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Contents

Rebranding the Post-war ‘Colombo’: Discursive Construction of Urban Regeneration	01
Susantha Rasnayake	
Do Ethics matter in Economic Development?	34
J.G. Sri Ranjith	
Screening Tool for Psychological Intimate Partner Violence for Sri Lankan Women: Sinhalese Validation of the Psychological Maltreatment of Women Inventory (PMWI)	47
Gunendra R.K. Dissanayake	
Book Review: <i>Cultural Politics and Asian Values: The Tepid War</i> (Part III – Cultural Politics and Asian Values)	83
Kalpani Dambagolla	

Vol. XIII, No. 02, 2022

Rebranding the Post-war ‘Colombo’: Discursive Construction of Urban Regeneration

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Abstract

This paper explores the neoliberal practice of rebranding and marketing city image in the context of urban regeneration. In particular, it examines the implementation of an urban regeneration project in post-war Colombo, Sri Lanka, analyzing the discursive strategies used by project leaders to construct a new form of city identity. Previous scholarship on this topic has widely discussed the role of the state and the corporate sector in transforming cities into consumer spaces, as well as the socio-economic, environmental, and psychological consequences of this transformation. However, this body of work leaves a theoretical gap regarding the phenomenon—namely, how urban restructuring discourse is produced within the everyday social sphere. This research is based on a documentary review that yielded both qualitative and quantitative textual data, including relevant websites, newspaper articles, audio and visual documents, advertisements, videographs, photographs, and recorded speeches related to urban regeneration in Colombo. The findings reveal that the discursive strategies used by project leaders revolve around two major themes: claiming the right to beauty and heritage-led rebranding. Rhetorical expressions such as “a better Colombo,” “a clean and green city,” “a slum-free city,” “a world-class city,” and “a miracle city” became key lexical forms used by power agents in rebranding the city’s identity. Similarly, ideas such as “a public-friendly city” and “inclusive citizenship” were also widely promoted through official discourses. Ultimately, the project leaders succeeded in rebranding old Colombo into a city characterized by consumerism and entrepreneurialism—an identity that largely caters to

affluent social classes.

Keywords: discourse, discursive strategies, entrepreneurship identity, neoliberalism, rebranding the city, urban regeneration,

Introduction

Globalization of the capital market has created tremendous competition among cities of the global urban hierarchy to become so-called ‘world-class cities’ that push cities to serve as centers of high technology, trade, tourism, entertainment, finance, professional activity, higher education, and the arts in the global urban hierarchy (Sassen, 2002; 2012), resulting a greater demand among investors and urban managers for more and more attractive cities for their investments, increasing the competitiveness among cities in the global economy (Sarvari and Majedi, 2012; Jansson, 2006). In this sense, ‘city marketing’ is a viable economic tool that consists of the construction, communication, and management of the city's image (Kavartzis, 2004).

As Jansson and Power (2006) claimed, city branding is not just for attracting tourists and investments, it is also concerned with identity building and strengthening the pride of people living in a space. This is what they named ‘inward branding’ while ‘outward branding’ is concerned with external communication to attract investments, knowledge workers, visitors, and tourists to a place (Jansson and Power, 2006:6). So, rebranding city image has been a prominent agenda item of the neoliberal economic paradigm since the 1980s. Thus, the urban administration pressurizes the designers to create and improve the beauty, freshness, and vibrant nature of urban spaces to increase the image of their cities in which the indigenous identity of cities has transfigured into a consumer or entrepreneurship identity. In the late

1980s and early 1990s, many developing countries aggressively followed market liberalization responding to the debt crisis that led to a number of changes in the physical, political, economic, and cultural landscape of their megacities (Fernandes, 2004). As Sassen (2002) claims, following the neo-liberal economic system, megacities in the developing world are attracting attention known as 'global cities' that monopolize global functions in economics, politics, and culture, and which stand atop the global urban hierarchy system. In this direction, the states excessively believe that they can be an attractive node of the world economy by transforming their capital cities into world-class cities regardless of the socio-spatial inequalities of such transformations (Batra and Mehra, 2008; Dupont, 2013; Hariss, 2006). Developing countries, therefore, have increased their investments in large-scale urban regeneration projects (URP) in their capital cities to make a positive image of the city since they are targeting the promotion of tourism. This includes not only new and massive investments in roads and transport facilities, public utilities, green areas, heritage buildings, and new magnificent public architectures, but also new forms of governance which seek to streamline, standardize, and privatize processes of urbanization to be governed by the free-market rules of profit-making efficiency (Batra and Mehra, 2008). Therefore, urban regeneration and related subprojects have been an attractive research topic to the global urban scholarship in which literature has widely discussed the role of the state and corporate sector in transforming cities into consumer spaces. Mainly they emphasized the political economy of the transformation of cities. Their main claim is that on the one hand, middle-and upper-class residents redesign and rebuilt their cities to improve the utility, beauty, and civic order of urban places

for the betterment of their survival. On the other hand, it has produced a number of pathologies for the urban disadvantaged groups: poor, women, ghettos, immigrants, minorities, etc. (Andrews et al., 2014; Bhan, 2009; Hariss, 2006).

Another branch of scholarship has studied the socio-economic, psychological, and environmental impacts of URP (Ayeni and Olalusi, 2012; Carlino and Saiz, 2008; Kamali and Tahmouri, 2013). When it comes to the psychological benefits, URP is understood from the aesthetic point of view as a remedy for the psychological problems of the citizens using visionary tools (sceneries) such as beautiful, fresh, and vivid urban spaces to create freshness and motivation for living in cities.

The main environmental concern relating to URP is that the rapid growth of urbanization has affected land use planning and poor environmental outcomes. Particularly the natural areas are constantly destroyed by manmade activities of building, refuse dumps, slums, and squatter settlements. Hence, the ecosystem can be corrected through landscaping and beautification (Ayeni and Olalusi, 2012). Further, urban displacement and relocation of evictees have also been sufficiently studied therein some argue that URPs bring mobility opportunities to urban underserved communities in terms of housing, environmental, education, and health (Herath et al., 2017; Niriella, 2014;) while evictees have been victimized due to relocation (Cernea, 2000; Ghertner, 2011; Rasnayake, 2019; Terminski, 2013; Vedeld and Siddham, 2002).

Close observation of the literature indicates that though there is tremendous empirical research evidence related to urban restructuring, there is a chasm in theoretical knowledge about the phenomena, that is, how urban restructuring discourse is produced in the everyday social

sphere. Otherwise, how the knowledge of urban restructuring is organized in the social body? When we understand the said knowledge from a critical point of view, there are several questions to ask. Who are the competent speakers or constructors of knowledge, what methods or strategies are used in knowledge construction, what purpose do they produce knowledge, and how the constructed knowledge is presented as the truth that shapes our everyday social circumstances? These fields of inquiry seem to be relatively absent from the existing body of knowledge in the field of URP. In response, drawing from post-structural discourse analysis, examining the experience of implementation of the URP in post-war Colombo, this paper aims to answer how the discourse of URP in Colombo is constructed by project speakers in creating a new form of city identity in the context of national development in post-war Sri Lanka. More specifically, the paper aims to answer what sort of discursive strategies are used by project speakers to establish the ‘truth’ of URP.

A Brief Note to the Concepts of Discourse and Discursive Strategies

From the post-structuralist viewpoint, what we understand or perceive as reality are social constructions, with no universal standards, moral ethics, absolute truth, or generalizable ideas available. What seems to have appeared as truths is a form of ‘discourses’ (Foucault, 1972; Lyotard, 1979) or ‘language games’ (Lyotard, 1979) of different knowledge regimes. Thus, discourse is not just producing knowledge through our social intercourses, discourse itself is material, and entities such as the economy, the infrastructure, and institutions are also parts of discourse (Foucault, 1969; Weedon, 1987).

Therefore, discourses are the set of language practices that shape our thoughts, actions, and even the way we construct our identities. Foucault (1969) employed the term 'discourse' to describe a social system that produces knowledge and meaning, in relation to its historical roots. He notes discourse is definitely material in its practical sense. This is what he calls 'practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak'. In this sense, discourse is the way of organising knowledge in a specific social context and such organized knowledge "structures the constitution of social relations through the collective understanding of the discursive logic and the acceptance of the discourse as social fact" (Adams, 2017). Weedon (1987) defines the discourse as "...ways of constituting knowledge, together with the social practices, forms of subjectivity, and power relations which inhere in such knowledge and relations between them. Discourses are more than ways of thinking and producing meaning. They constitute the 'nature' of the body, unconscious and conscious mind, and emotional life of the subjects they seek to govern" (Weedon, 1987:108).

Foucault's theory of governmentality identifies various discourses are governmental instruments that support the state to conceptualize how individuals and society should be governed in different contexts; whether may be a group of people, community, organization, city or state. In this sense, disciplines such as psychology, medicine, sociology, social work, public policy, criminology, etc. produce knowledge and specific understandings about things.

Experts examine situations like urban unrest, economic downturns, poverty, and so on as threats to the existence of society. 'Human

behaviour became a problem to be analyzed and resolved' . . . with 'mechanisms of power' (Foucault, 1988:106). Here, the role of experts is to analyze such pathologies, develop indicators to measure and design suitable intervention (Inda, 2005). This is what Foucault (1978) conceptualized as the "technico-political or bio-political register".

The role of the modern state is to "produce various conditions for self-regulation a form of personal autonomy and citizenship which incorporates responsibility for oneself and dependent others through the adoption of these norms" (Rose and Miller, 1992:174). Finally, such governmental efforts are legitimized in the social context as ways of ensuring the public welfare or well-being of the population at large (Li, 2007). Mele (2000) has pointed out three major areas of application of discourse into urban restructuring. 1. Employing discourse to define urban restructuring as normal and beneficial. 2. Employing discourse to legitimize the process of urban restructuring, especially its accompanying social costs. 3. Employing discourse to facilitate or reject the invention of new place identity.

Aligning with various thinkers of post-structural philosophy in social sciences, the term "discursive strategies" has been used to different phenomena, from the cognitive process involved in discourse construction to present overcoming communication problems (Carvalho, 2005). In this sense, discursive strategies are seen as the methods used by social actors to speak about phenomena in order to achieve a goal or set of goals. Given the importance of power involved in discourse, in nature, discursive strategies are forms of conscious manipulation of 'reality' (Carvalho, 2005).

Thus, discursive strategy serves the speakers to redefine the existing phenomenon and establish a new order of truth or discursive transformation from 'bad to good', 'under-developed to develop' and so on (Carvalho, 2005; Reisigl and Wodak, 2001).

Methodology

This paper used the documentary review method. According to Bowen (2017), as a qualitative research methodology, documentary review is well suited for social scientists to assess historical or social value, or to create a larger narrative through the study of multiple documents surrounding an event or individual. Document review includes institutional memoranda and reports, census publications, government pronouncements and proceedings, diaries and innumerable other written, visual and pictorial sources in different forms and so on (Bailey, 1994). From the discourse point of view, documents are the sources that contain views, feelings, imaginations, meanings, and interpretations of different knowledge constructors. As Foucault (1969) described, discourse is the way of organizing knowledge that urges us to believe organized knowledge is the truth in our social relations. Therefore, various types of documents are a method used by speakers to organize what we should accept as knowledge or truth. Drawing from this Foucault philosophy of knowledge, various documents yielding both qualitative and quantitative textual data including relevant websites, newspaper articles audio and visual documents; advertisements, video graphs, photos, and recorded speeches related to URP were selected for this analysis. Documents were selected using purposive sampling based on their relevance to URP and their role in shaping public narratives on post-war Colombo. Documents directly related to URP,

produced between 2010–2015, and official, media, or public communication were selected for the review. A total of 53 documents were qualified for the analysis. Documents not directly addressing urban regeneration or lacking discursive relevance, and duplicates were excluded to maintain analytical focus.

The analysis followed a qualitative coding procedure involving open, axial, and selective coding to identify recurring discursive patterns. Particular attention was paid to how language constructs regimes of truth, in line with a Foucauldian approach. The unit of analysis included key phrases, metaphors, visual representations, and recurring narratives within the selected documents. To enhance credibility, triangulation was employed by analyzing multiple document types, including policy documents, media reports, and visual materials. The major limitation of this study is that documentary sources primarily reflect dominant institutional discourses, potentially marginalizing alternative voices. This review was performed in 2016. Since the project of URP in Colombo was implemented after 2009, the documents reviewed belong to the timespan of 2010-2015.

Findings and Discussion

Urban Regeneration Discourse in Colombo

In the post-war development arena, the government of Sri Lanka paid significant attention to the country's rapid economic growth. The government claimed that the economic growth that was slowed down due to the war should be regenerated in the post-war period to become an economic hub of the competitive world system. For instance, the state policy document known as *Mahinda Chintana Vision Future (MCVF)* presents that the state targets to become an upper-middle-income country by 2016. Further,

with the overall development of the country, the government targeted to double the per capita income from US\$ 2,000 to US\$ 4,000 and raise the gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate by more than 8 percent within five years (DNP-MFP, 2010: v-vi).

According to official documents, the government has identified several measures which are instrumental to achieve this target, including ambitious plans to increase foreign and local investment, promote tourism, improve the national infrastructure, and enhance land utilization. The policy leaders presented the view that cities are the driving force of economic growth and nation- building in the post-war era. Aligning with this target, realizing the role of Colombo-the capital city, in the country's economic growth, the government prepared plans for the improvement of Colombo due to its high productivity. As the document titled *Turning Sri Lanka's Urban Vision into Policy and Action* published by the World Bank (2012) says,

Sri Lanka's Country Vision is to become a global hub between the East and the West and an upper-middle-income country by 2016. Sri Lanka's Urban Vision, as defined in the government's development policy framework – the *Mahinda Chintana* – is to develop a system of competitive, environmentally sustainable, well-linked cities ... (World Bank, 2012: 01).

Nevertheless, the Colombo development planners repeatedly stressed that the economically backward features of Colombo such as poor land use pattern, poor infrastructure, poor solid waste management, frequent flooding, and weakness in municipal administration are the obstacles to achieving this dream (World Bank, 2012). Therefore, the Colombo Municipal Region (CMR) needs to be more competitive and reoriented in its capacity in line with other Asian cities. In this sense, as the MCVF identified,

improving the CMR's infrastructure, its citizens' quality of life, and its human resources, through a close partnership with the domestic and international private sectors is essential. According to the vision of the secretary to the Ministry of Defense and Urban Development (MDUD),

All of us desire a better Colombo; a city that is **clean, green, attractive, and dynamic**. Let us work together and work hard to achieve this. Together, we can transform Colombo into **a world-class city**, globally recognized as a thriving, dynamic, and attractive **regional hub** that is the centerpiece of 21st Century Sri Lanka: **the Miracle of Asia** (Speech delivered by Secretary of Defense at BMICH on 23rd February 2012. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wnksU87cQRA>).

As above extract communicates, the authorities attempt to transform Colombo into a world-class city mainly by improving its economic and environment capabilities. To tap local and international opportunities the potential of Colombo needs to be further improved and development agents should work hard to achieve this target. In this effort, the Urban Development Authority (UDA) implemented some immediate development needs of Colombo to increase hotel capacity, particularly in terms of luxury accommodation for high-spending tourists; developing overall IT infrastructure to encourage foreign companies to send their operations here; providing more residential facilities for high net-worth individuals, and providing quality housing for middle- income segments (Adikari, 2014). These development projects can be categorized under the following thematic areas:

1. City beautification
2. The development of community housing
3. Road development
4. Beira Lake development
5. Urban sewage disposal
6. Creation of urban open spaces
7. Restoration of heritage buildings and
8. Urban landscaping (Adikari,2014).

My argument here is, the aspiration to become the economic 'hub of Asia', 'Miracle of the Asia' through metropolitan development in post-war Sri Lanka, should not be taken as mere speeches of project designers but official discursive strategies aimed at rebranding the Colombo. According to Reyes (2011) creating a hypothetical future is a strategy employed by social actors to legitimize certain agendas. The state's targets such as 'becoming an upper-middle-income country by 2016', increasing per capita income from US\$2,000 to US\$ 4,000', and 'raising the GDP growth rate over 8 percent are forms of communications employed by the leaders to get the public attention and mind approval for the project.

Rhetorical Presentations of a World Class-City

From the lenses of post-structuralism, language is not a just communication tool used to transfer information from one to another. It creates reality through social relations and produces meaning, identity, and existence in the social body. Simply, language is a site of discursive formation

Discursive formation conceptually describes the regular spoken or written communications that produce discourses. Further, if something is communicated very specifically, repeatedly, and linked with the relations between and among subjects, objects, and statements, it is the discursive formation of the language (Fairclough, 1992). According to Foucault (1972), discourses are bodies of text meant to communicate specific data, information, and knowledge. However, discourse is an integral part of all social processes. Admitting Foucault’s views on discursive formation, table 01 presents some rhetorical formations found in materials, used to communicate the status of Colombo before and after its transfiguration into a world-class city.

Table 01: Linguistic Formation of World-class City

Before transfiguration	After transfiguration
A bad Colombo	A better Colombo
Dirty/polluted, environmentally ill	Clean, green city
Unattractive/unbeautiful/unpleasant	Attractive/beautiful city
Globally unrecognized, less valuable city	World-class city/ Globally recognized city
Normal/ usual city	Miracle city of Asia
Uncomfortable/congested city	Comfortable city for all
Slum and shanty city	Slum free city

Discursive formations establish orders of truth, or what is accepted as 'reality' in a given society. They do not permit the existence of forms of opposite knowledge and practices due to the reality or the accepted knowledge produced by discursive regimes or systems of power

(Foucault, 1972). If we see the above discursive constructions in column one of the table such as 'a better Colombo'; 'a clean, green city, 'slum-free city', 'world-class city, 'miracle city' are the lexical forms or 'mode of talking' of power agents what is accepted as truth or reality to be achieved through the URP. Finally, these types of communications permit the development ideology to transform “ 'bad Colombo'- 'dirty Colombo'- 'unpleasant Colombo' into a “ 'clean', 'green', 'world-class' city” by demolishing unwanted constructions: increasing visual appearance, aesthetic value and utilizing the space for economic growth, etc. As Ghertner (2011) notes such discursive boundaries (beautiful/ugly, visible/invisible, legal/illegal) are used to normalize the urban quality by the knowledge camps, ultimately thinking of the desirability of world-class urban improvements, even those who oppose such developments would agree with the world-class aspirations. These linguistic presentations of a world-class city produce a stereotyped image of a utopian city that adheres to policy and institutional reflections.

Right to Freedom and Beauty

In the process of remaking the image of Colombo, city beautification (CB) has been used as a powerful discursive strategy by the leaders of URP. As the project leaders claim, on the one hand, CB is a very essential tool for economic development through tourism and other commercial activities. On the other hand, it creates an avenue for the citizens to enjoy the freedom meaningfully earned through the military victory against the LTTE (Liberation of Tigers of Tamil Eelam). Project practitioners strongly emphasized that the CB will bring benefits to citizens while protecting the environment through so-called 'public-friendly', and 'environment-friendly' development.

Rebranding the Post-war 'Colombo'

The following two narratives communicate how the project actors establish the project rationale by stressing the progressive change to be achieved.

Rebranding the Post-war 'Colombo'

...Citizens of the country are now reaping the dividends of the hard-earned peace with their loved ones. You don't believe that only upper-class people come and spend their leisure time in leisure parks. People belonging to different layers, age categories, and ethnic groups come to these places and talk to each other, play, and jog in the evening and morning. We must work hard to make Colombo into an attractive place and provide more opportunities for the citizens to enjoy their life (Secretary to the MDUD, adopted from '*Doramadalawa*' TV programme themed '*Punarudayata Perawadanak*' on 22nd October 2012, telecasted by ITN).

We identified that there are no urban spaces in the city for people to enjoy as it is a highly dense place,". While large areas for people to gather and enjoy are quite common in other countries, in Sri Lanka the places were few and far between. ...We wanted to get as much space for the public which is important for the mindset of the people (The project director MCUDP and MDUD, Source: Mendis, 2013:04).

These two extracts related to public spaces communicate four specific meanings; first, since the war is ended, people are waiting to enjoy their life with their companions. Second, there is not enough beautiful space to enjoy. Third, thus, the government must provide its citizens with ample opportunities to enjoy their lives meaningfully. Finally, public spaces bring benefits to all of its citizens regardless of their class, ethnicity, gender, or age. These meanings, finally, demonstrate that the URP is a public-friendly project from which all citizens will be benefited. However, the narration hides its market-oriented purpose. This rhetoric presentation of public-friendly development draws our attention to the concept of 'responsible wellbeing' in the development discourse (Chambers, 2005). Responsible wellbeing is a form of wellbeing that is ethically grounded, recognizing our obligations to others and the wider social and environmental consequences of our actions. Chambers highlights the importance of equity and sustainability as key principles of responsible wellbeing: 'When wellbeing is qualified by equity and sustainability it becomes responsible wellbeing' (Chambers, 2005:193). Here, project leaders showcase that they are morally and ethically responsible agents who bring good change to all citizens through the URP.

As the project leaders believe, the URP not only brings freedom for the citizen to enjoy their lives meaningfully but also it protects their right to see beautiful sceneries and spaces. On the one hand, living in beautiful surroundings will be a mental cure for many diseases and it can uplift the standard of city dwellers. Therefore, everybody expects a beautiful city. On the other hand, living in a dilapidated city and an ugly place is a violation of rights.

Therefore, the government should ensure the rights of the public. Under the heading "*An expression of freedom in post-war Lanka*"

- The Sunday Times (July 13, 2014) reports that the goal of the government's policy of beautification is to ensure the right of every citizen to have a beautiful city. The article explains the purpose of the CB in a quite poetic way as follows.

Large expanses of green on the ground
Fluffy white clouds dancing
upon the blue-green skies A
statuesque white stucco building
standing
Sentinel against a new tomorrow.

As portrayed in the poem, a beautiful city, and beautiful life are rights of every citizen in Sri Lanka. These utterances strongly and indirectly communicate to us how development actors rationalize their projects emphasizing the whole process as a way of protecting the rights of citizens. Protecting the rights of citizens is also an element of the discourse of a 'public-friendly city' which allows developers to continue their market-oriented beauty projects. New forms of communication, such as 'public-friendly development' and 'public participation in planning' are instruments of neo-liberalism, used to show that development projects do not increase social polarization and protect democracy (Swyngedouw et al, 2002).

Heritage-led Regeneration

The embracement of the role of the cultural heritage of cities has become a more important economic catalyst than ever under neoliberalism. Rather than

simply focusing on the conservation of the cultural heritage of cities, it has become a response to demands to regenerate the economic base of cities that have lost their ability to attract local and foreign investments (Gunay, 2008). Especially, by showcasing the cultural significance of cities, policymakers target to attract more tourists. Therefore, new urban policies that are structured through neoliberalism necessitate the use of cultural heritage as a tool to respond to the rapidly changing socio-economic conditions of the new economic order. This necessity has two dimensions. While cultural heritage is used as a tool for economic development; the acquired development, in turn, should ensure the sustainability and continuity of cultural heritage (Gunay, 2008). In this context, the preservation of cultural heritage becomes a legitimizing tool for development and global city branding.

Aligning with this logic, the URP has seriously considered renovating historically valuable places and buildings. Developers emphasized that one of the aims of the CB is to preserve the historical and cultural identity of Colombo as a colonial city. The project leadership strongly stated that it is their responsibility to protect these heritages for the future while working on development at present. "Therefore, it is vital that this colonial heritage in the form of architecture is preserved for the future," (the Chairman of UDA, adopted from Jayathilaka, 2012). One of the main claims of project actors' is these heritage buildings and places had been abandoned since the 1970s due to failures of city administration and the LTTE threat in the past that inherited a dilapidated city. Therefore, it is a very difficult task to renovate these architectures without damaging the original value of architecture.

There is no doubt that the URP has succeeded in bringing forth a fresh look at the old buildings and places in Colombo. Though the government spoke out that the project targets to preserve cultural heritage the ground reality is that these cultural heritages have been used for market-oriented activities. Mainly concerning attractions for tourists, these renovated places have been converted into commercial centers with shopping and dining precincts, entertainment, restaurant, etc. (see the pictures of Old Dutch hospital after renovation). The project actors strongly believe that these places will create new job opportunities for the urban community while protecting its historical value. In this sense, project speakers legitimize their rebinding actions by stressing that the project will not harm the heritage. As they communicate, it is a project of protecting the nation's heritage for future generations. Moreover, the project will bring benefits to all. Nevertheless, when the views of the project actors are closely studied, it is obvious that the notion of protecting cultural heritage has become a powerful discursive strategy that is well adapted to the journey to a world-class city. The following statement made by the Chairman, UDA, at the opening ceremony of renovated Dutch Hospital clearly explains the actual purpose of renovation of cultural heritages under the CB.

Not so long ago Colombo used to be a dim city, going to sleep by about ten in the night. Go to Geneva or Stockholm or go Singapore, these cities go to sleep at four in the morning. Pubs and restaurants are open all night and the cities are bustling with activity. We plan to have that sort of Colombo. We want people to enjoy; places like Dutch Hospital are a part of creating this active, bustling city (the Chairman of the UDA, adopted from Jayathilaka, 2012).

The above narration very clearly demonstrates how developers have been stimulated by the values of the consumer economy. The developers' ambition is to adjust Colombo into the global market economy by using heritage as a cultural capital. Under the banner of conservation, cultural heritages are promoted by conservationists and planners into consumer spaces. The following two images substantiate this claim by illustrating how heritage is reconfigured into commodified urban spaces.

Figure 01. Dutch hospital before renovation Dutch hospital after renovation



By looking at the binary oppositions in the table, it is evident that there are two opposite clusters of meanings. As it is constructed, theoretically these binary clusters are opposite in existence. In other words, there is no co-existence of these binary oppositions. For instance, beauty does not permit ugliness and modernization does not permit dilapidation. Finally, the second cluster does not allow the existence of the first cluster. What happens here is the viewer refuses terrible, unhealthy urban conditions and stands for attractiveness and beauty which demands a world-class city. These

visualizations, however, should not be looked at in an isolated way. They are embedded into the verbal discourse on buildings, and into various kinds of communication, where their meaning is negotiated. Together with regularly emphasizing the aesthetic nature and cultural significance of the buildings, photographs of renovated Colombo influence the construction of "mental images" of the city.

Indeed, architectural landmarks are more powerful icons in displaying the political-economic strength of the city in the modernist discourse of city planning. Before plans are being operated, the designers serve as the city planners to see the image of their envisioned planning ideology through creating models of buildings and urban spaces. Therefore, the architectural model has become a more powerful discursive strategy in the process of urban design (Schalk, 2007). Since city planning is an aesthetic project, planners are more fascinated to see the models of the proposed architecture and town planning. City planners use the forms of models of buildings and gardens to convey the image of the proposed city design to the citizens to change their behaviour and moral attitude of citizens by creating an image of a utopian city (Schalk, 2007). The planners of the CB have used forms of models as visuals to present the vision of CB to the citizens. The following Figure 04 portrays the bureaucrats observing the model of the proposed Commercial and Residential Complex at Slave Island, where many urban underserved settlements are living in Colombo. The nonverbal language of the model indirectly makes people believe and accept the modernity and development brought forward by the proposed CB. From the Symbolic interaction point of view, in cities, spaces, buildings, and landscapes are not just physical—they are symbolic.

People act toward things based on the meanings those things have for them, and these meanings are socially constructed and constantly negotiated. Accordingly, these rebranding efforts or utopian ideologies are constructed through social interactions, shared symbols, and collective perceptions of power and authority. At the same time, the viewer is pushed to forget or justify the demolition of underserved settlements in the proposed project location.

Figure 04. The Secretary to the MDUD Kicked off the Commercial and Residential Complex at Slave Island



(Source: <http://www.ft.lk/2014/06/06/tower-apartments-for-slum-dwellers/>)

Media Speakers of Beautiful City

This analysis was drawn further to study the ways of visual communication of the discourse of beautiful Colombo focusing on television programmes, newspapers, advertisements, and news items.

It is obvious that the senders or speakers of all these media texts regularly confront their audience with photographs and/or partly also with films of "old Colombo" and the 'new Colombo'. Here, media texts have used rhetorical communications as powerful weapons when they present the improvements of URP by comparing the 'old Colombo' with the 'new Colombo'. The following narration and the data segment come from a television news item that presents the reality of old Colombo and new Colombo with slide shows.

As if a beautiful rural woman is smiling showing her beautiful teeth, the city of Colombo is like smiling at us. As if the dirty cloth that covered the body of a pretty woman has been removed, the walls that covered the attractively built houses have been demolished. It felt like the government buildings were covered by outer-walls to hide some secrets from us than to ensure the security of the buildings. The buildings on the road that lead to the Independence Square, which had been built with no fence around it, are now beginning to show themselves. The Grand Stand, where ladies and gentlemen who bet thousands on racing horse at the Race Course, is now ruined as an old man. That Grand Stand will be demolished soon and a beautiful building will be erected on it. Pedestrians, who walked in zigzag routs, as if they were playing hopscotch, today walk on the side-walks with their heads held straight with no obstruction. ...Village folks, who come to Colombo in AC buses having come to the bus stand on concrete roads, now tell us that the roads in village are even more beautifully made. Both Colombo and villages are becoming more and more beautiful now. The project of city beautification of the Defense Ministry, that removes the mountains of garbage is taken over by the UDA, and smashes gigantic walls, removing shops on the side-walks and growing vegetables in front of the building, is now getting the blessing of the people (Source: 'Vimasuma', Telecasted by ITN on 23/07/ 2011, available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mrjpYDPKeCM>)

News is not simply a description of something; it is a specific kind of reconstruction of reality. Also news production is part of complex professional work and technology in the field of construction of knowledge. Bruner (1986) notes narratives are a fundamental way in which humans encode and make sense of their day-to-day experiences. In his exercise, the narrator structuralizes the narration to draw a positive or negative sense in the mind of the audience. If the day-to-day experience is positive, the narrator uses linguistic utterance and visual slides to describe and give a superlative sense and if the experience is negative, utterance and visual slides are used to describe a devilish sense to the audience. Bassols et al. (2013) have compared an emotional message with a non-emotional message that deals with serious topics, focusing on the verbal, iconic, and auditory elements they contain, and observed that the former is designed to cause fear, while the latter is not. Regarding the structure of discourse in the above narrative genre, old Colombo is emotionally presented as an unlawful, unhealthy, and indecent place, at the same time it presents how the URP has converted the unlawful, unhealthy Colombo into a people-friendly place which brings many advantages to people.

For the processing of news discourse, usually, a listener or a viewer gets the first impression by listening or reading the headlines; therefore, the first few sentences are crucial for various reasons since it organizes ("attract") attention to specific things/events; they allow one to decide whether to read the rest of the discourse (Dijk, 1983:35). Now if we proceed with the piece of the genre- *As if a beautiful rural woman is smiling showing her beautiful teeth, the city of Colombo is like smiling at us.*

As if the dirty cloth that covered the body of a pretty woman has been removed, it is very clear that the organization of the news discourse attracted the audience very strongly, stressing that now that Colombo has become a very beautiful place like a pretty and decent girl.

Conclusion

In the process of rebranding the image of Colombo, the state-led neoliberal ideology of a world-class city has changed the socio-economic landscape of post-war Colombo. The project leaders have used various discursive practices to communicate the project goals and legitimize the URP as a public-friendly and part of a nation-building programme in the social context. Communicating economic aspirations such as becoming a middle-income country, an increase in per-capita income, and the economic viability of Colombo were widely used discursive strategies to approach the public. The claim to the preservation of colonial heritages, the demonstration of existing problems in Colombo have been widely used as discursive strategies to legitimize URP. Rhetorical presentations such as 'a better Colombo'; 'a clean-green-city', 'slum-free city', 'world-class city', 'miracle city' have become the lexical forms or 'mode of talking' of power agents in constructing the new truth or reality which is to be achieved through the URP.

As I widely explored creating a public-friendly city and inclusive citizenship were popular discursive presentations of the project leaders. Shopping malls, plazas, sidewalks, leisure parks, pedestrian pathways, markets, bazaars, low-income housing apartments, middle and upper-class housing apartments, and even transport systems are all contenders for the label of "public friendly city." Use of visual aids such as photos, video documentaries, advertisements, forms of models, news headings, and news

reporting have been used as powerful means in demonstrating the importance and progress of city beautification to society. The common role of all forms of these discursive strategies was to value the 'new Colombo' and devalue the 'old Colombo' by demonstrating that now Colombo is becoming a world-class city. Particularly the state-controlled media played the main catalyst role to demonstrate the state's development hegemony. Ultimately, the world-class city discourse has successfully rebranded the old Colombo into a consumer or entrepreneurship identity which more caters for the affluent social class while challenging the survival of disadvantaged people in the city.

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Do Ethics matter in Economic Development?

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Abstract

The aim of this article is to explore the existence of an empirical link of ethics as a determinant of economic development. Ethics shapes and defines the nature of an individual's behavior and will have an impact on trust in market transactions and institutions. So that ethics can improve efficiency, and disciplines and reduce transaction costs in markets. This paper has selected proxy variables for ethical considerations with reference to the Sri Lankan context and analyzed the empirical link of ethics with economic development. The results show that ethics is an important determinant among other variables for economic development. Therefore, the conclusions are made to estimate the statistical significance of ethics among other explanatory variables as a determinant of economic development in Sri Lanka.

Keywords: Ethics, Economic Development, Morality, Values, Disciplines

Introduction

The word “ethics” is a widely used term in many disciplines such as social sciences, businesses, and medicine and, even in public media such as newspapers, magazines, radios and, televisions that people generally have access to use¹. This is mainly because ethics are so important to us in our usual everyday life in dealing with addressing questions, and issues about morality and making choices. Intentionally or unintentionally everyone in the society has to have some sense of moral conduct, and follow some

¹ The word “ethics” is interchangeably used with a singular or plural verb in the literature. However, in this paper, the word is used in a plural form only.

generally accepted codes, and rules to live as an ordinary person. Everyone observing these moral principles is usually expected in any civilized society. Hence, we all are obliged to learn, discuss and become familiar with ethics and its values in a meaningful way (Berman, 2004). For this reason, it is unusual to hear that someone is making a choice or action that is known to be “unethical”. When we hear the phrase “it is an unethical action” sounds like a more embarrassing, psychologically down feeling. Because of this evaluative role of ethics in judging practices and experiences, a person or a community that experiences such a down feeling situation may face decreasing trust, respect and, self-confidence or may even be stigmatized by the rest of the society. Therefore, ethics teach us about how we ought to live (Singer, 1994).

Ethics shapes and defines the nature of an individual’s behavior. The application of ethics will come into play when an individual faces a dilemma over a question about morality. In our day-to-day life, everyone is presented with choices, some are simple to make like should I have dinner today at the usual time or a little late. Nevertheless, some choices are a little difficult to make like accepting or rejecting an invitation from a friend to a party this weekend, and on some occasions these choices are so difficult to make, and we struggle with many perspectives, possible scenarios, historical experiences and opinions of others on what might be the right thing to do. If the choice is to be made within a limited time span, under a difficult situation, then of course you tend to make it based on your own moral conduct regardless of what others think. Therefore, our ethical considerations are mostly based on individual perspectives while the judgments are made from societal perspectives. The questions that arise here is how many of us are successful in keeping up with moral conduct satisfactorily in our ordinary lives? Also, how important is it to have some moral conduct when we work in our professions, and institutions? Do they have any defined boundaries, contextual applicability? Overall, what can we say about ethics in relation to the determination of the development status of a community or a country? Do they really matter? When looking at economic development perspectives, are there evidence or indicators that we can use to prove a country’s economic performance would improve

Do Ethics matter in Economic Development?

if the people were more ethical or in other words whether the economic performance of a country retards when such a country is ranked at low level of ethical conduct. Answering these questions is attempted in this paper in order to explore whether ethical considerations can be empirically modelled and tested as a determinant of economic development.

The Definitions of Ethics

The literature on ethics has expanded greatly over the last few decades. Hence it is said to overlap with many subjects and fields. There are many definitions for ethics with many volumes of literature. Currently it is enriched to be called as a branch of philosophy that deals with people's morality (Shapiro, 1999). According to the Dictionary.com, in its simple form ethics is defined as a system of moral principles². These principles may also be recognized as a set of value principles with respect to particular class of social groups or communities and their choice making procedures and actions (Gasper, 2006). The Dictionary.com further clarifies ethics as a *“branch of philosophy that dealing with values relating to human conduct, with respect to the rightness and wrongness of certain actions and to the goodness and badness of the motives and ends of such actions”*. Cultivation of these values with individuals or communities is usually determined by their social, cultural, religion and epistemological grounds.

According to another comprehensive definition

...ethics refers to well based standards of right and wrong that prescribe what humans ought to do, usually in terms of rights, obligations, benefits to society, fairness, or specific virtues. Ethics, for example, refers to those standards that impose the reasonable obligations to refrain from rape, stealing, murder, assault, slander, and fraud. Ethical standards also include those that enjoin virtues of honesty, compassion, and loyalty. And ethical standards include standards relating to rights, such as the right to life, the right to freedom from injury, and the right to privacy. Such standards are adequate standards of ethics because they are supported by consistent and well-founded reasons (Velasquez, et al., 2009).

² The Dictionary.com: <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/ethics>

This definition infers that ethics is a self-regulatory moral conduct that we must bear in our day-to-day life in making choices over problems ranging from very simple to more complex dilemma and dealing with resulting outcomes or scenarios. Within the broader literature of ethics there are three kinds of moral thinking; *descriptive*, which attempts to develop a theory of human nature that bears on ethical questions; *normative*, which addresses what is good or right in a particular case or as a general principle and leads to a normative judgement; and *critical or meta-ethical*, which addresses logical, epistemological, semantical questions dealing with the establishment and justification of ethical and value judgements (Patton & Sawicki, 1993).

Currently the relevance of ethics has been widely accepted in many branches of disciplines, professions and institutions. However, there is no adequate and systematic research has been conducted in order to capture how ethical dimension of a society impacts on economic development. Although economics is changing fast its mode of analysis by means of quantification and objectification of human behavior and values, an economy which is made up of living people have a complexity that is beyond the ability of models to capture (Hamilton, 1994). However, most economists limit their study of the determination of development to popularly known variables only and therefore considering to incorporate other factors such as ethics is an important aspect as a determinant of development. In order to fill this research gap, this paper efforts to identify empirically testable determinants that will help the development process of a country needs ethical dimension so as to ensure distribution of economic benefits fairly among its citizen, maintain civil order, and ecological and environmental sustainability.

Ethical considerations in Economic Development -The role of ethics

What ethics perform in our day-to-day life and how do such rules of conduct allow people to live in harmony is an important aspect to look at.

Do Ethics matter in Economic Development?

The knowledge on ethics continuously grows and its application tends to be validating considerably in everyday life. The more we read and study about ethics the more we expose to the rigor and complexity of its relevance and application. Do ethics really contribute as a determinant for the betterment of people's socioeconomic and cultural behavior or quality of life? This is the most common question philosophers and researchers have been raised and attempted to address. Considering economic development perspectives countries make their effort to achieve development goals including both material as well as psychological well-being even though the weightage assigned in different periods interchangeably being changed. For instance, till the close of middle ages, non-economic aspects of social life were accorded a great importance. The weightage assigned to material well-being in human life for the attainment of happiness was quite low. Instead, a life which conformed to a code of moral values was considered preferable to the one which gave 'undue' weightage to material well-being (Bhatia, 2003). Hence ethics and development are inseparable since ethics causes us to consider topics such as the nature of public life, accountability and conflict of interest. Starting with Adam Smith, many economists have discussed the ethical dimensions of economic prosperity in which ethical approach to development demands that each individual is able to lead a life of dignity, wherein his/her basic minimum needs of food, clothing, and shelter are fulfilled (UNESCO, 2003). Therefore, human actions are guided by certain desires and instincts in which self-love, sympathy and desire to be free, a sense of propriety are all embedded. In order to achieve these aspirations in development goals, policies and practices need to be aligned with market system and government regulatory functions. Thus, when the development process is embedded with ethics and morality even under free market system there will be room for setting standards for fair competition in their own interest and the public interest. In other words, competitors create standards for assessing ethical/moral conduct, including the quality of life and consumer product safety (Bruyn, 1999). This system of self-accountability might be based on mutual agreement among competitors by which welfare of the society and consumer protection will be improved. This will in turn reduce the weight on government regulatory functions and expenditures as well.

Therefore, installation a sense of ethics into economic order may help to rediscover the interdependency of all parties and close interaction between its different modes within a system (Garper, 2006). Hence, it implies that ethical behavior of an economy is seemingly important for economic efficiency and economic growth.

Although attempts are being made to cultivate an optimistic view of ethical dimension to economic development current practices seemed to have unrealized the importance of it. Unequal distribution of income, corruption, poverty, lack of health care, gender disparity, violent behavior of some groups and environmental degradation and damages to the ecological base are some of the major issues resulted by this ignorance. This is partly because ethical judgments usually based on personal value system and characteristics including cultural, social, and educational background. Usually the existing loopholes in rules, regulations, and laws, can be combined with powers of individuals in order to make ethical judgments over problematic situations, dilemma of “what the best/correct thing to do?” The effect of these actions may in turn determine trust, social cohesiveness, and visions of the civil society.

If everyone in society considers his/her ethical obligations in the economic development process could make favorable changes to the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. This may be conducive to expand the sense of mutuality and moral energy for economic development. Therefore, in its holistic view, ethics can play a major role in shaping the societal standards, development status from economic, ecological, and environmental perspectives, and maintaining civil order and political stability in a country.

Methodology

Ethics may reflect the social standards by means of people’s moral beliefs, conduct, and social accountability in that people are more responsible for their own lives and actions (Bruyn, 1999). These can be used to improve the ways in which people associate with each other and make social fabrics stronger. In this way, ethics can develop trust and mutual understanding

Do Ethics matter in Economic Development?

among each other, making individuals well-behaved which will in turn improve social capital and accountability. The economic system becomes more efficient and less costly by means of reducing transaction costs and regulatory expenditures. Chances are higher for distributing economic benefits in a socially justifiable manner. These improvements in behavioral characteristics will have a positive impact on resource management and economic development.

However, there are certain other ways depending on the socioeconomic, cultural, and educational level of society, ethical questions become devilishly difficult in terms of larger public policy. This is more painful to development practitioners when a person or a group of people gets hurt by losing their livelihood, employment, resources, properties, or displacement from their original habitat. Is this justifiable? Corruption, abuse of public finance, politically driven public policy mistakes, and violation of human rights. Finally, after a development program or a project who gets the benefits? Are they particularly for the betterment of any particular group, region, or distribution among all? By making these judgments development practitioners sometimes may create winners at the expense of depriving others of well-being. Therefore, what can we expect from ethics under these circumstances in determining the greatest welfare for everyone becomes an open question.

Although many economic growth theories explain the determinants of economic development, much less is done on how ethical consideration links to economic development. Therefore, this paper intends to use proxy variables to explore the possible relationship between ethical considerations and economic growth and development with special reference to the Sri Lankan context. Empirical links are derived from the available data on economic growth, trust, distribution of economic benefits, and descriptive secondary evidence on the welfare standards of people. The analysis will provide empirical links and implications on answering the questions in relation to ethics and exploring the results by way of possible evidence of the existence of a close association between ethics and economic development.

Is ethics important for economic growth and development?

The meaning of development consists of a multidimensional process of improving material, social, and environmental well-being in order to enhance the quality of life. It has been further expanded to incorporate achieving a real sense of life such as prosperity, freedom, and happiness in mind. According to Michael Todaro (2008).

..... development is both a physical reality and a state of mind in which society has, through some combination of social, economic, and institutional processes, secured the means for obtaining a better life. Whatever the specific components of this better life, development in all societies must have at least the following three objectives (p. 23)

- Increase the availability and widen the distribution of basic life-sustaining goods such as food, shelter, health, and protection.
- Raise levels of living, through higher income, provision of employment, education, and greater attention to cultural and human values
- expand the range of economic and social choices.

In order to achieve this goal a country must have the systems of provision and distribution of life-sustaining goods and upliftment of individual and national self-esteem while expanding the range of economic and social choices to free from ignorance and human misery. What is the role played by ethics in this regard as a determinant of development? is an important factor to focus on, nevertheless, researchers have not drawn attention to that component adequately and systematically. Although there is no specific index or identified units to measure the ethical standards of a country certain proxy variables can be used to investigate the possible empirical association of ethics with development. Hence, in this study there are selected indices and statistical data are used as evidence to prove the empirical link between ethics and development.

Although there is no single and exhaustive definition for good governance, researchers and institutions in different fields have developed their own ways of capturing the essence of governance using a wide range of related

Do Ethics matter in Economic Development?

variables. For instance, the Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI) is a research dataset summarizing the views on the quality of governance provided by a large number of enterprises, citizens, and expert survey respondents in industrial and developing countries. This process, in other words, includes the ways in which how governments are selected democratically and function effectively with transparency, and implement good policies to enhance the welfare and living standards of people. Hence, as a result of good governance, it improves the economic and social interaction between institutions and citizens, and therefore, governments gain the capacity, trust, and faith that is conducive to efficient resource use, lower transaction costs generating better outcomes such as higher GDP growth and per capita income. The WGI data are gathered from a number of survey institutes, think tanks, non-governmental organizations, international organizations, and private sector firms. These secondary data can be used as proxies to reflect the ethical standards of a country. The data mainly cover six dimensions of governance, namely,

Voice of Accountability: Reflects perceptions of the extent to which a country's citizens are able to participate in selecting their government, as well as freedom of expression, freedom of association, and free media.

Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism measures perceptions of the likelihood of political instability and/or politically motivated violence, including terrorism.

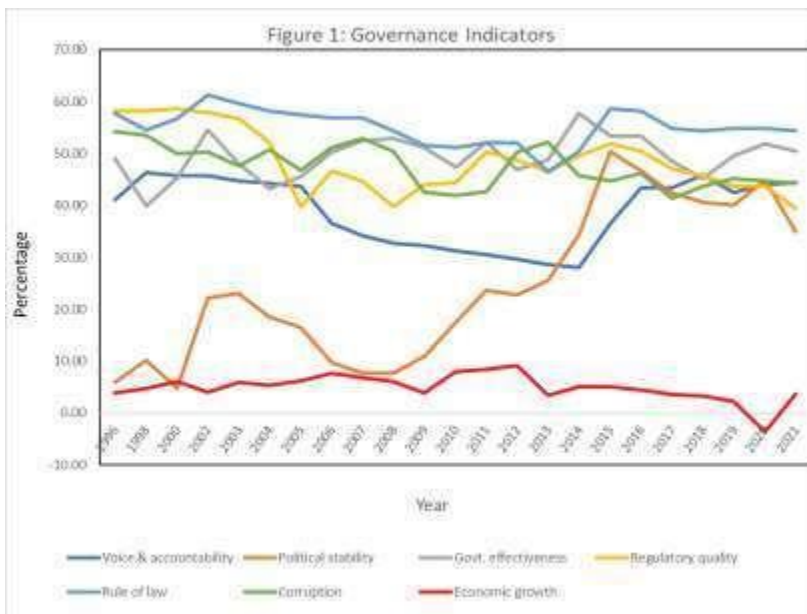
Government effectiveness: Reflects perceptions of the quality of public services, the quality of the civil service and the degree of its independence from political pressures, the quality of policy formulation and implementation, and the credibility of the government's commitment to such policies.

Regulatory quality: Reflects perceptions of the ability of the government to formulate and implement sound policies and regulations that permit and promote private sector development.

Rule of law: Reflects perceptions of the extent to which agents have confidence in and abide by the rules of society, and in particular the quality of contract enforcement, property rights, the police, and the courts, as well as the likelihood of crime and violence.

Control of corruption: Reflects perceptions of the extent to which public power is exercised for private gain, including both petty and grand forms of corruption, as well as "capture" of the state by elites and private interests.

Figure 01: Governance Indicators



Source: The World Bank, Available at <http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/>

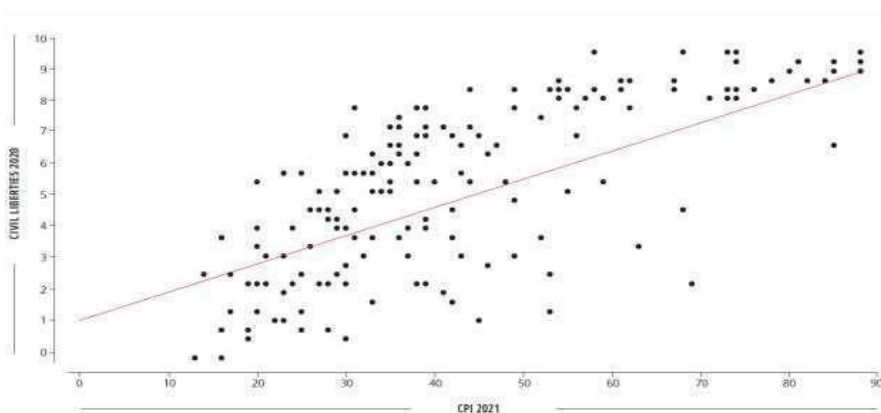
Figure 1 shows that economic growth particularly after 2012 has been in a declining trend followed by a time reasonable time lag of about a 10-year period (2000-2012) of downward trend in other variables which are considered proxy variables for ethical values estimated by WGI for Sri Lanka. Therefore, it reflects the empirical relationship between ethical standards and declining economic growth and development resulting in a

Do Ethics matter in Economic Development?

downward trend in regulatory quality, rule of law, voice & accountability, lack of corruption control, and effectiveness of government policies.

Furthermore, the Corruption Perception Index shows a similar pattern of distribution of data between CPI and civil liberties where Higher levels of corruption, as measured by the CPI, are strongly associated with breaches of civil liberties (see Figure 2). Outliers exist, but in most cases, the relationship is causal in both directions: more corruption can lead to restrictions on civil liberties while having fewer civil liberties makes it harder to fight corruption.

Figure 2: The relationship between CPI and Civil Liberties



Source: CPI 2021 Report Available at <https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2021>

Modernized economies such as Singapore have efficient bureaucracy and strong rule of law all of which contribute to Singapore's success. However, it continues to fall far behind on human rights such as freedom of expression and association, which means that any anti-corruption success is tied to the political will of the ruling elite and may not be sustainable.

Corruption and impunity make it unsafe for people to speak up and demand justice. Ninety-eight percent of the 331 murders of human rights defenders in 2020 occurred in countries with high levels of public sector corruption (CPI Report, 2021). Hence, there is a tendency towards taking strong action against corruption and halting human rights violations and

democratic rights of people if development initiatives are to be effective in developing countries. Therefore, this evidence locally as well as globally shows that ethical practices are closely associated with the economic growth and development of countries.

Conclusions

Ethical judgments are mostly based on personal characteristics. However, they may not be defined by laws, regulations, or religions, nor are they straightforwardly given, from institutions or community codes (Gasper, 2006). These judgments are made on making choices on what the best thing to do from personal perspectives, but the best thing may or may not be the correct thing from a social point of view. Hence ethical judgments become a major driving force that determines societal standards.

Using ethics purposely in a meaningful way may have a positive impact on economic development and increase social welfare. Any development project, or public policy action may have costs and benefits, therefore creating losers and winners may not be avoidable, however, space may be available for choices that can still be made on what degree of pain we will accept, and with consensus to make alternatives fairly.

Finally, ethical commitments will be periodically reviewed and their appropriateness determined in the light of new knowledge and changing circumstances in a social environment. Therefore, ethics can be identified as a major driving force that is closely associated with sustainable economic development determining the overall socioeconomic and environmental standards of a country or a society. Economic development achieved through ethical values may help to direct society towards a more humane and sensible development status. If economic agents such as businesses, workers, or consumers are more ethical or trustworthy with morality the benefits of a such system could be enjoyed by all parties who engaged in the process of economic development.

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Screening Tool for Psychological Intimate Partner Violence for Sri Lankan Women: Sinhalese Validation of the Psychological Maltreatment of Women Inventory (PMWI)

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Abstract

Psychological intimate partner violence (IPV) is reported as the most prevalent form of partner abuse in many cross-cultural studies. Despite these important findings, there remains a lack of standardized and validated scales to measure psychological IPV specifically within the Sri Lankan context. In view of the lack of a culture-specific tool to measure psychological IPV comprehensively among Sri Lankan women, this research study aimed to validate the Psychological Maltreatment of Women Inventory (PMWI) in the Sri Lankan cultural context. The Psychological Maltreatment of Women Inventory is a well-established instrument for assessing psychological IPV. This research study aimed to validate the Psychological Maltreatment of Women Inventory (PMWI) in the Sri Lankan cultural context and to confirm the factor structure of the Sinhalese PMWI, as well as analyze its psychometric properties using a community-based sample of 300 ever-partnered women, aged 18-49 years, selected through multi-stage sampling. In the preparation phase, the PMWI was first revised for possible cultural differences between Sri Lankan and non-Sri Lankan women, with a few supplementary items added on the use of electronic devices as a contemporary form of monitoring. Forward and backward-translated items were reviewed by a panel of experts before being administered to the study sample. Exploratory factor analysis conducted on data from the sample revealed a two-factor structure similar to the original English version. The two-factor structure accounted for 56.98% of the total variance and was named the emotional-monitoring-verbal abuse (EMV) subscale and the dominance-

isolation (DI) subscale, with Factor 1 accounting for 48.70% of the variance and Factor 2 accounting for 5.16% of the variance. Known-groups validity was demonstrated by significant differences in scores between women with different relationship histories. The validated PMWI showed good internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha $>.9$ for the entire scale and each subscale. The intraclass correlation across administrations over 2 weeks was $>.9$, demonstrating excellent test-retest reliability. The comprehensive validation procedures used in the present study provide evidence for both the cultural appropriateness and satisfactory psychometric properties of the PMWI Sinhala form. It shows promise as a useful instrument in research and clinical practice to measure psychological IPV among Sri Lankan women.

Keywords: Psychological Intimate Partner Violence, Psychological Maltreatment of Women Inventory (PMWI), Screening Tool, Sri Lanka

Introduction

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is a global public health crisis that has serious social and economic consequences for countries and societies. IPV refers to behaviour within an intimate relationship that causes physical, sexual, or psychological harm, including acts of physical aggression, sexual coercion, psychological abuse, and controlling behaviour (WHO, 2021). IPV occurs in all settings and among all socioeconomic, religious, and cultural groups. As shown in research findings, the overwhelming global burden of IPV is borne mostly by women. On average, 736 million to 852 million women aged 15 years or older in 2018 (nearly 1 in 3 women) have experienced at least one of these forms of violence at least once in their lifetime (WHO, 2021). Men, too, can be victims of IPV; however, the global prevalence of IPV among men is estimated to range from 3.4% to 20.3% for physical violence (Kolbe & Büttner, 2020). Most of the affected men had also been violent toward their partners. Research evidence further demonstrates that although women can be violent in relationships with men, often in self-defense, the most common perpetrators of violence

against women are male intimate partners or ex-partners (Heise, Ellsberg, and Gottemoeller, 1999). By contrast, men are found to be far more likely to experience violent acts by strangers or acquaintances than by someone close to them (Heise and Garcia Moreno, 2002). Research findings on the prevalence rates of different forms of IPV show that psychological IPV is the most prevalent form of IPV among both women (WHO, 2021) and men (Kolbe & Büttner, 2020), which suggests that effective efforts are required to develop prevention programs for victims, along with further exploration.

Psychological intimate partner violence (IPV), as defined by O’Leary (2015), includes acts of criticism, verbal aggression, isolation, and domination of a partner. Loring (1994:1) defined psychological IPV as “an ongoing process in which one individual systematically diminishes and destroys the inner self of another,” emphasizing the pattern of behaviors that constitute abuse. The concept of the “inner self” includes ideas, perceptions, feelings, and personality characteristics. Psychological IPV exposure significantly impacts the health and well-being of women by increasing the risk of adverse outcomes and risky behaviors, such as depressive symptoms, suicidal thoughts and attempts, alcohol and drug use, cognitive impairment, and a decline in self-esteem and self-identity (Antai et al., 2014; Baldry, 2003; Kaslow et al., 1998; Ludermir et al., 2008; Matheson et al., 2015; Pico-Alfonso et al., 2006; and Vives-Cases et al., 2011). Psychological IPV results in extensive mental health consequences among its victims (Dutton et al., 2006; Devries et al., 2013; Johnson, Zlotnick, and Perez, 2008), including anxiety and mood disorders (Dillon et al., 2013; Vázquez, Torres, and Otero, 2012), and PTSD (Arias and Pape, 1999; Baldry, 2003; Pico-Alfonso et al., 2006), while directly causing psychological distress (Antai et al., 2014; Kaslow et al., 1998; Marshal, 1999).

Psychological IPV is also shown to be associated with a number of detrimental physical health consequences, including weight loss, weight gain, stomach pain, and the experience of pain in “every bone of my body,” demonstrating that psychological abuse not only damages psychological health but also undermines physical health (Lingren and Renck, 2008), as

well as women's general functioning (Kelly, 2004; Tolman and Bhosley, 1991). It is identified as a form of abuse that impacts the overall quality of life (Hutchins and Sinha, 2013).

Psychological IPV, which leads to all these adverse outcomes, is reported to be the most prevalent form of partner abuse in many cross-cultural studies (Garcia-Moreno, Jansen, Ellsberg, Heise, and Watts, 2006). The average prevalence of psychological IPV in large population surveys varies largely depending on how this type of violence is defined and measured. Some studies estimate its prevalence at around 10–20%, while others found prevalence rates of around 80–90% (Carney and Barner, 2012; Martín-Fernández, Gracia, and Lila, 2019; Tjaden and Thoennes, 2006). High prevalence rates of psychological IPV have been reported in Europe, with the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (EUAFR) (2014) finding that between 35 and 49% of men and women are affected (Dokkedahl et al., 2019). It is also estimated to be the most common form of IPV in the USA (Black et al., 2010). The Demographic and Health Survey (2016) conducted in Sri Lanka showed that the most predominant type of violence (75%) reported by women who suffered from IPV was being “belittled or seriously offended,” which is considered a form of psychological IPV.

Psychological IPV is often reported to be more harmful than physical forms of violence (Garcia-Moreno et al., 2005; Follingstad et al., 1990). It is frequently shown to precede and progress to physical IPV (O'Leary, 2015) and is also considered a risk factor for physical aggression (Capaldi et al., 2012). The early signs of verbal aggression may provide the context for further violence, making it important and beneficial to identify psychological IPV in a relationship to prevent more severe consequences.

However, research shows that variations occur in how women express the effects of psychological IPV across different cultural settings, as these effects are determined by how women perceive the behaviors (Queen, Brackley, and Williams, 2009). This underscores the importance of exploring the occurrence of IPV in specific cultural contexts.

Despite the abundant literature on the consequences of psychological IPV on psychological well-being, psychological IPV is less researched than physical or sexual violence, likely because it is less visible and harder to measure and evaluate than other forms of IPV (Follingstad et al., 1990; Ureña et al., 2015). The reason why psychological abuse has rarely been studied in Sri Lanka, despite its known impact on mental health, could be due to the lack of a valid instrument to detect psychological abuse among women in the country. A key to identifying a problem is having a valid instrument. In the domain of psychological abuse of women, several instruments have been developed, but they have only been validated in Western cultures. An essential aspect of using an instrument in a culture different from its origin is ensuring that the concepts measured by the instrument are equivalent or similar in both cultural groups (Flaherty et al., 1988; International Test Commission, 2001). The lack of culturally valid psychological instruments has been a significant obstacle to the development of psychological services in many countries (de Zoysa, Rajapaksha, & Newcombe, 2007). Without validated screening instruments, psychosocial interventions may unintentionally divert resources from the women most in need of mental health services. Moreover, it becomes impossible to evaluate the effectiveness of an intervention, risking the failure of programs designed to improve women's lives and wasting scarce human and economic resources (Brandon et al., 2011). In humanitarian emergencies, data from unvalidated instruments can be worse than no data at all, as it may lead to inappropriate and potentially harmful interventions (Allden et al., 2009).

Even though there are measures to detect domestic violence against women (Moonesinghe et al., 2004), there is no specific tool available in Sri Lanka solely to detect psychological abuse of women. Therefore, it is crucial to have an adapted and validated instrument to identify the nature and severity of psychological abuse among Sri Lankan women. Using existing tools that are already validated can be time-saving and convenient. It saves both money and time in developing a new tool and, most importantly, allows for the collection of more information on the psychometric properties of existing tools in various populations.

In the absence of a specific tool to assess psychological IPV among Sri Lankan women, this study aimed to translate and adapt the Psychological Maltreatment of Women Inventory Long Form (PMWI-LF) to Sinhala and validate it within the Sri Lankan cultural setting, thereby providing a screening tool for the prevention and detection of psychological IPV among Sinhala-speaking women in Sri Lanka.

Method

Study Design: A cross sectional validation study was carried out.

Participants: Three hundred 18- to 49-year-old ever-partnered Sri Lankan women who have the knowledge to write, read and speak in Sinhala were the participants of this study.

Sample Size Calculation: The sample size (n) required for the validation of the PMWI was calculated using the formula from Hulley and Cummings (1988), based on the expected sensitivity and specificity of the instrument. This formula has been previously used in scale validation studies in Sri Lanka by De Zoysa et al. (2007) and Moonesinghe, Rajapaksa, and Samarasinghe (2004). For the present study, a sensitivity of 85% and a specificity of 90% were targeted. The number of respondents that needed to be identified as ‘psychologically abused’ for the instrument's sensitivity of 85%, with a 95% confidence interval (CI) of ± 0.05 , was at least 87. The number of respondents needed to be identified as ‘psychologically non-abused’ cases, for the instrument’s specificity of 90% (with a 95% CI of ± 0.05), was calculated in the same manner as that for sensitivity. The number of respondents required to identify ‘psychologically non-abused’ cases to achieve a specificity of 90% was at least 138. Thus, the total number required was 225, which was rounded up to 300 to account for any incomplete responses.

Selection of the Sample: The sample was selected from the Central Province, Sri Lanka, using multi-stage cluster sampling. The primary sampling units were the smallest administrative areas, *Grama Niladhari* divisions, and a number of these were randomly selected in proportion to

the sample size. Each cluster consisted of 30 households, and the primary location of the cluster was randomly chosen from a regularly updated list of households provided by the local administrative office. From this list, one eligible woman was selected by lottery for the study.

Description of the Sample: The validation study included a total of 300 ever-partnered women who had been in an intimate relationship within the last 6 months or during the preceding 12 months. In accordance with the sampling criteria, out of the total sample, 193 women were in the psychologically non-abused group, and 107 women were in the psychologically abused group. The majority of the total sample were Sinhala (97.2%) and from Buddhist families (87.8%). Only 2.8% belonged to other ethnic groups. Most respondents in the non-abused group were married (95.2%), 3.2% were separated, and 1.3% were cohabitating at the time of the study. Similarly, in the abused group, the majority were married (76.8%), 10.5% were separated, and 3.5% were divorced. A large proportion of the non-abused group (52.6%) had been educated up to G.C.E Advanced Level (A/L), followed by 32.3% educated up to G.C.E Ordinary Level (O/L). In the abused group, a significant proportion of women (45.6%) had also been educated up to G.C.E Advanced Level (A/L), with 38.5% having reached G.C.E Ordinary Level (O/L). No respondent in either group was illiterate. Women with tertiary education were a minority in both groups, with percentages of 7.2% and 4.5%, respectively. In terms of employment, the majority of the non-abused group (65.4%) were employed, while most of the abused group (62.3%) were unemployed. Both groups reported having more than one child ($M=1.9$), although a significant portion of the abused group (18.2%) reported not having any children. Only 6% of the non-abused group reported having no children.

Instruments

a). Psychological Maltreatment of Women Inventory (PMWI; Tolman, 1989)

Instrument PMWI is a 58-item self-report scale that measures the psychological maltreatment of women by their male intimate partners. The adapted and validated Sinhalese translation of the PMWI was used in the present study. This scale consists of questions that ask the participants how often their partner engaged in various psychologically abusive behaviors, such as interfering with her relationships or criticizing her. The original PMWI includes subscales that measure levels of two distinct types of psychological abuse: emotional or verbal and dominance or isolation.

Even though there exists a shorter form of the PMWI and other scales and indexes measuring the same phenomenon, it was decided to choose the PMWI long form over these other scales for a number of reasons. First, the PMWI has been designed specifically to measure the degree of psychological abuse experienced by females in their intimate relationships. Next, the PMWI long form captures a wide spectrum of psychologically abusive behaviours compared to any other existing similar scale (e.g., Revised Conflict Tactics Scale). Finally, the NA choice might reveal patterns for researchers to recognize which types of abusive acts are not common or prevalent in the Sri Lankan cultural context. The good psychometric properties of the scale described below also served as an additional reason for choosing this scale. Internal consistency: Dominance/Isolation = .95; Emotional/Verbal = .93; and evidence of convergent, discriminant, criterion, and factorial validity have also been established (Tolman, 1989; 1999). Participants' reports of psychological abuse on the PMWI have been found to be characterized by high internal consistency and are free of socially desirable responding effects (Dutton and Hemphill, 1992; Tolman, 1989). This measure has been shown to distinguish between abused and non-abused women (Tolman, 1989; 1999).

b). Emotional Abuse and Controlling Behaviour Questionnaire (EACBQ): The EACBQ was used as a comparable test for convergent-

related validation. Specifically, it was used to test the strength and direction of Pearson's correlation between the Revised Sinhala PMWI and the EACBQ as a measure of convergent validity. Participants' experiences of psychological abuse were assessed using the section pertaining to the assessment of emotional abuse and controlling behaviour in the WHO Violence Against Women Instrument. This 11-item questionnaire assessed the presence of emotional abuse and controlling behaviour over the past six months. Psychological abuse was assessed using 11 items, while 7 items inquired about women's experiences of controlling behaviours by intimate partners. All items are rated on a 5-point Likert scale with anchors ranging from 'never = 1' to 'very frequently = 5'. Scores for each item are then summed to yield an overall score indicating the severity of psychological abuse from the intimate partner. This measure takes approximately 5 minutes to complete. The internal reliability coefficient in this study was .91.

c). Self-Administered Questionnaire for Collecting Socio-Demographic Information

Procedure

The validation of the PMWI was conducted in two phases. In the first phase, the preparation of the PMWI for psychometric validation was carried out. This involved considering possible cultural differences between Sri Lankan and non-Sri Lankan women when adapting the instrument to the Sri Lankan context and adding a few supplementary items to keep the instrument relevant, given the changing nature of psychological maltreatment with technological advancements.

Back-Translation

Following permission from the author of the PMWI (Tolman, 1999) to adapt and validate the instrument in the Sri Lankan context, the PMWI-LF was first translated into Sinhala from English. It was then back-translated by two independent bilingual investigators to maximize conceptual equivalence. In accordance with international translation guidelines (ITC, 2001), the translation of the PMWI was conducted as advised by Meadows (1994) and Mare et al. (1995), to maintain conceptual, operational, and

semantic equivalence. To ascertain conceptual equivalency, the original version of the instrument and the back-translated (from Sinhala to English) version were compared by a bilingual professional in Sinhala and English from the social sciences. Discrepancies between the two versions were identified, and necessary modifications were made to the Sinhala version.

Following the translation, the Sinhala version of the instrument was pre-tested twice. The first pre-test involved a structured exploratory interview with twenty Sinhala-speaking, 18 to 49-year-old married women from different socio-economic classes and IPV experiences. These women were selected from the University of Peradeniya, which employs individuals from diverse socio-economic backgrounds across Sri Lanka.

During the interview, women were asked to comment on various characteristics of the instrument, including difficulty in understanding, clarity, and length, and to suggest any additional forms of psychological abuse that they believe are prevalent in the Sri Lankan context. The feedback from the women, including their suggestions for new items, along with observations from the investigator and a review of the literature on the applicability of these new items, were used to revise the wording and structure of the instrument. After revision, the instrument was pre-tested a second time with a new group of twenty women selected in the same manner as the first pre-test. Their feedback, along with comments from a panel of psychologists, was used to further refine the wording, instructions, and formatting of the instrument.

The second phase involved the full psychometric testing of the Revised PMWI. Following approval from the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Graduate Studies, University of Colombo, and adhering to ethical principles prescribed by the WHO (1999), participants were invited personally to take part in the study. Key issues such as ensuring confidentiality and privacy, obtaining informed consent, voluntary participation, and respondent safety were considered paramount in designing the study.

Data Analysis

SPSS 20 was used to analyze the data, including the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants, which are reported through descriptive statistical analysis. The reliability of the PMWI was determined using both test-retest and internal consistency measures. The test-retest reliability for the Sinhalese version of the PMWI was evaluated by calculating the inter-class correlation (ICC), and the test would be considered reliable if the calculated ICC exceeds a level of 0.7 (Streiner and Norman, 2008), indicating confident use of the instrument in research, clinical, and applied settings. The internal consistency of the scale was estimated using Cronbach's alpha. To check content and consensual-related validity, the comments of the expert review committee were analyzed, and the means of their ratings of items were calculated. A mean rating above 7 was considered satisfactory (Senaratne et al., 2008).

Construct validity was assessed in two ways: (a) factor analysis, and (b) discriminant validation. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was performed through principal axis analysis with varimax rotation, and Pearson correlation coefficients between EACBQ and PMWI total scores were calculated for discriminatory validity. Criterion-related validation was assessed through two forms: convergent validity and the known-groups method. Convergent validity was tested by computing the strength and direction of Pearson's correlation for the Revised Sinhala PMWI with the EACBQ. Applying the known-groups method, this study examined if scores on the PMWI discriminated between known groups of psychologically abused women and those who are not abused.

Results

Content and Consensual Related Validation

Content-related validation and consensual-related validation of the PMWI were determined by the Delphi Process (Jones & Hunter, 1995). Content-related validation involves a judgment on the operational aspects of the conceptual definition of a scale/item, while consensual-related validation assesses the extent of agreement about the (cultural) appropriateness of a

scale/item (Abramson and Abramson, 1999). A group of six experts from the social and behavioral disciplines served as judges for content- and consensual-related validation of the 64 items of the PMWI, examining both the synthesized translated and synthesized back-translated versions. The judges were also invited to suggest necessary modifications to the items if they deemed it necessary. For the first and second rounds of the Delphi Process, the decision on which items/scales of the original instrument were to be retained in the Sinhala version was based on the following criteria: if 70% or more of the ratings for an item (or scale) were in the category of 7 or above, the item was retained. In the case of a low rating, if an item was rated poorly in the first round, it was reworded to make it more acceptable if the wording was the reason for the low rating. If the item continued to receive low ratings in the second round, it was omitted from the Sinhala version.

There was a high level of agreement regarding the relevance of the items for assessing psychological abuse among adult women (age appropriateness), as no item had a rating below 7. Regarding the relevance of items for assessing psychological IPV, all items were in the acceptable categories of 7-9. However, some experts rated a few items as “relevant but needs minor alteration.” Modifications were incorporated according to the recommendations of the experts after discussion. For example, the item “My partner was jealous of other men” had a rating of “7.2” but was noted as “relevant but needs minor alteration.” Four experts were concerned that a man being jealous of other men, such as colleagues, might not indicate psychological maltreatment of his partner. Therefore, this item was modified to “My partner felt jealous when I looked at or spoke with other men.” Additionally, the item “My partner restricted my use of the telephone” was noted as requiring modification, as numerous forms of harassment in intimate relationships now involve not only the landline but also new communication technologies. Hence, this item was modified to “My partner restricted my use of the computer and/or telephone and/or cell phone.” All the modified items were presented to the experts for review again. In content-related validation, all item ratings were in the acceptable categories.

Semantic or conceptual equivalence (the extent to which the idiomatic expression in the target language reflects the meaning of the source language) was in the range of “6.8-8.4”. Experts who rated whether each item of the PMWI retained the conceptual meaning when translated into Sinhala suggested that a few items needed modification and provided examples to convey a meaning similar to that of the original item. The two items “My partner tried to keep me from doing things to help myself” and “My partner did not want me to go to school or other self-improvement activities” also needed modification as the direct translation did not convey the intended meaning. Additionally, since attending school after marriage is not common in the Sri Lankan cultural context as it is in the West, the item was changed to “My partner did not want me to continue higher education or to go to other self-improvement activities.” With these revisions and modifications, the minimum ratings increased from “6.8” to “7.4” in the second round of the validation process. Thus, the consensual-related validity of the Sinhala version of the instrument was made satisfactory.

Cultural relevance of translated items

While most of the items received ratings of “7” or above from all experts, a few items received ratings below “7”. For example, the item “My partner restricted my use of the car” had a rating of “6.6”. In Sri Lanka, as not every individual owns a private car, it was more appropriate to use the term “family vehicle”. Therefore, the item originally phrased as “My partner restricted my use of a car” was modified to “My partner restricted my use of the family vehicle”. Similarly, the item “My partner did not do a fair share of childcare” required modification, as in the Sri Lankan cultural context, mothers are expected to be mainly responsible for childcare. Hence, this item was changed to “My partner did not provide adequate support in childcare,” making it sound more appropriate for the Sri Lankan context. Since all other items were rated in the acceptable categories of 7 or above, the culture-related validity of the Sinhala version of the instrument was accepted as satisfactory. The ratings of the six experts on the items of the PMWI show a high level of agreement regarding the content, semantics, and conceptual validity of the instrument.

Construct Validity

Construct validity is the degree to which relationships among the items of an instrument are consistent with the theory and operationalization (Polit & Beck, 2004). In this study, it was assessed in two ways: (a) factor analysis and (b) discriminant validation. The translated PMWI-long form was administered to 300 participants. Due to missing data, only 295 cases could be considered for analysis.

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was first performed through principal axis analysis with varimax rotation. Before extracting factors, two tests were carried out to confirm the suitability of factor analysis: the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity. To assess whether the sample size was adequate for factor analysis, the correlation matrix of all items, Bartlett's Sphericity Test, and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy were used. The correlation matrix of all items was examined, and the determinant of the correlation matrix was 0.45, which is greater than the necessary value of 0.00001 (Field, 2009), indicating that there is no significant multicollinearity in the data and therefore it is suitable for factor analysis. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant ($\chi^2(1653) = 7924.121$; $p < 0.0001$), and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was 0.91, which is considered to be 'good' and well above the acceptable limit of 0.5 (Field, 2009). These two values support the use of factor analysis for this data set (Bartlett, 1954; Kaiser, 1970). An initial exploratory factor analysis was run using Principal Axis Factoring with Varimax rotation for the extraction of factors. Ten factors with eigenvalues over Kaiser's criterion of 1 were identified (Table 1). However, the scree plot indicated two factors, as the slope of the curve of eigenvalues leveled off after Factor 2. Since Kaiser's criterion generally overestimates the number of factors to retain, and the average communalities were not greater than or equal to 0.7, the scree plot was used to determine the number of factors to retain. Both factor structures were considered, and it was found that the two-factor structure was more appropriate in terms of

semantic meaning and factor loadings. Therefore, the two-factor structure that accounted for 53.86% of the total variance. was retained. Additionally, Factor 1 accounted for 48.70% of the variance, and Factor 2 accounted for 5.16% of the variance.

Table 1: Items with Eigenvalues Greater than 1 in Exploratory Factor Analysis

Factor	Initial Eigenvalues		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	30.681	48.700	48.700
2	3.249	5.156	53.856
3	2.850	4.523	58.380
4	2.360	3.746	62.126
5	2.034	3.229	65.355
6	1.719	2.729	68.084
7	1.418	2.251	70.335
8	1.208	1.917	72.252
9	1.154	1.832	74.084
10	1.028	1.632	75.716

Based on the results of a factor analysis, this measure ultimately included two distinct clusters of psychologically abusive behaviors. The factor structure of the Revised Sinhalese PMWI basically followed that of the original PMWI subscales: dominance-isolation and emotional or verbal abuse. Thus, the two dimensions were referred to as emotional-verbal and dominance-isolation, as with the original version, though some modifications were made, as described later in this section. Even though the factor structure of the Revised Sinhalese PMWI largely followed that

of the original PMWI subscales, a number of items did not load onto the relevant subscales as expected. Table 2 shows the factor loadings after rotation. Items 41, 49, 54, 58, and 63 did not load significantly on either of the factors, as indicated in Table 2. This finding casts doubt on the appropriateness of including these items in the scale, and hence, they were removed. All other items' loadings exceeded the significance level of 0.4 (Field, 2009).

Item number 13 ("My partner treated me like an inferior"), which represents the emotional or verbal subscale in the original PMWI, loaded onto the dominance-isolation subscale in the Revised Sinhalese PMWI. It is possible that, more than the emotional impact, this particular form of abuse conveyed the message that the partner is 'dominant' and more important than the woman, hence the item loaded onto the dominance-isolation subscale. Similarly, item number 17 ("My partner withheld affection from me") and item 18 ("My partner did not let me talk about my feelings"), which originally loaded onto the emotional-verbal abuse subscale, now loaded onto the dominance-isolation subscale. This shift might be due to respondents perceiving the dominant power exerted by their partners (e.g., deciding when to show affection or when to let the woman talk) as more significant than the emotional impact of these actions.

Another item, number 26 ("My partner monitored my time and made me account for my whereabouts"), which originally loaded onto the dominance-isolation subscale, loaded onto the emotional-verbal abuse subscale in the current study. The other four items (i.e., "My partner made me feel that he had a means to monitor me," "My partner checked my cell phone and/or computer (e.g., email, Facebook, Skype) to monitor my communication with others," "My partner repeatedly made unwanted calls (e.g., to my workplace or home or when I was away from home to check my whereabouts") which were included anew in the present study, also loaded onto the emotional-verbal abuse subscale. All these items pertain to monitoring behavior by the partner. Consequently, the emotional-verbal abuse subscale of the present study was renamed the emotional-

monitoring-verbal (EMV) subscale. The term dominance-isolation (DI) subscale was retained as is. Factor 1, dominance-isolation, included items related to “isolation from resources, demands for subservience, restriction of activities, and rigid observance of traditional sex roles.” Factor 2, emotional-monitoring-verbal, comprised items related to “verbal attacks, behavior and words that demean women, deprivation of emotional resources, and constant monitoring of activities.”

The structure matrix was incorporated into Table 2. Items with higher loadings on Factor 1 were assigned to Factor 1, and those with saturations in Factor 2 were assigned to Factor 2. Factor 1, dominance-isolation, was addressed in 33 items. The factor loadings of these items ranged from 0.419 (Item 44: “My partner did not allow me to work”) to 0.858 (Item 22: “My partner acted like I was his personal servant”). Factor 2, emotional-verbal, was addressed in 25 items. The factor loadings for these items ranged from 0.437 (Item 50: “My partner’s moods changed radically”) to 0.737 (Item 62: “My partner threatened to hurt me if I left him”). After removing the five items as previously explained, the EFA was run again. The percentage of the total variance explained by the two factors increased from 53.86% to 56.98%. Four new items with factor loadings in the emotional-monitoring-verbal subscale were added to replace the deleted items that were in the original scale. The final adapted and validated Sinhalese PMWI had 58 items.

Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validation requires that the tested tool not be correlated with unrelated or unlike variables (Streiner & Norman, 2002), such as demographic characteristics. Factors like age and number of children were previously found to be independent of psychological maltreatment (Tolman, 1999). Thus, the lack of associations between these variables and psychological abuse would demonstrate discriminant validity. A correlation coefficient (r) smaller than 0.1 is considered trivial; an r value between 0.1 and 0.3 indicates a weak relationship; an r value between 0.3 and 0.5 indicates a moderate correlation; and an r value larger than 0.5 supports a strong correlation (Cohen, 1988). Evidence of discriminant

validity was examined by employing a non-parametric test, correlating respondents' scores on the Revised Sinhala PMWI with the number of children they reported, and by analyzing age differences using Spearman's rho correlation coefficient method. The analysis revealed a very weak and non-significant correlation between respondents' scores on the Revised Sinhala PMWI and the number of children they had (Spearman's $\rho = .005$, $p = .942$, $n = 265$). Correlation analysis further revealed a non-significant relationship between PMWI scores and respondents' age (Spearman's $\rho = -0.005$, $p = .949$, $n = 265$), indicating good discriminant validity of the PMWI Sinhala version.

Criterion Validity

Convergent Validity: One of the best ways to appraise the validity of an instrument is to compare it with a criterion known or believed to be closest to the truth (Abramson & Abramson, 1999). Convergent validity is supported if the tested tool is found to be correlated with other variables to which it is theoretically related (Streiner & Norman, 2002). In this study, the EACBQ was used as a comparable test for convergent-related validation. Convergent validity was established by computing the strength and direction of Pearson's correlation between the Revised Sinhala PMWI and the EACBQ. The Pearson correlation coefficient between the Revised Sinhala PMWI score and the EACBQ score was significant ($r(295) = 0.88$; $p < 0.01$), indicating a strong association in the expected direction. For the subscales, the Pearson correlation coefficient between the EMV subscale and the EACBQ was also significant ($r(295) = 0.85$; $p < 0.01$), demonstrating a strong association. Similarly, the DI subscale showed a significant correlation ($r(295) = 0.86$; $p < 0.01$) with the EACBQ scores. All correlations were consistent with theoretical expectations, with strong magnitudes indicating high convergent validity.

Known-Groups Validity: Criterion validity was assessed using the known-groups method, which involves contrasting the scores of groups expected to differ on the critical attribute due to some known characteristics (Streiner & Norman, 2002). Specifically, this method was used to determine if scores on the PMWI could discriminate between groups of

psychologically abused women and those who were not abused. Known-groups validity in this study was confirmed by analyzing the Revised Sinhala PMWI, EMV, and DI scores among different subgroups of women expected to report varying levels of psychological abuse. Respondents who scored 60 or below (i.e., those reporting no abuse at all or no more than 2 items in the "rarely" category) were classified as psychologically non-abused. Scores for abused and non-abused respondents were then compared. As shown in Table 2, both the EMV and DI subscale scores were highest among abused women and lowest among non-abused women. The differences in scores between these groups were statistically significant ($p < 0.001$, Table 2). Additionally, regarding total PMWI scores, the scores for abused women were significantly higher than those for non-abused women ($t = 8.200$, $df = 178$, $p = 0.000$, two-tailed).

Table 2: Known-groups validity - Differences in Revised Sinhala PMWI scores between Abused and Non-Abused Women

Group	Emotional/ Monitoring/ Verbal		Dominance/ Isolation		PMWI Total	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Psychologically Non-Abused (N= 188)	27.86	7.34	35.67	11.76	59.56	5.33
Psychologically Abused (N=107)	84.23	20.56	98.46	18.45	165.24	23.75
<i>p</i> value based on T-test	<0.001		<0.001		<0.001	

Internal Consistency and Test–Retest Reliability

Reliability

The reliability of the PMWI was evaluated using both test-retest and internal consistency measures. Test-retest reliability was assessed with a 14-day interval between administrations, and internal consistency was computed based on the data from the second administration. Sixty women who participated in the scale validation at Time 1 were invited to take part in a second administration after a 14-day period. Of these, 46 women were available for the second administration. Data from these 46 women were used to perform the test-retest analysis of the PMWI.

Internal Consistency Reliability

Internal consistency reliability for the Revised Sinhala PMWI was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. For the entire scale, Cronbach's alpha was 0.983. The internal consistency for the Emotional-Monitoring-Verbal (EMV) and Dominance-Isolation (DI) subscales were 0.965 and 0.957, respectively. These values are well above the generally accepted threshold of 0.7 (Field, 2009), indicating excellent internal consistency for both the overall scale and its subscales (see Table 3).

Test-Retest Reliability

The Sinhala PMWI was re-administered to 46 respondents after a two-week interval. The total PMWI scores from the first and second administrations were calculated and correlated. The intraclass correlation coefficient (ICC) for the entire scale demonstrated excellent consistency across the two administrations (ICC = 0.977; Table 3). The ICCs for the EMV and DI subscales were 0.961 and 0.952, respectively. All ICC values exceed the recommended threshold of 0.8 (Streiner & Norman, 2008), indicating that the test-retest reliability of the Sinhala PMWI is robust.

Table 3: Reliability of the Revised Sinhala PMWI

Scales	Internal consistency (n=295) (Cronbach’s alpha)	Test-retest reliability (n=46) (Intra-class correlation coefficient (ICC))
Emotional- monitoring-verbal	0.965	0.961
Dominance-isolation	0.957	0.952
Entire Scale	0.983	0.977

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to adapt and validate the Sinhala version of the PMWI on 18-49-year-old Sri Lankan women who could speak and read Sinhala. This inventory is expected to serve as a culture-specific instrument to measure the complex phenomenon of psychological abuse among Sri Lankan women for both research and clinical purposes. To ensure that these objectives are achieved, a standard methodology was followed. To ensure that the meaning of the translated Sinhala version was the same as that of the English version, the PMWI was forward and back translated by independent translators. Once translated, in view of the rising use of technology in psychological maltreatment in recent years (Fraser et al., 2010; Finn and Atkinson, 2009) and potential differences in the interpretation of psychological maltreatment in the United States and Sri Lankan settings, the PMWI was revised based on a literature review and consultation with a group of women experiencing and not experiencing psychological abuse. This procedure helped to ensure that the adapted PMWI would keep pace with changes in the tactics used in psychological maltreatment while including items culturally relevant to the phenomenon in the Sri Lankan community.

Translating the PMWI to the Sinhala language posed certain difficulties. Such problems in translating instruments have been highlighted in the Introduction of the Linguistic Evaluation Protocol devised by the World Health Organisation (1997). Following the initial back translation process (ITC, 2001; Neuman, 1997), experts from the social and behavioral professions assessed the degree of conceptual equivalence of the original PMWI to its Sinhala version. This two-way process - back translation and consensual-related validation - assisted in making the Sinhala version as conceptually equivalent as possible to the original version. The chance of inconsistent translation or conceptual errors during translation was minimized with this technique (Beaton et al., 2000). However, there were instances in which perfect conceptual and literal equivalence could not be achieved (i.e., “Gave silent treatment,” “withheld affection,” “expected obedience to his whims”). Terms in the original PMWI were difficult to translate into Sinhala; the original meaning of an item had to be modified during translation because only a part of the original meaning was present in Sinhala; and some of the associations in the original version were lost, making the translated item much narrower in the Sinhala version. These difficulties have been found to commonly occur when translating instruments in Sri Lankan settings (Godamunne, 2011; de Zoya, Rajapakse, and Newcombe, 2007).

Content - and consensual-related validation of the instrument involved the Delphi Process (Jones and Hunter, 1995). Content-related validation involved two dimensions, whereas consensual-related validation involved three dimensions, which underwent a review process. This expert review process played a crucial role in cross-cultural adaptation because these experts were knowledgeable in the content area of the PMWI, and some of them had rich experience working with the target population. Obtaining their opinions about the translated measure further enhanced confidence that the source and target versions were highly equivalent in content and that all items, including those modified, were culturally relevant to Sri Lankan women.

For each item, a minimum score of 7 was obtained after modification, demonstrating satisfactory content and consensual validity of the Sinhala version of the PMWI. This modified version of the PMWI was administered to a group of abused and non-abused women for cognitive debriefing, further strengthening content, conceptual, and semantic equivalence (Sousa and Rojanasrirat, 2010). Participants commented on the content, format, and instructions of the Sinhala PMWI. The positive feedback from the participants indicates that the measure is understandable and relevant to the target population of Sri Lankan women experiencing psychological abuse.

After cross-cultural adaptation, the Sinhala version of the PMWI underwent full psychometric testing in a sample of 300 eligible Sri Lankan women, establishing the construct validity and criterion validity of the instrument. Exploratory factor analysis indicated a two-factor structure. Although the factor structure of the Revised Sinhalese PMWI basically followed that of the original PMWI subscales - dominance-isolation and emotional or verbal abuse - a number of items did not load onto the relevant subscales as expected. Some items that had loaded on the emotional-verbal subscale loaded on the dominance-isolation subscale and vice versa in the Sinhala PMWI. Tolman (1989) noted that some items in the PMWI might have elements of both subscales and suggested mixed-factor loadings. For example, in the Sri Lankan context, items like “My partner did not let me talk about my feelings” and “My partner treated me like an inferior,” which represent the emotional or verbal subscale in the original PMWI, may convey the message that the partner is ‘dominant,’ controlling, and more important than the woman, hence loading onto the dominance-isolation subscale in the Sinhala PMWI. Similarly, items originally loaded in the dominance-isolation subscale, such as “My partner monitored my time and made me account for my whereabouts,” loaded onto the emotional-verbal abuse subscale in the current study. Other similar items related to monitoring behavior, such as “My partner made me feel that he had a means to monitor me” and “My partner checked my cell phone and/or computer (e.g., email, Facebook, Skype) to monitor my communication with others,” also loaded onto the emotional-verbal abuse subscale. This

may be because the constant suspicion implied by monitoring can have an emotional impact (i.e., feeling anxious and ‘always on pins’) more than the controlling behavior exercised over women. The two dimensions were referred to as emotional-monitoring-verbal (EMV) and dominance-isolation (DI), based on the factor structure in the Sinhala PMWI. Factor 1, dominance-isolation, consisted of 33 items addressing behaviors related to isolating partners from resources and demanding their subservience. Factor 2, emotional-monitoring-verbal, consisted of 25 items addressing behaviors that hurt partners emotionally and verbally. The slight difference in the factorial structure between the English and Sinhala versions of the PMWI reinforces the idea that differences in traditions and cultures across countries may affect the experience and perception of psychological abuse. Thus, the need to culturally adapt the measure before introducing it in a new setting is reinforced by the findings of this study.

Discriminant validity was supported by the non-significant correlation of Sinhala PMWI scores with age and number of children. Similar findings have been reported in previous studies as well (Escribà-Agüir et al., 2013; Tolman, 1999).

Convergent validity, assessed as one form of criterion validity, was demonstrated by a strong correlation between scores on the Sinhala PMWI and scores on the ECBQ. Regarding the subscales, Pearson correlation coefficients between the EMV and DI subscales and the ECBQ were also significant, indicating a strong association in the expected direction. This finding aligns with studies indicating that psychological abuse includes controlling behaviors (Hoffman, 1984). In known-groups validation, as expected, comparing the Sinhala PMWI scores among groups classified by abuse status identified significant differences. The mean PMWI scores differed significantly between women who were psychologically abused and those who were not.

The test-retest reliability for the full instrument and the scales was high, showing adequate test-retest reliability. According to De Vaus (1991), a “rule of thumb” acceptability for an instrument’s test-retest reliability is an ICC value greater than 0.70. The ICC values for the full instrument (ICC

= 0.97) and its scales (EMV ICC = 0.96, DI ICC = 0.95) demonstrate that all ICCs showed excellent consistency across the two administrations, further supporting the psychometric credentials of the Sinhala PMWI.

As with test-retest reliability, the internal consistency reliability of the Sinhala version of the instrument showed good psychometric values. Alpha coefficients for the entire scale (0.983), and for the EMV (0.965) and DI (0.957) subscales, were higher than the desirable value of 0.7 (Field, 2009).

The internal consistency of the Sinhala PMWI was also comparable to that of the original English PMWI. The alpha coefficients for the EV and DI subscales reported by Tolman (1989) were 0.930 and 0.945, respectively, while those of the present study were higher. These results indicate that the adapted and validated Sinhala PMWI has satisfactory internal consistency, meaning the items of the instrument measure the same trait. Therefore, the full instrument can be confidently used in research, clinical, and applied settings in Sri Lanka.

A notable aspect of the present study is the methodology employed to ensure the cultural appropriateness of the Sinhala PMWI for Sri Lankan women. From the initial revision stage, items considered culturally inappropriate for Sri Lankan women were modified or removed. For example, the original item “My partner restricted my use of the car” was modified to “My partner restricted my use of the family vehicle,” as not everyone in Sri Lanka owns a private car. However, further testing showed that this form of abuse was not very prevalent in the Sri Lankan setting, as this item received the highest percentage in the ‘Not Applicable’ category (44%) and also failed to load on either of the two factors. Thus, the item was removed from the final version of the PMWI. The item “My partner did not do a fair share of the household tasks” was modified to “My partner did not help me adequately with household tasks,” because the majority of Sri Lankan women are socialized to take a domestic role in their families. Therefore, dividing household tasks equally between couples is not common as it might be in Western countries. Most Sri Lankan women might not perceive the partner’s lack of contribution to household tasks as

abusive, as they might not expect their partners to share household chores equally. Hence, this item was modified to convey a more appropriate meaning in the Sri Lankan cultural context. Similarly, the item “My partner did not do a fair share of childcare” was modified because, in Sri Lankan cultural contexts, mothers are expected to be mainly responsible for childcare. If children are not well-fed, not cleaned properly, do not perform well in school, or behave badly, the mother is usually blamed rather than the father. Therefore, this item was changed to “My partner did not provide adequate support in childcare,” making it more suitable in the Sri Lankan context.

Although the process of cross-adaptation may take time and require repeated refinement of items, it is the best way to achieve cultural relevance of the measure for the target cultural setting (Beaton et al., 2000). If the adaptation process had not been conducted thoroughly or if it had only consisted of simple translation, important concepts of psychological abuse specific to Sri Lankan women might have been left out, or items not relevant to Sri Lankan women might have been inappropriately retained in the Sinhala version. Thus, the current study sheds new light on the measurement of psychological abuse in Sinhala by validating the PMWI to make it relevant to Sri Lankan women.

Another feature worthy of note is the addition of a few new items for measuring the misuse of technology and other forms of psychological abuse that were not included in the original PMWI but were found to be prevalent in the Sri Lankan context. One such form of abuse was threatening to kill or destroy the woman if she attempts to leave the abusive partner. Rather than threatening to harm or commit self-harm if the woman leaves, it was found in the Sri Lankan setting that the abusive partner frequently threatened to harm, kill, or slaughter the woman if she left him, thereby making the woman feel entrapped in the relationship. Thus, this item was added to the adapted version of the PMWI.

Another important form of psychological abuse involves monopolization, where the abuser makes himself the center of the victim’s perceptions (Tolman, 1992). In the past, monopolization might have been

accomplished by monitoring the woman's whereabouts by following and waiting outside her house (Rodenburg and Fantuzzo, 1993), reading her letters and diary, and continuously calling her (Shepard and Campbell, 1992). However, the nature and means of this kind of psychological abuse might have changed with the increasing use of mobile digital technology. Nowadays, perpetrators are able to monitor and control their partners more invasively with digitally based devices such as cell phones, the internet, and cameras (Finn and Atkinson, 2009). In recent years, with the advancement of technology, the use of technology has become increasingly prevalent in Sri Lanka as well. However, the PMWI was designed in 1989, when technology was not very advanced and not common in households. Thus, it did not measure cyber forms of psychological abuse involving technology. Therefore, items like checking the computer, repeatedly calling or sending messages, and restricting the use of digital devices were added to the adapted Sinhala PMWI. In the present study, among those who were psychologically abused by their intimate partners, more than 40% had also experienced being monitored or controlled by their partners through these technological devices. This finding indicates that new information technology provides abusers with easier and more intrusive ways to monitor and control their partners, a behavior that exists in the Sri Lankan community. Therefore, the original PMWI was revised by adding items for measuring the misuse of technology in psychological abuse, thus capturing the phenomenon in current settings.

Implications for Research and Practice

The validation of the Revised Sinhala PMWI is significant in several aspects. The findings of the present study confirmed the cross-cultural appropriateness and psychometric credentials of the adapted Sinhala PMWI, providing researchers with a standardized tool to examine the concept of psychological abuse systematically and comprehensively in Sri Lankan women. Thus, meaningful cross-cultural comparisons of results on psychological abuse can be made. Furthermore, a better understanding of the etiology, risk factors, and outcomes of intimate partner violence (IPV) can be developed with this adapted version of the PMWI, allowing for the

evaluation of effective interventions for terminating psychological abuse and reducing its corresponding negative health consequences, specifically for Sri Lankan women.

The use of the adapted and validated Sinhala PMWI should not be limited to research; it can also be applied in practical settings. Its comprehensiveness is useful for understanding patterns of psychological abuse experienced by individuals. Professionals such as psychologists, physicians, nurses, family therapists, and social workers can use this wide-ranging tool to assist in diagnosis. In addition to aiding diagnosis, the instrument can be valuable in treatment and intervention. With a better understanding of clients' experiences of psychological abuse, timely interventions to enhance their safety can be conducted, and treatment modalities can be better planned in therapeutic settings. Furthermore, by administering the Sinhala PMWI at intake, periodically during treatment, and at follow-up, the effectiveness of treatment and clients' progress can be systematically evaluated.

To keep pace with developments in information technology, normative data on the prevalence of cyber forms of psychological maltreatment can be obtained using the Revised Sinhala PMWI. Technology safety issues in the context of domestic violence can be addressed, and corresponding educational measures to prevent technology misuse in IPV can be planned. Further research may include incorporating other sources of information, using a more representative sample, and conducting longitudinal studies to detect changes over time and to test for potential emerging pathways of psychological IPV in the early stages of dating.

Conclusions

As prior research findings have demonstrated (Ureña et al., 2015), psychological IPV is a less-documented form of IPV that can be observed in many types of intimate relationships. In this context, screening, assessment, and intervention regarding psychological IPV may prevent escalation to physical IPV and persistent forms of violence (O'Leary, 2015). The main goal of this study was to provide a screening tool for the

prevention and detection of psychological IPV by validating the PMWI-LF, thereby aiding adult women, clinicians, social workers, and counselors in recognizing and detecting psychologically abusive behaviors. The comprehensive validation procedures used in this study provided evidence for both the cultural appropriateness and satisfactory psychometric properties of the PMWI. In conclusion, the validated Sinhala version of the PMWI revealed good psychometric properties for detecting psychological IPV over the past six months and proved to be an effective tool for screening women in abusive relationships. It can be used in clinical and research settings to detect early signs of psychological IPV and improve decision-making in cases of potentially abusive relationships.

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Cultural Politics and Asian Values: The Tepid War

Part III – Cultural Politics and Asian Values

By Michael D. Barr

Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2002

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pp. 177 – 193

Review by Kalpani Dambagolla

In *The Cultural Politics and Asian Values: The Tepid War* (Part III), Michael D. Barr tackles the complex debate surrounding Asian Values as an alternative to Western human rights. Barr traces the origins of this discourse to the 1990s, largely crediting its advocacy to figures like Dr. Mahathir Mohammad, former Prime Minister of Malaysia, and Lee Kuan Yew, Minister Mentor of Singapore. He describes Asian Values as a concept rooted in a shared cultural heritage that prioritizes collective well-being and economic development over the individualism and legalism central to Western liberalism. However, Barr acknowledges the criticism that Asian Values often serve to protect the interests of authoritarian elites¹ rather than genuinely reflecting the cultural priorities of Asian societies.

Positioning himself as a mediator in this debate, Barr attempts to navigate between the extremes of Western liberalism and the authoritarian tendencies of some Asian political elites. His critique of the West is not so much against the idea of human rights but rather against the Western emphasis on individualism and liberalism, which he views as potentially detrimental to the communal fabric of Asian societies. Barr warns that if ‘social atomism’ continues to infiltrate Asian societies, the liberal Western model of human rights, which he describes as ‘highly individualistic’ and ‘almost asocial’, could come to dominate. This concern underscores his broader argument that cultural relativism must be considered when discussing human rights in an Asian context.

¹ Hoon, C. Y. (2004). Revisiting the Asian Values Argument used by Asian Political Leaders and its Validity. *Indonesian Quarterly*, 32(2), 154-174.

Barr's exploration of cross-cultural dialogue forms the crux of his argument. In the second part of his book, *Cultural Politics and Asian Values*, he examines the major belief systems—liberalism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, and Confucianism—that influence this dialogue in Asia. Part III of the text summarizes his arguments and offers suggestions for improving cross-cultural communication on human rights. Barr praises the emphasis on society over the individual and highlights the significant role religion plays in shaping Asian values, particularly in contrast to Western secularism.

While Confucianism is often cited as the primary source of Asian Values in existing literature, Barr identifies Buddhism as a crucial element in fostering cross-cultural dialogue. He highlights Buddhism's inherent existentialism, which he sees as key to concentration, experience, personal concern, commitment, and the uniqueness of the individual. However, Barr also raises concerns about how this Buddhist approach can be reconciled with the broader human rights discourse.

The second key Barr discusses is the influence of post-modern feminist discourse, particularly the work of Jennifer Nedelsky. He critiques the way liberalism and mainstream human rights discourse perpetuate what Nedelsky calls a 'masculine disregard' for the inherently social nature of human beings and an excessive focus on property rights. Barr argues that autonomy, potentialities, and happiness can only be fully realized within relationships, a view that aligns with the Asian emphasis on duty and collective responsibility. This relational view of society, Barr suggests, offers a rationale for what some might see as Asian exceptionalism in the context of human rights.

Barr's third key focuses on the distinction between positive and negative rights. He defines positive rights as economic and social rights that require active government intervention, while negative rights require only government restraint (p. 190). Although this distinction is not entirely foreign to Western discourse, Barr implies that it is less familiar in Asian societies. He notes that nationalist movements in 20th-century Asia have often invoked economic and social rights in their rhetoric, reflecting

concerns about being left behind or victimized by Western capitalism and globalization (p. 191). However, Barr argues that Asian cultures have historically demonstrated “benevolent impulses” that align with human rights principles, even if they do not use the same “language of rights” as the West.

Barr supports the idea that culturally relative practices, such as ‘benevolence’ in the Asian context, encourage people to uphold what the West defines as human rights without necessarily using the ‘language of rights’ common in Western discourse. He uses the example of a hungry stranger (p.191) to explain how ‘rigid universalism makes it difficult to reconcile social and economic rights with common sense human nature.’ How does this ‘common sense of human nature’ prompt an individual to feed the hungry stranger? Whose responsibility is it to provide food? Is it the stranger’s right to be fed? At this point, Barr introduces the ‘language of religion,’ which is deeply embedded in Asian cultures and often serves as the moral foundation for humanistic benevolence. He argues that the ‘language of religion’ can restore or complement the West’s ‘language of rights.’ The major religions in East Asia—Confucianism, Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity—are as influential in Asian culture as human rights are in Western culture. However, the question arises: how do we translate this religious language, with its teachings of benevolence, compassion, or love, into political and international discourse?

However, Barr also acknowledges the potential dangers of relying too heavily on religious language in the human rights discourse. As seen in many countries, whether in Asia, Africa, or the West, those in power often use the language of human rights or ‘Asian values’ to advance their political agendas. Similarly, religious language has had a more negative than positive impact throughout history, as many examples suggest. When people prioritize religion over human rights simply because the religious language feels more familiar, the universality of human rights is at risk. It risks becoming a utopian ideal disconnected from the lived reality of people—especially in Asia—who often face oppression by those in power. Although Barr suggests that ‘the West could indeed learn from Asia and

accept contextualization and relationalism as a legitimate and necessary part of the human rights discourse’ (p. 191), it raises the important question: has this truly benefited individuals in Asian societies? Barr’s concluding statement, ‘a dialogue based on these principles (contextualization and relationalism) might also save the Western perception of rights from degenerating into caricature,’ encapsulates the primary counterargument of Asian value proponents against the Western human rights framework.

One of the more thought-provoking aspects of Barr’s argument is his critique of the “thin” accounts of human rights, as exemplified by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Barr, drawing on the work of Joseph Chan, points out that many rights in the UDHR are generalized or imprecise, often serving as shorthand for a range of more specific rights. For example, Article 19 on freedom of speech encompasses various forms of expression, including commercial, political, artistic, and religious speech. Barr argues that human rights require more precise, contextually grounded interpretations, a goal that could be achieved through dialogue that incorporates cultural and religious perspectives.

The question arises: is there a difference between Barr’s identification of ‘thin’ accounts of human rights associated with Western language and his suggestion of using religious language in the Asian context? Religious or cultural language resonates with those who believe in the religion, were raised in that context, and can relate to the specific situation. Thus, it too risks becoming a ‘thin’ account from another perspective. However, as Barr suggests, a balance can be achieved through the contextualization and relationalism of human rights discourse—an ongoing process that evolves over time. This leads to further questions: How and when do we determine the best approach to human rights? It also raises key academic debates, such as whether human rights should be understood within specific contexts, and if so, whether these risks undermining their universal character.²

² Willy Moka-Mubelo, S.J. (2019) Towards a contextual understanding of human rights, *Ethics & Global Politics*, 12:4, 40-52, DOI: 10.1080/16544951.2019.1696112

In conclusion, Barr's work offers a nuanced perspective on the debate over Asian Values and human rights, highlighting the importance of cultural relativism while also recognizing the potential pitfalls of abandoning universal principles. He raises critical questions about the role of religion, the limitations of human rights language, and the dangers of rigid universalism. Ultimately, Barr's argument suggests that cultural relativity and different values can and should be appreciated within the broader framework of universal human rights. As Amartya Sen has argued, the division between Asian and Western values is unnecessary and potentially harmful to the pursuit of freedom and democracy³. Barr's book serves as a valuable contribution to this ongoing debate, challenging readers to consider how best to reconcile cultural specificity with the universality of human rights.

³ Sen, A. *Asian Values and Human Rights*. Lecture delivered at the 16th Annual Morgenthau Memorial Lecture on Ethics and Foreign Policy.

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Contents

Rebranding the Post-war ‘Colombo’: Discursive Construction of Urban Regeneration Susantha Rasnayake	01
Do Ethics matter in Economic Development? J.G. Sri Ranjith	34
Screening Tool for Psychological Intimate Partner Violence for Sri Lankan Women: Sinhalese Validation of the Psychological Maltreatment of Women Inventory (PMWI) Gunendra R.K. Dissanayake	47
Book Review: Cultural Politics and Asian Values: The Tepid War (Part III – Cultural Politics and Asian Values) Kalpani Dambagolla	83

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