) or cultural practices (including seasonal restrictions and caste-related norms).</p>

<p>Gender roles</p> <p>It refer to the socially constructed expectations, behaviors, and responsibilities assigned to individuals based on their perceived sex or gender within a particular cultural or social context (West & Zimmerman, 1987; Lorber, 1994).</p>	<p>Gender roles are explored by analyzing who is responsible for cooking, who determines the menu, and how food-related duties are allocated within households. This includes an examination of how these roles evolve or remain constant across generations and socioeconomic strata.</p>
<p>Identity</p> <p>It refers to an individual's or group's self-conception and expression, shaped through social interactions, cultural affiliations, and personal experiences. It encompasses aspects such as ethnicity, religion, gender, nationality, and social roles, and is continually constructed and negotiated within specific social and cultural contexts (Jenkins, 2008; Hall, 1996).</p>	<p>Identity is assessed through the ways participants articulate their cultural affiliation via food (for instance, stating, "This dish represents who we are"), their pride in traditional culinary practices, and the role of food in preserving cultural heritage.</p>
<p>Social change</p> <p>It refers to the significant alteration of social structures, cultural patterns, norms, and behaviors over time, often resulting from economic development, technological advancement, political movements, or shifts in values and ideologies (Giddens, 2006; Harper & Leicht, 2011).</p>	<p>It can be evaluated by examining the evolution of food practices over generations. This includes the transition from traditional cooking methods to the use of instant foods, a decline in communal cooking, and a growing dependence on catering services for various rituals and celebrations.</p>

Variables

Independent Variables

- Religious beliefs
- Cultural identity
- Gender roles
- Lifestyle changes

Dependent Variables

- Food practices
- Food choices
- Food Consumption
- Food preparation

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Food is one of the primary influences that shapes the culture, society, and identity of communities and individuals. In the cosmopolitan city of Kochi, food habits and practices are shaped by a multitude of socio-cultural, religious, and traditional factors. The objective of this research is to examine the religious and cultural factors affecting food choices, changes in food habits over generations, and the participation of different genders in food-related activities in Kochi.

This chapter deals with data analysis and interpretation of the project titled 'A sociological analysis on the food practices among the families in Kochi city'. Researcher have conducted interviews with 18 families in Kochi from different religious and cultural backgrounds such as Hindu, Christian, Muslim, Gujarati, Jain, Konkani and Anglo Indian. As they hold various cultural and religious beliefs, there are significant differences in their food habits too. While some of them are not originally from Kerala but have been living in Kochi for years.

This research seeks to uncover the themes and patterns that emerge from in-depth interviews conducted with individuals from diverse backgrounds. Thematic analysis was employed to identify, code, and categorize these themes, thereby enhancing our comprehension of the complex relationships among food, culture, and identity in Kochi.

Key aspects of this investigation include examining the impact of gender roles on food preparation and consumption, the influence of intergenerational changes on food choices, and the role of cultural and religious traditions in shaping eating habits and practices. Furthermore, this study will contribute to our understanding of the cultural dynamics surrounding food in Kochi by highlighting the importance of preserving traditional culinary practices while adapting to modern influences and cross-cultural exchanges. A thorough exploration of the connections between food habits and cultural or religious factors is essential to grasp the significance of each culture. A deeper inquiry into this topic could yield further insights.

Even though some people were not interested when approached for the interview, the data collection was completed without much trouble and with the support of those who shown interest and most of them were welcoming and enthusiastic. The respondents expressed their curiosity in sharing their knowledge and experience with the researcher. The researcher started the interview by building rapport with the respondents.

The total participants were from 18 different families in which the members were aged between 20 to 50 years old. The variation in the age group was to better understand and identify the traditional and modern ways of food practices as there might be generational differences within the family members. It would be helpful for a nuanced understanding of the subject.

The population of the study include 2 respondents from Hindu community, 3 respondents from Muslim community, 4 respondents from Christian community, 3 respondents from Konkani Community, 3 respondents from Gujarati community, 1 respondent from Gujarati Jain community and 1 respondent from Anglo Indian community. Each of these respondents have their own unique food culture and tradition. As the topic also discusses about the role of religion in food habits, the interview was done more carefully without hurting anyone's sentiments.

The communities involved in this study have different socio-cultural contexts. The Hindu, Muslim and Christian communities studied in this research are originally from Kerala. But the Communities such as Konkani, Gujarati and Jain have roots in different regions of India. The Konkani community have their origin in Goa and was migrated to Kerala around 350 years ago. The Gujarati Hindu and Jain communities have roots in Gujarat as they migrated to kerala for various purposes mainly trade. Anglo Indian community have European roots. So there is a lot of difference in the traditional and cultural context of these communities especially in the food. It was interesting to know about the cultural influence in the food as it open up new ways of learning the wide variety of traditional dishes.

Thematic Analysis

Themes	Sub themes
1. Cultural Identity and Food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Importance of traditional food practices • Role of food in cultural heritage • Food as a symbol of cultural identity
2. Religious influences on diet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role of religion in shaping food preferences • Impact of religious festivals on food choices • How Fasting influence dietary habits
3. Food Taboos and Restrictions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural and religious restrictions on food consumption • Impact of taboos on food choices • Reason behind taboos and restrictions

4. Traditional food practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Importance of preserving traditional food habits • Efforts to preserve traditional cooking practices
5. Changing food habits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Differences in Food habits between generations • Reason behind changes in food habits • Impact of changing food habits on family dynamics
6. Modernisation and food choices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact of modern lifestyle on food preferences • Role of convenient food in modern diet • Impact of convenient food and dining out culture on health
7. Balancing tradition and modernity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategies for balancing traditional food habits with modern convenience • Role of technology in preserving traditional food practices • Challenges in balancing tradition and modernity
8. Technology and Food habits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Influence of technology on food habits and preferences • Role of social media in shaping food choices • Impact of online food delivery on food practices
9. Gender Roles in food preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Division of labour in food preparation between men and women • Reasons behind gendered food preparation roles • Impact of gender roles on food choices
10. Modernisation and gender roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The influence of modernization and urbanization on conventional gender roles • The contribution of media to the transformation of gender roles • The impact of economic empowerment on gender roles in culinary tasks • The obstacles and prospects for advancing gender equality in food-related activities

Cultural identity and food

The impact of cultural and religious dietary customs is evident across numerous communities. Each community possesses its unique traditional eating practices that have been upheld for generations. These practices serve as a reflection of their cultural identity. Additionally, food is essential in safeguarding cultural heritage.

Christian community have different subsets including Latin and Syrian Catholics. Both groups follow different food practices. During the interview with the members of Latin Catholics among the christian community, the researcher came to know about their traditional dishes such as *Appam*, *Stew*, *Vindaloo*, *Pork* and *liver fry* which hold a special significance in their cultural and traditional identity especially in the areas of Kochi. Vindaloo is a special dish which can be made using Chicken, Beef or Pork has its roots from the arrival of Portuguese. Stew was also introduced with the arrival of Portuguese and became one of the most popular dish among christians in Kochi which was only made on special occasions like Easter, Christmas or wedding functions. Another respondent said that their traditional food includes *Kappa* or *Maracheeni* back in the days. They keep Kappa under the sun to get it dried to preserve it for many days or even months and use it as a staple whenever there is unavailability of food. Traditional food can also be influenced by the socioeconomic factors of the respondents. Another respondent said that they make Cutlets using fish and prawns as their traditional food which had been in practice for years. *Uppil vendha erachi* with bread or *puttu* is another significant traditional dish. *Mathangapidi* is also common in this community. These traditional food items signify how they preserve food as their cultural heritage and identity.

While coming to the respondents from Muslim community which includes only certain muslim families from Mattanchery, their traditional food includes *Pathiri*, *Erachichoru*, *Neychoru*, *Kinnathappam*, *Ottappam* *Puzhukkunda* or *Unda*. It is served as significant dishes only on the tables of these families. *Erachichoru* holds more specialty among the other traditional dishes as it has been in the cultural heritage of Kochi and have old roots. It showcase Kochi's unique blend of spices, flavours and cooking techniques. They said that it is served mainly in communal gatherings, festivals and special occasions. The variety of traditional food reflects the diversity of Food Culture in Kochi and also within different communities.

One of the respondent from Hindu community who were from lower caste mentioned their food practices in earlier times. They mainly had *Kanji* and *Meen curry* as they could not afford

other kinds of food. But now situation has improved a lot as they mentioned the importance of *Sadhya* in their food practices. Even though it's a popular kerala cuisine, it still holds a special significance in the cultural context of Hindu community. There is a special way to eat *Sadhya* on a banana leaf which is a step by step process. Back in time, it was a dish consumed mainly by the so called higher caste people and was not allowed to the lower caste people. But as a result of social changes and reformation *Sadhya* became an integral part of the Kerala cuisine irrespective of religion or caste. It is mainly served during special occasions like weddings, festivals and harvest celebrations. Another respondent said that *Varutharacha Meen curry* is a significant dish in their tradition. The cooking method and ingredients are different from the normal curry. They also have a traditional practice of food, *Aval Nanakkal* during the Onam celebration. After having the *Sadhya*, it's a ritual that it should be served by the eldest member of the family to other members. It was a practice among the higher caste Hindus.

Konkani is a community in Kochi whose origin can be traced back to Goa. They are mainly Garuda Saraswat Brahmins following Hindu religious practices but have different cultural background. So there are significant changes in their food habits. They are culturally different from other communities as they are pure vegetarians who consume mostly fibres and carbs so they prefer leafy vegetables to balance the carb and fibre in the body. Leafy vegetables include *Sambar Cheera*, *Kaipa Cheera*, *Uluva Cheera*. They also include fenugreek and beans in their food practices. They don't use garlic or onion in their food.

One of their popular and significant traditional dish is *Chembilayappam* also known as *Pathravada* which is made out of *Chembila* by cutting off it's veins and then add rice dough in the leaf making it a round shape and steam it. According to their belief, It has many health benefits as the leaf contains some kind of oil and it boosts the immune system. It's prepared and consumed especially during the month of *Karkadakam*. During this month, drumstick leaves are intentionally excluded from their diet. A notable dish is *Plavilayappam*, also referred to as *Hittu*, which is prepared using Idli dough, ginger, and cumin seeds. They create a variety of dosas, including *Uzbunnu dosa*, *Gothamb dosa*, *Raggi dosa*, *Cheera dosa*, *Cabbage dosa*, and *Cherupayar dosa*, among others. In celebration of Samsar Padvo, which marks the Konkani New Year, a special dish called *Ambat* is prepared, consisting of dal, banana, jaggery, and coconut milk. Additionally, they prepare a unique payasam made with fenugreek and rice. Another significant sweet dish, crafted from green gram and split chickpeas, is traditionally made during the month of Dhanu.

Tomatoes are typically avoided during cultural events and special Pooja rituals. In certain months, they consume only pulses while refraining from vegetables and underground items as it is considered as impure whereas in other months, they switch to a diet of vegetables and underground foods, avoiding pulses. Their culinary traditions include the preparation of five distinct types of sweets exclusively for the Valaikappu ceremony and the 30th day of mourning, which are not made on any other occasions. Thus, the traditional food practices of this community are essential in preserving their cultural heritage and identity, serving as a testament to their unique cultural identity through a focus on vegetarianism and the use of specific ingredients. Their dietary customs reflect their cultural and traditional values and beliefs.

The cultural identity of Gujarati community who follows Hindu religious practices is also unique and different as they hailed from North India. They are known for their sweet business. There are many sweet maker families in this community who have been in Kochi for many decades. They are also pure vegetarians and avoid egg in their diet. They usually have wheat items in their food practices. *Dhokla* is a traditional dish of Gujaratis. It's made with rice, dal, fenugreek, buttermilk and water. *Kadhi* and *Khichdi* is one of the best combination in Gujarati food culture whereas Kadi is a kind of curry made with buttermilk and *Khichdi* is the rice mixed with dal. *Thepla* is another important dish which is made with wheat and masala powder. *Undhiyu* is an integral part of Gujarati culture which is made with all kind of vegetables in all the special occasions. *Ghor Papdi*, *Shrikhand*, *Doodhpak* are other important traditional dishes made by Gujaratis. *Kheer* is also popular as it's a traditional sweet dish of Gujaratis. Their traditional dishes also include *Kachori*, *Samosa*, *Bhaat*, *Pappad*, *Kesari* and *Shiro*.

The Jain community, while being a part of larger Gujarati Community but belong to a different religion following idol Mahaveer, has distinct religious beliefs that shape their food habits. As strict pure vegetarians, they avoid onion and garlic and also follow a vegetarian diets that excludes animal products. Their traditional food is also similar to that of the broader Gujarati community featuring dishes such as *Dhokla*, *Undhiyu*, *Khichdi*, *Thepla*. This community's food traditions reflect their strong religious beliefs and commitment to non violence and compassion. Their dietary choices are guided by the principles of minimising harm to living beings highlighting the importance of food as a reflection of their cultural and spiritual identity.

The respondent from Anglo Indian community claimed that the *Appam* and Stew was originated from their traditional cuisine influenced by their European ancestry. Their typical breakfast consists of English style dishes such as *Sausage, Pancakes, Salami, Baked items, Breads, Fruits and Fresh juices*. Their food culture is heavily influenced by English traditions reflecting their European roots. Cutlets are also a significant part of their traditional cuisine. Their cuisine serves as a reflection of their cultural exchange and adaptation, blending English and Indian flavours. They have a unique cultural identity which is shaped by their European Ancestry and Indian Heritage.

Religious influences on diet

Although the respondents from the Christian community, especially Latin Catholics initially stated that religion doesn't influence their food habits, the researcher found that *Appam* and Stew are traditional dishes made specially on the occasion of Christmas and Easter highlighting the connection between food and religious celebrations. Maundy Thursday, a religious ceremony features a traditional dish, *Appam* And *Paal* made with special ingredients served by the eldest family member to commemorate the Last Supper of Jesus Christ. Fasting is practiced although not compulsory which can last upto 25 or 50 days with individuals choosing which food item to avoid. The Christian community's food tradition reflect the importance of religion in shaping their cultural identity. The connection between food festivals and religious ceremonies highlights the role of food culture in reinforcing community bonds and spiritual values. The freedom of choice in religious traditions on food habits also underscores the community's adaptability and individuality.

The interview with a few members of the Muslim community from Mattanchery highlighted how religion can have significant role in shaping dietary habits with Islamic principles guiding their food choices. They follow halal dietary laws which dictates permissible and forbidden food. They have prohibition on consuming pork and alcohol. They emphasise on cleanliness and hygiene in food preparation. Fasting is an obligation for Muslims during the month of Ramadan. It influences the food habits and meal timings. A month long fast from dawn to sunset abstaining from food and drinks. There are some exemptions in fasting for those who are aged, pregnant, breastfeeding or menstruating women and even travellers. *Suhoor* and *Iftaar* are significant meals during Ramadan. The meal to be eaten before dawn is *Suhoor* and the meal to break the fasting after sunset is called *Iftaar*. During the holy month of Ramadan, they prepare special dishes such as *Jeerakakanji*, a traditional rice based dish made with cumin

seeds and *Tharikanji* made with Rava. Additionally during *Bara'ath*, a holy day in the Arabic month of *Sha'baan*, they prepare a special dish called Banana Payasam a sweet dessert similar to payasam featuring banana as main ingredient. There might be differences among other ethnic Muslim community.

Religious beliefs of certain families from Hindu community have also a significant impact on food habits. Higher Caste Hindus from the respondents follow a vegetarian diet avoiding meat, fish and eggs. They offer food to deities known as *prasadam* which can be consumed by the devotees after the rituals and prayer. They observe fasting during special occasions during which they abstain certain foods or fasting completely. One respondent mentioned about the fasting during the Sabarimala season by abstaining from non vegetarian foods.

The dietary practices of the Konkani community are significantly shaped by their religious beliefs. Predominantly, they adhere to a strict vegetarian diet, refraining from the consumption of onion and garlic. During specific Pooja rituals at the temple, they also abstain from tomatoes. Throughout the Navratri festival, they limit their diet to pulses, avoiding both vegetarian and underground vegetables. For the Poonool changing ceremony, a special dish known as *Thakkambat*, made with curd, is prepared. In celebration of Janmashtami, which marks the birth of Lord Krishna, they exclude rice from their meals, opting instead for wheat and various curry dishes. On Ekadashi, they observe fasting by consuming only fruits and dishes made from rava, completely avoiding rice. During Holi, they prepare *Rontas* or Poori using rice flour, along with Thoy made from dal. For Diwali, a special payasam is crafted using Avil, jaggery, coconut, and banana. On Shivaratri, they partake in food offered at the temple while avoiding rice. Additionally, they may fast on Mondays and Saturdays, although this practice is not obligatory. Overall, the religious traditions play a crucial role in shaping the culinary habits of the Konkani community.

The religious beliefs of the Gujarati Hindu community can be seen as a reflection of their traditional values and cultural identity. They are pure vegetarians. During *Sankranthi* they prepare *Ghor papdi* using jaggery and sesame seed and *Undhiyu* including all the vegetables and *Til Ladoo*. They only consume eggless food items. They observe fasting on which they consume food only once in a day which is mainly *Sabudana Khichdi* using Sago which is similar to Upma. During diwali they make *Shrikhand* in which they add sugar, green peas, potato, daal and cardamom in curd and they also make *Kesari* or *Siro* using Rava.

In Jain community they avoid onion and garlic. They fast on special occasions have hot water and only one time meal as boiled food.

Food Taboos and Restrictions

From interviews with respondents from Latin Christian community, the researcher understood that generally there are no specific food taboos or restrictions in the community. However one respondent mentioned a taboo against consuming food prepared for Pooja purposes of other religions.

Based on Islamic teachings, muslims are forbidden from having pork and pork related products. They are also forbidden having alcohol and other intoxicants. It is a major sin to have it and will face punishment and spiritual consequences. The reason for restriction on pork is that they are unhygienic and bad for health. Alcohol will make them loose their control over life and bring issues.

There is a taboo among the Hindu community that food touched by someone who is considered impure is polluted and they avoid it. They are restricted from having non veg food during certain fasting, some consider beef consumption as a taboo. Some avoid onion and garlic as it's considered as negative energy.

In Konkani community, they are restricted from having non vegetarian food but it's not compulsory. They never cook non vegetarian meals at home even though young generations have it from outside. They also avoid onion, ginger and garlic as it is considered as non vegetarian. Tomatoes are avoided from Pooja rituals.

The Gujarati community are strictly against non vegetarian food. They only consume vegetarian foods even the younger generation. They don't even use egg as it's animal based product. The Jain community don't consume onion and garlic unlike the rest of the Gujarati community.

Traditional Food practices

Through interviews conducted with individuals from diverse communities, it became evident that the preservation of traditional food culture is a crucial element of their cultural heritage and identity. Food acts as a mirror of their customs, with cultural and religious influences shaping their culinary practices, thereby contributing to the uniqueness and diversity of each community. In many households, traditional cooking techniques and recipes are handed down through generations, from parents and grandparents to their children. The participants conveyed a strong commitment to sharing their cultural heritage with the younger generation, ensuring its continuity for the future. Notably, a member of the Konkani community emphasized the role of social media in safeguarding their food culture. These platforms facilitate awareness regarding the significance of traditional food practices and offer a way to disseminate knowledge to those who may lack familiarity. The respondent recounted how a friend who moved abroad utilizes social media to maintain ties with their cultural roots. To uphold their culinary traditions, communities are undertaking various initiatives, including organizing classes, hosting food festivals, fostering community involvement, and documenting recipes. A participant from the Anglo-Indian community remarked that her experience at a food festival deepened her understanding of her cultural traditions, underscoring the vital role of community events in the preservation of cultural heritage.

Changing Food Habits

Over the years, various communities have experienced significant shifts in their dietary practices, largely influenced by modernization. The current generation has seen a marked rise in fast food consumption compared to earlier generations. In the past, meals were primarily prepared at home using organic ingredients, which included a diverse array of spices and essential cooking items. Some individuals feel a sense of nostalgia for the *Ammikkallu*, or grinding stone, a traditional kitchen tool that was crucial for grinding and crushing spices, grains, and other ingredients. This tool played an important role in traditional cooking, but its usage is declining as it is increasingly replaced by modern appliances like grinders and electric mixers that provide greater convenience.

Likewise, the *Manchatti*, a traditional clay cooking pot, has also seen a reduction in its use, having once been the main utensil for cooking. The flavors of food have changed as well; a member of the Konkani community observed that the traditional dish *Hittu*, which was once prepared daily, is now made only on rare occasions, despite its health advantages. Furthermore,

the *Kalpathram*, a utensil that was once integral to their cooking practices, is now utilized less frequently. These evolving trends have negatively impacted the traditional and cultural heritage of each community. A member of the Gujarati community noted that their parents enjoyed better health due to regular meals and a balanced diet, while expressing concern over the increasing dependence on processed ingredients in food preparation. Although community members aspire to maintain traditional cooking methods, their hectic lifestyles often hinder this aspiration.

Modernisation and Food choices

The fast paced nature of modern life has significantly influenced food preferences, with convenience and instant gratification taking over the traditional food habits. Respondents particularly those with busy work schedule, expressed a similar sentiment except for housewives and stay at home individuals despite their different lifestyle also acknowledged allure of convenient food. Respondents voiced concerns about the decline in homemade food in favour of modern and convenient options as everything is available as readymade. Even the Idli, dosa batter has been in the market even instant *puttu* and *upma* are available. While modern food styles offer comfort and convenience saving time and effort, health concerns have become a worry among the respondents. There is an ongoing tension between the convenience of modern food and importance of maintaining traditional, homemade food practices which is good for health and nutrition.

Balancing Tradition and modernity

The respondents said that they try to keep a balance between traditional and modern food as the food is a reflection of their cultural identity and cannot afford to lose it. Most of the respondents don't prefer having convenient food. They have been trying to pronounce the importance of maintaining and preserving the traditional food habits even their life has been busy. Technology has been in favour of preserving their traditional culture. Websites like YouTube and blogs provide information on cooking techniques and preparation. In order to reach as many people as possible, the majority of the community members have created a YouTube channel to convey their culinary customs and cultural history.

Technology and Food habits

The technological advancement have become increasingly popular among the community members as it provide more convenience and comfort. Cooking have become more electric

based than the traditional way of preparing food with hands. The use of mixer grinders, microwave and even air fryer is making cooking more convenient among them. The influence of social media is also a concern among the respondents as they are afraid its promoting unhealthy food habits such as street foods, junk foods, etc. Some respondents have been affected by trying modern food which they saw on social media. Online food delivery is also in practice for years among the respondents but it's mainly when they are busy enough not having time for preparing meals at home. They also mentioned that there have been an increase in choosing catering service over cooking together for functions such as wedding, cultural or religious events. Some respondents use social media for learning new recipes and try to taste new cuisines.

Gender Roles in Food Preparation

When asked about the responsibility of food preparation among the family members, all the respondents said it's the responsibility of women in their home. Some of the respondents were working women but they also bear the burden of household chores. Some respondents don't see it as a burden as they consider it as their duty to serve the other family members. One respondent replied that she doesn't want to change it as it's her way of expressing love and kindness. The gender roles have been in practice as a result of socio cultural norms which reinforce the notion that women are caregivers and are responsible to look after the family members. But some respondents wanted to have a change in the system but they are not able to completely bring equality as they don't get much support from their family members. In most houses the food prepared is based on the preference of the male members. The gender roles in food preparation have affecting some of the female respondent's professional life as they are enforced on this duty.

Modernisation and gender roles

The Modernisation has somehow challenged the traditional gender roles among the family of the respondents. As some respondents said that the male members have been helping in the kitchen and prepare some dishes. Media has also an impact on the lives of the respondents as it opens new ways to unlearn the cultural norms and adapt to changes. One reason behind this slight change is the economic empowerment of women as they have got some voice in their families. They are now able to address the issues and make decisions regarding the food preparation. The challenges they face is mainly because of the patriarchal system which have been in practice for years. So it's somewhat hard to convince the eldest members of the family

to remove gender roles and stereotypes. The female respondents found it difficult to make them understand. But they are finding other ways to manage the situation better and to involve everyone in the cooking activities.

CHAPTER 5
FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

Food transcends its role as a basic biological requirement; it serves as a significant cultural artefact that influences and mirrors identity, traditions, beliefs, and social roles. The current research, titled “Sociological Analysis on Food Practices Among Families in Kochi City,” investigates the complex interplay between food and society within various communities. By conducting comprehensive interviews with individuals from Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Konkani, Gujarati, Jain, and Anglo-Indian backgrounds living in Kochi, the study seeks to uncover the cultural, religious, generational, and gender-related aspects of food practices.

A key finding of the study indicates that culinary practices play a crucial role in maintaining and expressing cultural identity. Each community in Kochi showcases a unique culinary heritage that is deeply influenced by its historical context, social dynamics, and patterns of migration. For the Latin Christian community, traditional dishes such as *Appam*, Stew, Vindaloo, Pork and Liver Fry serve as symbols of cultural continuity. For instance, *Appam* and Stew are not merely meals; they are ceremonial dishes associated with significant religious celebrations like Easter, Christmas, and weddings. Additionally, Vindaloo and Stew reflect the impact of colonial history, particularly the Portuguese influence, illustrating the integration of colonial legacies into local culinary traditions. Furthermore, food preservation techniques, such as drying tapioca (Kappa), reveal past socioeconomic conditions where food security was a pressing issue, making preservation methods essential.

The culinary identity of the particular families among Muslim community is significantly influenced by traditional dishes such as *Pathiri*, *Erachichoru*, *Neychoru*, and *Kinnathappam*. Notably, *Erachichoru* holds profound cultural significance and is frequently made at communal events and festivals, symbolising the social and spiritual aspects of food. These traditional meals highlight the rich variety of spices and cooking methods characteristic of Kerala cuisine, while also embodying a unique Muslim identity shaped by Islamic dietary regulations and familial customs.

Participants from the Hindu community highlighted the importance of *Sadhya* as both a cultural and ritualistic tradition. The practice of serving and eating *Sadhya* on banana leaves during festivals such as Onam and family gatherings serves to reinforce caste histories, social hierarchies, and reform movements. Although it was originally limited to upper castes, *Sadhya* has evolved into a representation of inclusivity within Kerala’s culinary scene. Additionally, other traditional dishes like *Varutharacha Meen Curry* and *Aval Nanakkal*, which are prepared during Onam, further strengthen cultural identity and the observance of rituals.

The Konkani community following Hindu religion, originating from Goa, showcases a unique vegetarian culinary tradition that excludes onion and garlic. Their cuisine features dishes like *Chembilayappam Pathravada*, *Plavilayappam Hittu* and various forms of *Dosha* (*Uzhunnu*, *Raggi*, *Cheera*, etc.), which reflect a profound relationship with seasonal changes and health-oriented principles. They adhere to specific dietary restrictions, such as refraining from consuming tomatoes and root vegetables during particular months and religious festivities. This community holds a belief in the therapeutic properties of their ingredients and prioritises a balance between carbohydrates and fibre, illustrating a harmonious blend of health, spirituality, and cultural heritage in their food practices.

Gujarati Hindu families, many of whom have lived in Kochi for numerous decades, follow strictly vegetarian diets. Their culinary practices are deeply influenced by their North Indian heritage, showcasing dishes such as *Dhokla*, *Khadi-Khichdi*, *Thepla*, and *Undhiyu*. Furthermore, sweet delicacies like *Shrikhand*, *Ghor Papdi*, and *Doodhpak* reflect their entrepreneurial spirit in the confectionery sector and their strong sense of community identity. The Jain community, while part of the broader Gujarati population, adheres to specific dietary restrictions rooted in their religious beliefs of non-violence. Their avoidance of onion, garlic, and root vegetables underscores their commitment to *Ahimsa* (non-harming), reinforcing the importance of food in their religious practices.

The Anglo-Indian community merges English and Indian culinary practices. Dishes such as *Appam* and *Stew*, *Sausages*, *Pancakes*, and various baked items exemplify their mixed cultural heritage. Their dietary customs reflect the historical interactions and cultural exchanges of the colonial era, demonstrating how food acts as a medium of adaptation and resilience.

Religious beliefs play a crucial role in influencing the dietary preferences, cooking techniques, and mealtime traditions of various communities. Within the Latin Christian community, while some argue that religion does not directly govern food practices, certain dishes such as *Appam* and *Paal*, traditionally served on Maundy Thursday, embody spiritual significance. Additionally, fasting, though a personal choice, is integrated into the food culture, with individuals refraining from specific foods as a means of religious contemplation.

For the Muslim community, dietary selections are profoundly influenced by Islamic dietary regulations. The adherence to Halal food, the prohibition of pork and alcohol, and the observance of fasting during Ramadan dictate not only the types of food consumed but also the

timing and manner of consumption. Rituals such as *Suhoor* and Iftaar exemplify the significance of food in promoting community, self-discipline, and spiritual growth. Unique dishes like *Jeerakakanji* and *Tharikanji* during Ramadan, along with Banana Payasam during *Bara'ath*, illustrate how religious occasions inspire particular culinary traditions that are both spiritually enriching and communal in nature.

In the Hindu community, food serves as both a ceremonial offering and a symbol of purity. Certain individuals adhere to vegetarian diets and engage in fasting during religious festivals or the Sabarimala season. Prasadam, which is food prepared for deities, is consumed only after it has been offered. These customs illustrate the integral role that food plays in the spiritual life of devotees.

The dietary practices of the Konkani community are closely linked to their religious calendar. On Janmashtami, they refrain from consuming rice, while on *Poonool* day, they prepare *Thakka ambat*. Additionally, they observe fasting on *Ekadashi*. The celebrations of Holi and Diwali include the preparation of particular dishes that reflect both cultural significance and spiritual devotion.

In the Gujarati and Jain communities, there is a notable emphasis on religious discipline. Fasting practices are prevalent, typically consisting of meals that include only Sabudana *Khichdi* or boiled dishes. During festivals such as *Sankranti* and Diwali, traditional sweets like *Til Ladoo* and *Shrikhand* are prepared. The Jain community places a particular focus on non-violence in their dietary choices, adhering strictly to boiled foods and refraining from consuming root vegetables while fasting, thereby underscoring the moral and spiritual significance of food.

Food taboos vary significantly among different communities. Within Christian groups, there are generally few strong prohibitions, with one individual noting a reluctance to eat food prepared for non-Christian ceremonies. Conversely, Muslims adhere to strict prohibitions against pork and alcohol, viewing these substances as impure and detrimental to self-control. Hindu participants highlighted specific taboos associated with purity, such as refraining from consuming food that has been touched by someone deemed impure or food prepared during menstruation. Additionally, some Hindus avoid beef and the consumption of onion and garlic, particularly during fasting periods.

Konkani, Gujarati, and Jain communities adhere to strict dietary guidelines. Konkani and Jain communities typically avoid garlic, onions, and specific vegetables, while Gujaratis abstain from eggs and meat. These dietary prohibitions are frequently rooted in spiritual beliefs and are transmitted through generations, embodying profound convictions regarding purity and the sacredness of food.

The majority of participants conveyed a sense of pride in their traditional culinary practices and a deep commitment to their preservation. Families typically transmit recipes through oral tradition or practical demonstrations, facilitating the transfer of culinary heritage across generations. An interesting observation was the engagement of younger individuals with social media, particularly within the Konkani community, where platforms such as YouTube serve as tools for sharing and documenting traditional recipes.

Food festivals, educational classes, and cultural events contribute significantly to the preservation of culinary traditions. A member of the Anglo-Indian community noted that a food festival sparked renewed interest in their traditional dishes. Such community initiatives highlight the importance of food in promoting identity and ensuring cultural continuity.

Changes across generations and advancements in modern society have profoundly influenced culinary habits. In numerous households, fast food and pre-packaged meals have supplanted traditional cooking methods. Participants from various communities observed a reduction in the use of traditional cooking implements such as the *Ammikkallu* (grinding stone) and *Manchatti* (clay pots), which were previously essential to their cooking traditions. Many expressed regret over the loss of taste, health advantages, and cultural significance associated with these traditional practices.

Previous generations have been characterised as healthier, primarily because of their consumption of home-cooked meals made from seasonal and fresh ingredients. A respondent from Gujarat highlighted the detrimental impact of artificial additives and the decline of culinary discipline in the younger population. While there was a shared aspiration to adhere to traditional cooking practices, this was frequently hindered by time limitations and the challenges of maintaining a work-life balance.

Convenience has emerged as a key determinant in food selection. Participants highlighted the accessibility of instant batter, pre-prepared curries, and online food delivery options. Although

these alternatives offer time-saving benefits, there are apprehensions regarding their potential long-term health effects and the cultural implications involved. The increasing reliance on catering services for significant events, such as weddings, signifies a wider societal transformation in the perception and preparation of food.

Many respondents, particularly housewives and older individuals, demonstrated a dedication to finding a balance between convenience and tradition. The presence of cooking tutorials and blogs has facilitated access to traditional culinary knowledge, even if it is not utilised on a daily basis.

A notable finding was the continued adherence to traditional gender roles in the realm of food preparation. In all communities studied, the task of preparing meals was predominantly viewed as a woman's duty, even among those who were employed in professional capacities. While some women accepted this role as a demonstration of love and nurturing, others experienced it as a source of stress, especially in the absence of familial support. Generally, the culinary preferences of male family members heavily influenced meal planning, with women often expected to place household responsibilities above their career ambitions.

Nevertheless, some participants noted the emergence of new trends. In specific households, male members have started to engage in cooking tasks. The economic empowerment of women, greater access to education, and the impact of media have facilitated a shift in traditional roles. However, opposition from older family members and deeply rooted patriarchal norms continue to pose significant challenges.

The sociological examination of dietary habits within families in Kochi City uncovers a complex interplay of cultural, religious, and social elements. Food serves not merely as a physical requirement but as a social construct that reflects identity, spirituality, gender roles, and communal relationships. Each community—whether Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Konkani, Gujarati, Jain, or Anglo-Indian—upholds a unique culinary heritage influenced by historical, religious, and socioeconomic contexts.

Globalisation and modernisation have brought about new dietary trends, convenience foods, and fast-paced lifestyles; however, a robust sense of cultural resilience persists. Members of the community demonstrate a sustained commitment to preserving and passing down traditional food practices, even as they adapt to contemporary influences. While gender roles

in food preparation largely adhere to traditional norms, the forces of modernisation are gradually altering these dynamics.

Food in Kochi transcends mere nourishment; it serves as a vehicle for identity, memory, resistance, and a sense of belonging. In a diverse city such as Kochi, culinary traditions provide insight into wider social changes and illustrate how communities navigate the balance between tradition and transformation.

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APPENDIX – INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. Can you please introduce yourself and share your cultural/religious background?
2. How long have you been living in Kochi, and how has your dietary habits evolved over time?

Objective 1 - To understand culture and religious influences on food practices.

1. How do your cultural or religious beliefs influence your food preferences and choices?
2. Are there any specific food taboos or restrictions in your culture or religion? If yes, can you elaborate?
3. How important is cultural practices in preserving traditional food habits in your community?
4. Have you tried food from other culture or religion? Does it influence your individual food choice?
5. How do specific religious festivals influence the type of food prepared and consumed in your community? Are there any symbolic meanings associated with it?
6. Do you participate in any fasting rituals? How do fasting rituals influence your dietary practices during and outside of the fasting period?
7. How do family traditions influence your dietary habits?
8. How are dietary habits passed down through oral tradition or community practices in your community? Can you share any traditional dish or cooking methods that have been passed down through generations in your family?
9. What role does communal dining play in fostering social cohesion among diverse religious communities in Kochi?

Objective 2 - To explore the inter generational changes in food habits.

1. How do you think your dietary habits differ from those of your parents or grandparents?
2. Do you think modern lifestyles (e.g., busy schedules, convenience foods) have changed the way you eat?
3. How do you balance traditional food habits with modern conveniences?
4. How has technology (e.g., social media, cooking apps) influenced your food habits?
5. Do you prefer learning new recipes through online resources or traditional methods (e.g., family, cookbooks)?

6. Do you think economic factors (e.g., budget, time constraints) influence your food choices?
7. To what extent do you adapt or alter traditional recipes to suit contemporary tastes or time constraints?
8. Are there any specific cooking activities or traditions that bring your family together? Does it strengthen family bonding?
9. Do you think increasing availability of convenience foods and dining out culture are replacing traditional cooking practices? How do you balance it?

Objective 3 - To analyse the gender dynamics in food preparation and consumption.

1. How are responsibilities for food preparation typically divided between men and women within your household? Have these roles changed across generations? If yes, how?
2. Are there any cultural or religious traditions that associate specific cooking tasks or dishes with men or women?
3. How have modernization and urbanization impacted traditional gender roles in food preparation within your household? Does it lead to equality or challenges?
4. Are there noticeable differences in the types or quantities of food consumed by men and women within your family?
5. What role do women play in ensuring dietary diversity or nutritional needs for the family?
6. What influence do gender roles have on children's perceptions of food and cooking?
7. Are younger generations more likely to challenge traditional gender norms in food-related activities? have anyone challenged or modified traditional gender roles in your family?
8. How does the portrayal of gender roles in media and advertising influence food practices in families?
9. What impact do gender roles have on the professional opportunities and careers for women?